



# Fitzwilliam Darcy: An Honourable Man

*Brenda J. Webb*

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Fitzwilliam Darcy, An Honourable Man is a Pride and Prejudice variation. Not a simple retelling, it is an intriguing new story that does not follow canon and it is rated for Mature audiences. Leaving England after his disastrous proposal was refused at Hunsford, Darcy spent two lonely years in Scotland and Ireland before returning home to face Elizabeth Bennet, certain that he could regard her as an indifferent acquaintance. Events that transpired in his absence have left Elizabeth a changed woman. The victim of a marriage by deception to Count Stefano, she has suffered greatly at his hands. Will Mr. Darcy rescue the woman he vowed to forget?

## Fitzwilliam Darcy: An Honourable Man Details

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# From Reader Review Fitzwilliam Darcy: An Honourable Man for online ebook

**Meredith (Austen-esque Reviews) says**

Exhilarating Adventure, Drama, and All-Consuming Love

TYPE OF AUSTENESQUE NOVEL: Pride and Prejudice Variation, Mature Audience

TIME FRAME: two years after Darcy's failed proposal in Hunsford

MAIN CHARACTERS: Elizabeth, Darcy, Georgiana Ingram, Evan Ingram, Colonel Fitzwilliam, George Wickham, Charles and Jane Bingley, Count Stefano, Cecile Preston, Mr. Williamson

WHY I WANTED TO READ THIS NOVEL:

- New Author For Me: Even though she has 3 books published and has been writing for years, this is my first time reading anything by Brenda Webb. (shameful, I know!)
- Highly Recommended: This book has been on my wish list for years as the reviews and recommendations for it are overwhelmingly positive! It also won the vote I held last month!

SYNOPSIS:

Darcy goes to Scotland and Ireland for two years to escape his pain and longing for Elizabeth Bennet. Meanwhile Elizabeth is forced in marriage by dear Mrs. Bennet to a deceptive and delusional man who holds her captive. When Darcy returns to find Elizabeth a shell of her former self and in need of his help and protection, he is unable to refuse and commits himself to her in an entirely new and selfless way...

WHAT I LOVED:

- It is Sensational and Dramatic: What a dark and imaginative deviation! Wow! This story is a big departure from canon and follows its own course. This premise is filled with multiple villains, madness, and delicious melodrama! Our antagonists are different and instead of overcoming pride and misunderstandings, our dear couple fights Elizabeth's dangerous husband and the evil plots others have against them. I thoroughly enjoyed these changes, new scenarios, and the unique adventure this story took me on.
- Compelling and Captivating: The premise had me spellbound; and the intense drama, evil plots, and danger were all well-constructed and skillfully executed. I enjoyed the author's style and thought there was a great balance of dialogue, action, and flashbacks. The descriptions were vivid and the story was presented with just the right amount of detail. This adventure definitely had me consumed and when I wasn't reading, I was thinking about these characters and mulling over the drama in their lives. I love when a story does that!
- What a Darcy!: Being portrayed in the most heroic and swoon-worthy of premises, this Darcy is the ultimate romantic icon! Completely devoted, desperately in love, and dangerous to his enemies...\*sigh\* (excuse me while I collect myself from the puddle I have melted into!) I loved seeing this multi-faceted Darcy – he is both an ardent lover, taking care of Elizabeth with the tenderest of concern and a strong protector, ready to defend to the death! I loved Darcy's principles and honor in this story. How he would defy society, alter the course of his life, and completely devote himself to Elizabeth stole my heart!

- Engaging Relationships and Dynamic Characters: There was plenty of new original characters in this tale and I especially enjoyed seeing these characters interact with Jane Austen's characters. The new villains and antagonists were interesting and exciting additions, but my favorite relationships to observe were those between Mr. Williamson and Elizabeth and Darcy, Georgiana's happy marriage with her husband Evan, and Mrs. Reynolds love for Georgiana, Darcy, and Elizabeth.

