

# Miss Pride & Miss Prejudice

Kaylyn Venuto

May 2019

I used the *Pride and Prejudice* framework to embody two gay female characters working at the same restaurant in the conflict of potential love and lust. I tried to write my fan fiction dialogue using a Jane Austen-esque writing style, or a style involving Romanticism, parody, satire, and 3rd person narration, rather than using a modern or old english style. However, I used early 21st century cultural influences and ideals. I switched the Elizabeth character, Relina, to be rich and prejudiced but settled down while the newcomer character is the poorer, prideful Mr. Darcy character, or Alexandria. Relina's prejudice is not unkind, but hurts her. Kendra operates like Jane, but addresses her prejudice more than Alexandria, due to the ending. Evie operates like Kitty. Jed asserts sexist behavior and operates as the patriarch, or like a harsher version of Mr. Bennet. Casey operates like Mr. Wickham. I'd say this fiction moves like a movie about a musical that never actually plays through, where the audience only gets glimpses of key scenes. The scenes I chose to tie together were ones which particularly embodied the Elizabeth and Darcy characters. Even though *Emma* was the easiest novel to read with a Queer lense, the scenes I wrote to create tension between my characters seemed better suited to this framework. I wanted to challenge myself.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single woman who says she is in want of a wife, must be in want of a wife.

\*\*\*

One evening, the unruly and poorly educated diner manager provokes his favorite employee to provoke.

“So, you wouldn’t stand and defend your father in a fight? What a feminist!” Jed’s belly leads his walk to the bar, where he watches her.

Relina does not look up from her sweeping to entertain him. She has long, brown hair and haughty green eyes. She regards Jed by responding, “I’ll let my father’s actions stand for himself instead of quarrel. But I’m glad that, at the very least, you know where you are advantageous.” She also smiles, thinly.

“I’ve finished. May I be excused?”

Jed growls lightly and huffs, “The mess is your privilege to clean.” He descends the staircase to the basement. Relina’s eyes wander, wondering if she’ll be able to read before retiring to bed tonight.

\*\*\*

Evie expels the news while curling her long, blonde hair between her fingers. “Jed hired another manager, besides Casey and himself! Imagine the greater privileges! I should hope to have meal-tickets and raises.”

“Oh sweet angel, this is such teasing to make without a promise.” Kendra leans on the bar while arching an eyebrow, peering at the perfect length of her nails. Evie purses her fully glossed, pink lips.

Relina agrees with Kendra, primarily. “Yes, but I should hope so, too.”

Evie tosses her hair behind her shoulder. “Should you, really? You are *no* Cinderella. More like a Hilton.” Relina glares at her while she continues, “but not as pretty in the face...”

Relina grabs the wet cloth at her waist and whips Evie’s bottom with it, who squeals. They proceed to chase each other around the little diner, eager for much, much more.

Kendra smiles, unwilling to stop them. Just this once.

\*\*\*

Relina engages herself in conversation with Kendra and Evie at the bar, while watching the new manager, Alexandria, at a distance. She is light-haired, tall, and fair while strong and stoic. When her back is turned to study restaurant bills and payments, Relina notices the visible outline of her bra underneath her uniform.

Evie has finished giving an excerpt about attractive soldiers, expecting a reply from one of the two. Relina rests her head on top of her folded hands and adds, annoyed, “Men only like me because they do not know me. Or, they like how I look.”

Evie scrunches her nose. “So?” And then, she snickers. “Don’t you prefer superficial qualities, yourself?”

Relina looks towards Evie with furrowed eyebrows. Evie smirks and persists, “You’re hiding a secret.”

“Is that so?”

Evie looks to Kendra, who looks to Relina expectantly. Evie looks back to Relina and whispers close to her ear, “You’re affectionate. For *her!*”

Relina snorts. She resumes to study Alexandria and laughs. “If I am to be on my knees about a manager, I will be. And she is clearly one to be worshiped, here.”

Evie’s eyes widen. “Well, I don’t worship, but I do kneal.” She winks and rises from her bar stool to walk impetuously towards Alexandria. Relina attempts to grab any of the strings on her apron but misses, and her heart skips. Relina and Kendra have to overhear the conversation occur, where Alexandria refuses to express a kind opinion about either of them.

