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Critical Introduction

For my Fan Fiction project I decided to write on my favorite novel of Austen's, *Pride and Prejudice*. I was particularly inspired by Joe Wright's adaptation and the last scene in particular in which Darcy and Elizabeth are in their most natural and relaxed state teasing one another. Every time I watch his adaptation I wish that the movie would keep going and I could see their lives together. I have never written creatively before or taken a creative writing course and found this task daunting. I even asked our class Groupme for tips which were helpful. My everyday writing style is somewhat comic and so I decided to carry that tone into the Fan Fiction piece. I knew I wanted to continue Elizabeth and Darcy's story and enjoy play-by-play styles of writing. In order to add an element of humor and inspired by true events, I decided to give Elizabeth a hangover. This framing allowed her personality and wit to live on while also catching readers up on the events of the past few years. Elizabeth's mom died, Caroline Bingley is married and has a child, Jane is still Jane, and Darcy and Elizabeth are still in love and have a child named Emma. As Elizabeth goes throughout her comically painful morning she dips in and out of the future and the past. I tried to stay true to Elizabeth's character as much as possible while also adding an element of exhaustion as a hungover new mother would experience. The piece could honestly have continued as long as I wanted but I only wanted to give a glimpse into Mrs. Darcy's new life.

Mrs. Darcy Gets a Hangover

She swore she had closed the curtains before she went to sleep the night before. The sun, however, did not care what Elizabeth Darcy had done or intended to do with the curtains and shone through the windows anyways. The sun is always brighter than you remember whenever you overindulged the night before. God, did she regret having that last glass with Jane, but at the time it was key to her survival if she had to listen to Caroline talk about just “how smart her little Henry is!” She could use another glass right now just remembering it. Did the birds really chirp that loudly every morning? Or are they in league with the sun and bent on making her senses overwhelmed? Either way she felt like hunting today for the first time in her life. She rolled over to risk a glance at the towering clock in the corner of the room and squinted her eyes making out the time to be seven o’clock. Seven o’clock. Approximately fourteen hours until she could return to the sweet relief of sleep without raising too much concern among her staff and family. A nap might be necessary. Yes, a nap would be in everyone’s best interest. A quick scan around the room yielded the information she needed to proceed. Clothes were hung over the dressing screen. She remembered now being proud of herself for not leaving them on the floor for someone to have to straighten them out the next day and a wave of guilt to wash over her as she hated the servants thinking she was ungrateful for how fortunate her life had turned out or even worse, born spoiled like Caroline. The water pitcher was by her bed with some concoction one of the servants swore by for helping dehydration when serious illness strikes. Whose to say it hadn’t with the way she could only half open her eyes. The door to Mr. Darcy’s quarters was shut as he was away in London on business of some sort. She tried desperately to pay attention and listen anytime he told her about business or family dealings, however, he seemed just as bored with it as she was so she was often remiss in her efforts. Either way, he would not return until this

evening when they were set to have an intimate family dinner with Jane and her brood. She loved dinners like these when she could recount the events of the previous night and engage in light gossip. Elizabeth had always had a certain disdain for gossip and those who chose to participate in the act on a regular basis. She felt that it was an oversaturated job market in her circles and that her time was better spent in a more productive manner. The exception was with Jane. Gossip with Jane didn't count. Jane was too kind and gentle to ever say anything too slanderous, but both women did enjoy being in the know on their friends' happenings and mishappenings. Yes, dinner tonight would be wonderful and would make the time in between worth it, no matter how excruciating for her body. Had she not eaten enough at the ball? Was there another unknown factor at play she was missing? She downed the glass of water feeling as though she hadn't seen water in years and wouldn't for years after. Not really sure what was in the concoction the servant had left out for her she gave it a quick sniff and decided it was better if she plug her nose and shoot it back instead of sipping on it like the brandy she had for dessert last night. The brandy! That's it! Her mother may have never given her much useful advice, but she did impart on Elizabeth the importance of not mixing her drink choices. "Stick to one or you'll be done!" she would say to her girls before a big evening at one of the balls they grew up attending with hopes of a suitor finding one of her daughters and their safe drinking tips attractive enough to warrant a marriage proposal. God, she's glad those days are behind her. Elizabeth missed her mother, no matter how fraught their relationship was at times. Her sense of urgency in every matter of no importance and her oblivion to matters of genuine importance always made Elizabeth laugh. Ever since her mother passed her father had been visiting more and more which she enjoyed, although she could tell the years and the grief were taking a toll on him. She wished that Emma had gotten to meet her grandmother. Emma! Elizabeth sprang out of bed and rushed

to her robe. A true testament to wine's (and now brandy's as she had determined) ability to completely cloud your brain is forgetting about the human you gave life to a short eighteen months ago. Had it really been eighteen months? It seems like just the other day she and Darcy had announced that they would be expecting their first child in the following spring. They were so unbelievably happy when they learned they would be expecting a child. Women have been giving birth for thousands of years, yet with their level of excitement you would have thought their daughter's birth to be inaugural. Before Darcy, Elizabeth had never given much thought to children, not because she didn't want them or had an aversion to them, she just had never met anyone with whom she would want to embark on that journey. Until Darcy. Everything changed with Darcy. They had been married three years now and still she felt the same spark when she looked at him. Nothing was perfect with them by any means. They still fought over trivial matters and sparred with their words as a hobby. He kept her on her toes and she him. Parenting with him was an adventure she had not completely anticipated during the excitement of her pregnancy. They both were so in love with Emma that Elizabeth could already tell how difficult disciplining her when she got older would be. She wished she could stay this small forever.

Elizabeth walked down the hall as quickly as her hurting body would allow and reached Emma's doorway with a deep breath as she propped herself against the door frame. How much did she drink for Christ's sake? She tip toed into Emma's room and peaked over her crib. She was sleeping soundly still on her belly with her knees tucked under her and her bum in the air.

Elizabeth had no idea how that could be a comfortable sleeping position, but it seemed to be popular with Emma. She wondered if she had slept like that when she was Emma's age and felt a pang in her chest for wishing she could ask her mother. "Oh yes you slept like that until the age of two when then you trading sleeping for babbling on and on and keeping your mother up" she

would say. Her mother loved playing the martyr and she and the rest of her family usually let her. The pang in her chest had migrated up to her head and she wished she could sleep as peacefully as Emma was. She began to stir as she sensed her mother was near and Elizabeth whispered softly “Goodmorning” to Emma and a prayer to God that she wouldn’t be fussy this morning. Any other morning but this one. Not when your father is away. Her nurse would be in soon and tend to Emma’s needs if Elizabeth asked but usually Elizabeth preferred doing most things for Emma herself. Her mother had had little help with her five girls and she would feel useless if she let her hired help do everything for only one daughter. She scooped Emma up and looked into her little blue eyes and thought how they reminded her of blueberries. Elizabeth loved blueberries and thought maybe a bowl of fruit would help her feel a little better. No grapes, though, for she had consumed enough the night before in their popular liquid form.

Works Cited

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Edited by Donald J. Gray and Mary A. Favret, W. W. Norton & Company, 2016.

Wright, Joe, director. *Pride & Prejudice*. Focus Features, 2005.