#### WHAT I WASN'T TOO FOND OF:

While I did think there might have been one delusional woman too many chasing after Darcy, and I did find it a little odd that the Gardiners only came onto the scene at the end, I really can't say either of those marred any enjoyment or pleasure I had in this story!

#### CONCLUSION:

Looking for a Pride and Prejudice variation that pull at your heartstrings, enthrall your senses, and excite your mind? Fitzwilliam Darcy An Honorable Man is a wonderfully epic and romantic adventure, and I'm so very glad that I finally got to read a story by Brenda J. Webb! For those readers who enjoy heartrending romances and exhilarating premises, she is an author not to miss!

#### WARNING:

There are several intimate scenes between couples in love in this story – not very frequent or graphic though. And there are some scenes of mild violence. Would recommend for Mature Audiences.

Austen-esque Reviews

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#### **Tamra says**

Enjoyable but reminded me of an old black and white movie, over dramatic and even includes a sword fight with Darcy and the villain. I laughed out loud when Darcy yelled "En Garde". Mr. Bennett is missing from this variation and replaced with a vicar who was like a father to Elizabeth. Mr. Bennett is one of my favorite characters and I didn't like that he was replaced with the vicar who annoyingly called her "Lizziebet". Most Frustrating was Mrs. Bennett's portrayal. Ok, she's selfish, annoying and a nervous Nellie but she isn't evil. This Mrs. Bennett is evil. I also like to see Kitty and even Mary have a conscience but that wasn't the case in this variation.

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#### **Madenna U says**

This book was very long and at no point rushed any topics. There was some mystery. There was a LOT of women admiring Mr Darcy and his "form". His love for Elizabeth is all encompassing as he helps her recover from a tragedy that has her comatose. Jane, Charles, Georgiana, her husband and cousin Richard are amazing characters, where Mrs. Bennett is beyond awful. Mr Wickman, of course, is included but in a much different type of evil with a few helpers. Once Darcy and Elizabeth find their happiness it is hard to explain how syrupy sweet they are together as they find happily ever after. There are many epilogues of let you know how it all works out.

I think this book tried to do too much. It did keep my interest, but I don't know that I would recommend it to others unless you have a lot of time on your hands.

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## Ceri says

*This review was first posted on **Babblings of a Bookworm**: <http://babblingsofabookworm.blogspot....>*

This is a Pride & Prejudice variation which varies quite widely from the original book. Aside from the changes unfolding as you read there are a number of changes to past events which aren't obvious at first, such as a much smaller age gap between Georgiana and Darcy, 3 years instead of 12, and the history of George Wickham is also different – there was no attempted elopement with Georgiana and Wickham never joined the militia, meaning that hasn't been to Meryton and has never met the Bennets. Following the disastrous Hunsford proposal Darcy informed Bingley that he had been mistaken in his estimation of Jane Bennet's feelings towards Bingley. Feeling a need to escape for a while Darcy has spent the last two years visiting his estates in Scotland and Ireland. Personal mail wasn't forwarded at his request. Finally, Darcy feels that he is over his unrequited love for Miss Elizabeth Bennet, and he is ready to marry and produce the requisite heir for Pemberley.

*'It had taken a long time, but he was certain now of one thing – he could meet her as an indifferent and common acquaintance.'*

Georgiana is unaware of the reason for her brother's prolonged absence but is thrilled that he is finally thinking of marrying. Although she and her husband have been unable to have a child of their own she wants her brother to be happy and she looks forward to lavishing love on a niece or nephew. Georgiana has a candidate for a bride too, her husband's step-brother's widow, a Mrs Preston. She is plain, but aside from that Georgiana feels that she might fit Darcy's personality quite well. Having given up on love Darcy is amenable to considering a marriage with Mrs Preston, who he feels will not expect him to love her.