She barely makes eye contact with Evie and declares, “We are not equivalents, and I will not be fond of any of you.” She adds more knowingly, “I do not relate to employees.”

Eventually, Evie awkwardly returns to the bar to sip on her shift drink.

Though no one asked, Relina responds. “Do you think her spite affects me? Well, it isn’t so.” She rises from her seat, brushes her thighs and decides with a smile, “It feels good to be hated by people I hate.”

\*\*\*

“Aren’t you pretty, darling?”

One of Relina’s most recent customers tries to please her. She is an elderly woman. “I’m sure all of your work fellows want to have a date with you. Don’t you think she’s pretty, dear?”

Relina’s heart skips. “Oh--” Her customer is now addressing Alexandria, who is at a nearby table sorting through payments. Alexandria interjects before Relina can continue.

“I’m her manager,” she laughs. Relina has never heard her laugh. “She’s attractive, but I would never date her. Policy!”

Relina’s cheeks burn, and she fails to notice how Alexandria’s hands shake. Relina whips her head around and glares at her. “Actually, Jed is my manager.”

The friendliness on both of their faces fades entirely, regardless of the customer’s presence. Alexandria refuses to make eye contact with Relina until the door shuts behind the elderly woman who, on her way out, mumbles, “Date her? Why, I would never imagine *that!*”

“You will not embarrass me again” she warns. Then, she rises from the nearby table and roughly takes the payments with her to the basement.

Relina watches her walk away, realizes she's doing it, and huffs. She scratches her head and walks over to the bar, immediately relenting to Kendra.

"She's embarrassing. She refuses to learn from me Kendra, or at least let me know that she learns from me. We go along when I'm the subordinate. She knows I have money, and it would take a heavy hammer to destroy her stony prejudice against me! There will be no peace between us. She loves to puppet me, and how can I find pride in that? Which is the very point, isn't it? She is here to puppet me like Jed, not to govern a business. She is here to protect women only if she feels like it."

Kendra looks down at the floor, holding a small smile. "Well, it is easier to deal with, isn't it? When you discover the one you admire has vices."

Relina turns to look at her with confusion. "Actually no, not at all."

Kendra frowns. "Rather, I find my ex-lover easier to chew having known he always cheated and stole, more than I would if only he stole." She starts to empty the ketchup bottles Relina has brought to her earlier.

Evie passes by while dragging the mop and tacks on inquisitively, "If you saw a flaw in your man, wouldn't this heal you?"

Relina reflects. But with nothing greater to say, she resorts to despondently muttering the correction, "*Woman.*"

"Oh," Evie chuckles and rolls her eyes, "right!"

This triggers Relina. "Do you give me faulty advice because you think this is *wrong*?"

Evie stops mopping and looks speechless. Kendra looks at Relina with deep concern. "Your first defense will always make others the enemies you first see." She remains careful. "Is it because your first defense is rooted in years of heteronormative oppression?"

Relina stares at the ground with her arms folded across her chest. Kendra continues. "Anyway, do not make me your enemy, judge me from *our* history."

"I cannot judge you without the history surrounding us." Relina sulks. She walks away, and Kendra looks pained.

\*\*\*

Relina believes the new girl won't last longer than a few weeks, but it's better to correct her. "It isn't Alex. It's Alexandria."

The new girl frowns. "Could've sworn--"

"But you didn't and might as well have." Relina takes the stacked plates from her, one by one. "Instead, you cut her name to sound more masculine to you."

The girl is left with a quizzical expression, which is transformed into a frown after Relina tells her to mop the basement. This is when Casey appears from the kitchen and approaches her.

Relina did not have the pleasure to work with him as often as Jed. But she knew his youth and tall stature made him popular with young women, along with his confident behavior. Or, dominant behavior.

“Aren’t you such a manager?” He asks her during his waltz, demonstrating his good impression of her so far.

Relina notices his movements and opts to smile politely. “No, I do not think so.”

He has not been encouraged, but flashes her a smile anyway. “So, haven’t you recently attended a dance?”