Meanwhile Bingley is at the end of his tether; though happily married to the former Miss Jane Bennet he is extremely worried about Elizabeth. After Elizabeth's return from Kent a Count, Stefano, came to Hertfordshire and became besotted with Elizabeth, who showed no interest in him. The Count proposed marriage to Elizabeth but was refused consent by Mr Bennet. Following Mr Bennet's death soon afterwards, the Count renewed his addresses to Elizabeth, receiving far more encouragement from Mrs Bennet. Then one night Elizabeth disappeared and suddenly Mrs Bennet was in possession of a large sum of money, having sold her daughter's hand in marriage. News was next heard of Elizabeth having married the Count, presumably against her will. The next contact relating to Elizabeth was via a servant, who informed the Bingleys that Elizabeth had been involved in a violent altercation with her husband in which she witnessed her husband killing her maid, and had herself been grazed by a bullet. Her husband had then set the house on fire. The servants had hidden Elizabeth and put out word that she was dead. A grave in Meryton holds the body of a servant who perished in the fire and the secret of Elizabeth's survival has been carefully kept from all but a handful of people.

Lizzy is by no means unscathed by her experience. She's had a breakdown of sorts and barely communicates. If she sees a man she often panics and the need to limit the people in Meryton who know she's alive means that Elizabeth is cared for by Jane and one servant. She has escaped from the house on more than one occasion and it is purely by good luck that she hasn't already been discovered. Bingley is praying that his good friend Darcy will assist them with their need to get Lizzy away from Meryton and be

assured that she will be cared for by somebody who loves her and will be able to keep her existence a secret. This is obviously asking a huge amount of Darcy – firstly, it is asking him to take on the care of somebody who rejected his offer of marriage and broke his heart, which will be hard enough, but Bingley is also asking Darcy to sacrifice his future. Should Lizzy recover she is married to a dangerous madman so she wouldn't be free to marry Darcy and the likelihood of Darcy marrying somebody else willing to put up with the care of her husband's first love seems slim. Darcy sees all the disadvantages of him taking on Elizabeth's care but once Darcy sees Elizabeth and realises that he is one of the very few people she responds positively to it becomes a very difficult task to walk away from the only woman he's ever loved in her hour of need.

*'If he took Elizabeth to Pemberley, he would be giving up the prospect of a future with another woman, and there would be no future with Elizabeth as his wife, as she was already married.'*

***Could I settle for another woman, knowing that Elizabeth is alive? Can I live with the prospect of caring for her a lifetime without being able to marry her?'***

Will Darcy succumb to the pressure of his responsibilities to marry and provide an heir for Pemberley? Will Lizzy ever recover? Is there any chance of a happy ever after for our poor couple!?

I thought this was a really inventive and unusual premise. Some elements reminded me of a story by Victorian author Wilkie Collins, called 'The Woman in White' which features a villainous Italian Count, sees a character presumed dead and touches on mental illness. It's certainly very sad to read of the circumstances that Lizzy has found herself forced into due to her mother's avarice. In some variations Mrs Bennet is shown to be pettily spiteful to Elizabeth but her behaviour here transcends the petty, it's genuinely evil!

I wasn't sure about the behaviour of some of the characters, Caroline Bingley in particular does something that I can't see her doing, as any shame on the Bennets is also shame on her, via her brother's family connection. Also, many of the characters are quite demonstrative, which surprised me a tad. For those who prefer to avoid them there are some sex scenes although they are not especially graphic.

There are some strong gothic elements in this story – madness, violence, villains, peril and high drama. The characters tend to be either good or entirely bad and every female who Darcy meets in society is abhorrent, they are either trying to catch his hand in marriage or secure him as a lover. This is certainly a gripping story, not the type of thing you pick up if you have 10 minutes here and there to fill, you need a good stint of reading time because I needed to know what happened next to the characters but was almost afraid to read on and find out! There is no need to worry too much as eventually no bad deed goes unpunished, rapturous happiness awaits the deserving and best of all, we see a victim become a victor. I would recommend this as an extremely romantic, extremely entertaining read but not for the Austen purist, as I felt this story had a more gothic romance feel than Austen feel to it.

*\*I received a copy of this book from the author for my honest review*

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## **Brittany says**

Absolutely fantastic!

This is another one of those books I kept just skipping over, and have finally decided to give it a chance. I

have been having a lot of luck finding good variations lately!

In this variation, Darcy leaves after Hunsford to visit his estates in Scotland and Ireland, to try to forget Elizabeth. Meanwhile Mr. Bennet dies, and Elizabeth's mother forces her to marry a very evil man, Count Stefano for money!!

When Darcy returns to Pemberley, he thinks that he has banished Elizabeth from his heart completely. The author has changed the story a bit - Wickham never goes to Hertfordshire, and never tried to seduce Georgiana, and believe she is supposed to be a few years older than she is in the book. They never directly say her age, but when Darcy arrives back to Pemberley, Georgiana has been married for a few years. Her and her husband, Evan Ingram live on an estate very close to Pemberley. Georgiana is elated to have Darcy back home at Pemberley, but is now on a mission to marry him off. She convinces him to unofficially court her sister-in-law Cecile, who is not very pretty, but is, of course, obsessed with Darcy. Darcy does so, trying more or less to convince himself that he truly is over Elizabeth.

After a while he finally starts to catch up on his personal correspondence he's been neglecting since his return to Derbyshire. He comes across a few letters from Bingley, who married Jane, frantically begging him for help on a matter who dares not write about. Feeling guilty about neglecting his friend for years, fearful of hearing about Elizabeth, he decides to test out his indifference to her by visiting Hertfordshire.

Bingley and Jane tell Darcy that Elizabeth is dead. OH MY HEART ACHES AT THIS. Darcy is so horribly devastated by this. He instantly realizes he was completely wrong, and that Elizabeth was the only woman he could have ever loved.

But things aren't quite what they seem. They tell him this fib, as it is what they tell everyone. She was supposed to be dead. Count Stefano tried to murder her in a fire, after shooting a child and her maid. Elizabeth tried to block them, and the bullet grazed her head, causing some...issues. The Count thinks she's dead, but she survives the shooting and the fire. Spirited away by a loyal servant, Elizabeth is in hiding at Netherfield.

Only, she's now in a fog. She isn't aware of her surroundings, she doesn't know anyone, she does not like to be near men, she clings to a little doll as if it's her own child, and...she can't speak. She doesn't acknowledge people when they say anything to her. She's in a mental prison. Bingley and Jane don't know what to do. They are fearful she'll be discovered, as Mrs. Bennet visits quite often, and forces her way into the house. Caroline is also a possible visitor. Elizabeth has a tendency to run away, as she thinks she's fleeing the Count.

So after they see how devastated Darcy is at her death, they decide to tell him the truth, in hopes that he will take Elizabeth to stay with him at Pemberley.

But before they can, he sees her.

What I loved about this novel: The entire plot kept me so completely captivated! I was on the edge of my seat a lot in this book. I also truly felt the emotions that they felt, as the author did a wonderful job describing them. This is a wonderful romance (Mature audiences only), and it all just wrapped up so nicely. It was long, but unlike Mr. Darcy's Forbidden Love, written by Brenda J. Webb, I didn't mind. I was kind of nervous when I saw how much of the book was left after things were resolved, but in reality there was a lot of loss ends, and they just had to be tied. I am glad she didn't really miss any. Cecile, Gwendolyn, Wickham, Stefano, and Mrs. Bennet all play the antagonists, and Darcy has a lot to go through to hide and protect Elizabeth. There was certainly plenty of obstacles along the way!

What I wasn't so fond of: I would have just liked to have seen a confrontation with Mrs. Bennet and Elizabeth. I feel like Mrs. Bennet doesn't suffer enough in the end (wow...that's not nice of me). Let's just say she does get what's coming to her, but I think she deserved more punishment. I also wish that Elizabeth's younger sisters were more involved in the story. Perhaps a bit more of Anne and Lady Catherine as well. Also, when Elizabeth meets the women of the ton, it is mentioned she deals with their barbs with grace and wit, but I would have liked to read some of that dialogue. But none of this I think is worth taking away a star - as I didn't dislike anything. I just would have liked to have seen more :)

Wonderful variation! Among my favorites now!