Relina, feeling uncomfortable, tries to respond gladly. “I suspect Alexandria would not bother me with such questions!”

“I’ve known her.” Casey’s expression quickly darkens. “She’s been engaged to my friend.” Relina looks up automatically to study his expression. “The woman was a good friend of mine, and I did not suspect Alexandria’s desire for her to stem from anything but what resources would benefit her. Alexandria was jealous of our intimacy, and does not speak with me, now.”

“Oh, that’s dreadful.” Relina continues. “Why would Jed have her here, then?”

“He enjoys the entertainment. And don’t you know it?” He chuckles. “But do not fuss, I understand the disappointments of poverty. All is well.”

\*\*\*

Relina discusses the disturbing gossip with Kendra at the bar.

“Doth he lie?” she asks.

But Kendra, rather, chooses to address Alexandria. “Doth she marry for love?”

There is a glow in Relina’s cheeks, even though she remembers their previous conversation about oppression and history. “She *fought* to marry a woman---”

Kendra also knew this woman, before. “A woman with a house--- and God knows that house only came with that woman’s age ---a car, a dog---”

Relina extends her arms in exasperation. “---Everyone has a dog.”

She scoffs. “Relina.”

“This is a woman *teacher*! What else is so *rich*?”

Kendra, without another answer, mutters, “Businesswoman.”

“Right! Ew!”

“But I persist,” Kendra starts with a sad expression, “what better illusion of emotional security assumes itself in love with a woman twelve years her senior?”

Relina is not done, yet. “First, I should tell you about wicked ones who are twelve years *your* senior. Second, I will tell you Kendra, the answer is in no illusion at all. But, there is one in a woman who *loves*, and who *she* loves.”

Kendra reflects. “Well, she claims to. Doesn’t she?”

Relina surprises herself by stomping her foot. “Well, her love *now* has better than what her love *first* expected! And I say it still does not have what goodness she disbelieves exists.” Relina remembers a fear she spotted in Alexandria. “To have such a thing would be too frightening for her. Daresay, I can give it.”

“Ah,” Kendra understands, “you are too vain and assuming of a stranger. I will always hurt you.”

Relina’s cheeks flush. “Ah, you are too similar to the devil’s advocate!”

\*\*\*

“AH!” Alexandria cries.

Relina rushes to the kitchen. The curdled voice coming from Alexandria’s gaping mouth is unfamiliar. She holds out a cut thumb, where a bit of blood is traced. Relina suddenly remembers the wet cloth at her hip and rushes over to where she stands in order to wrap her hand. Just before Relina touches her, though, Alexandria’s eyes widen. She whisks her damaged hand into the air, unavailable for Relina to reach. Relina is perplexed by this new character. The two stare at one another. After the harsh moment, Alexandria grabs the cloth from Relina’s hand and passes her to exit the kitchen.

Relina notices a few drops of her blood have stained her own pants.

\*\*\*

“She cries at a cut!” Evie chuckles. “But it’s only blood! What happens to her every month...” she wonders.

Evie is a fool, which Kendra understands, and comments better. “She cries at a cut *and* wouldn’t let you tend to it.”

“How do we know exactly what haunts her from the situation?” Relina is distressed, but quick. “What if she *is* fond of one of her employees...”

Evie interjects, not yet having her fill. “Well, maybe she’s haunted by the new tattoo she received last week which gave her the poverty she is troubled with this week...”

“Doth she encourage my affections to erase my homophobia?” Relina wonders dreamily, “Or is it for her greed? Or does her unobservant self encourage me?”

“How do you expect to get a truth you do not have, and then, she might not have to give you?” Kendra looks down at her waitressing pad, tapping it with her pen. “You cannot stare into a mirror for 500 hours and learn any truth that comes from a mouth.”

Relina runs her hands through her hair. “Oh, but there is so much to learn in what is unspoken!”

Kendra sighs, “But Relina, in it, there is *nothing* which *requires* being spoken.”

She says her last word just as the front door opens. The three waitresses watch Casey stroll inside and smile at each of them. Then, he calls Evie down to the basement for a word. She hops down from her seat at the bar, turns to wink at them, and skips off.

\*\*\*

Relina and Alexandria are lonesome in the diner. Alexandria has resorted to sorting through payments in the basement. Relina desires a meal ticket, and descends the staircase.

Relina approaches the desk Alexandria sits behind, and Alexandria does not look up to address her.

“Do you see me? I am injured; I hold the blood up to your face. It isn’t much, but more than anyone has shown you, or has had the courage to show you, before. Right?” She seems to be overcome with a passion to educate.

Alexandria, without confusion, only asks rather quickly, “Did I do it to you?”

“You ask, but you know why I cannot blame you; you are barely a friend to me.”

“Strangers hurt. I stayed with a girl for a week and she left.”

There is a small pause.

“You will hurt over what doesn’t keep you which you want to keep.”

“How do you or I know which I bleed for?” Relina questions, feeling fallen. “How do you or I know what you have done but don’t admit? How do you or I know what you have done, or what you have not done?”

Suddenly, someone shakes her.

“Relina!” Kendra bristles. “You’re going to get fired!”

Relina, startled and still in the fading remnants of slumber, lifts up her head from the book it has fallen upon. She meets Kendra’s gaze, who pointedly remarks, “The dishes need to be done, *now*. The dinner rush is coming and Evie was fired.” She adds more grimly, “She *attacked* Casey.”

\*\*\*

“Who’s going to take my pain away? You? *You*? Or, is it *you*? Let me relate to all of you until I find out,” Relina mocks Casey with disdain. “Evie did not do this.”

Relina and Kendra are at their common positions near the bar when Alexandria unceremoniously walks into the diner and heads in the direction of the basement. Relina and Kendra both give each other glances before following her.

“Is this about Evie?” Alexandria quips as they descend the stairs together.

“Yes,” Kendra and Relina say in union.

“There was nothing I could do. I brought the matter to Jed, but nothing more could be done.” Her voice sounds particularly low.

When they reach the ground, she stops and turns to face them. Relina is a bit uncomfortable and releases her anger disproportionately. “Evie did not attack him! How many women has this been done to? Should I just find another job, too?”

Alexandria lightly smirks, “I don’t imagine why *you’d* need to.”

Relina, exasperated at the months of rejection, cold treatment, and injustice releases herself.

“Do you judge and come to place me for money that I have come to? Do you enjoy hearing gossiped stories about my drunk mother and rich, wheezing father to make yourself feel better about nothing you know right of? Hm! How poor are you, then? And should I care so much of your opinion, or choose the cost of my upturned nose to you in public---which you would then point at and call me snob? I guess at that moment, if it should come, it would be about which I could most *afford*.” She finishes with a rewarding certainty of herself, but guesses it might have cost her in another way.

Alexandria pauses, and responds with an unsurprising calamity.

“If any of this emotion, at all, has to do with my previous engagement, I’ll have you know what Casey has done. She cheated on me, and it was with him.” Relina and Kendra exchange a glance. “For Evie,” she continues, “I offered what has left of my power; to be her reference in the direction she chooses next. A shift in power could happen here, but it will be slow. That means, Kendra,” she looks at her, “I expect more work from you. And Relina,” Alexandria prepares her final correction by clearing her throat, “you are, most ardently, fired.”

Relina releases eye contact with Kendra and looks to the floor. She has a few tears in her eyes, which she hopes do not fall. With no further anguish to discuss and no argument left to propose, she only states with a low, angry voice, “Perhaps, in the end, I became a worthy opponent to you.” She sees Kendra bow her head.

Relina climbs the staircase and gathers the apron she tossed onto the bar. Before she reaches the exit, she turns to look at the interior of the diner. She remembers her many mistakes and successes, but only for a moment or two. Alexandria comes to the top of the staircase. Even while fully exhausted, Relina asks with perplexity, “What else is there?”

Alexandria comes a little bit closer to where Relina stands.

“You have been a risky employee for me, and maybe the smartest I’ve ever had.” She looks towards the ground, which is when Relina finally notices her shaking hands. “However, I’d really like to clear this up with you. I argue that I’m not as prideful as you believe.” She looks up at her face, fully.

“I would be honored if you decided to go with me, sometime.”

\*\*\*