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### **Nicole says**

Fitzwilliam Darcy, An Honorable Man was an exciting read. In comparison to others, it was very unique. There were the great moments of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth's unconditional love and even blush inspiring parts. What was different was the excitement and suspense that the author elicited. MUCH more was going on than the customary angst of their relationship. Brenda Webb is a superb writer and was masterful in her arrangement. So much was occurring, yet it flowed easily and kept me intrigued. I highly recommend this book.

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### **Shy says**

This is not for the Jane Austen purists. If you only like P&P variations with a slight tweaking of the chronology and believe the characters themselves are sacrosanct then step away from this book! However, if you are open to exploring greater variation in the P&P setting then all I can say is that I highly enjoyed this inventive tale. First of all, the quality of the writing is above average for this particular niche genre. It reads very easily and is \*very\* hard to put down. This book is also a romantic's delight. Rather than the length of the book being occupied by Lizzy's and Darcy's tortuous journey through their feeling and only concluding with their understanding of the love they have for each other, they come to that understanding in themselves straight away and it is the external events of the story that they must overcome, not so much their own misunderstandings and emotions (though there's a bit of that as well). So if you're looking for pages and pages of Mr. Darcy showing his love for Lizzy then go nuts, this book is definitely for you.

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### **Erika says**

#### **I LOVED THIS BOOK!!!!**

Fitzwilliam Darcy: An Honourable Man by Brenda Webb is one of the best P&P variations I have read. Though this was Ms Webb's first baby, this was my second book I read. I have to say I was hesitant at first only because of the description stating Elizabeth was married already. I have such a hard time with either Darcy or Elizabeth being married to someone other than each other!!!! But was challenged to read it in my GRs group, though I would have eventually gotten to it.

This story starts out with Mr Darcy returning to England after two years traveling to his two estates in Ireland and Scotland. He exiled himself after the heart wrenching refusal of marriage by Elizabeth Bennet



while in Hunsford. A lot has changed in those two years, and it shows in his appearance and his manner. He left no explanation to anyone as to the 'why' he was away so long. In this story, Georgiana is older than in the original P&P and is married to a gentleman neighbor. She and Darcy share a very close bond, though when he up and flees out of the country mysteriously she worries, when he returns she starts to mother him and needle him into marrying and settling down with a family. She has the 'perfect' person in (her) mind and continues to through them in contact and work on him, against his desire or want.

Prior to leaving, Darcy apologizes and confesses all to Bingley, much earlier than in canon, which sends Bingley back to Hertfordshire to court and marry Jane. While Darcy is nursing his wounds, Mr. Bennett dies leaving Mr. Collins to inherit Longbourn and the Bennet women to rely on the kindness of other family. Elizabeth is courted (against her desire or Mr Bennet's wishes) by an untrustworthy Count. Elizabeth is drugged and taken off in the middle of the night to 'marry' and live against her will with him, and only Jane and Bingley seem to be concerned.

Now, I must insist you read the book to see what happens after this since I will not fully spoil the fun and heartache you will have by reading it yourself.

I have to say I loved how well developed the characters are, specially Mr. Darcy. I confessed that I loved Mr. Darcy even more after having read this book!!!! There are also the new characters such as, Evan Ingram (Georgiana's husband), Mr. Williamson (the vicar at the Meryton church), and Evelyn Fitzwilliam (Lady Matlock). They completed the story perfectly, joined with ones we love from the original like Col Fitzwilliam, Mr. Bingley, Jane and Georgiana. They all make it even much sweeter to read.

And of course what will happen to a story without villians. The typical villians like Wickham (whom it appears is not known to those in Meryton) and in this path also Mrs Bennet (one of the worst portrayals written), and those the writer created like Count Stefano (the devil incarnate), Mrs Preston (a sniveling, gambling society woman who is desperate), Jacqueline Leighton (wife to Edgar Leighton - brother to Col Fitzwilliam), and Lady Gwendolyn Waltham (a seasoned huntress with Darcy as her target). They added many courses that will be followed in the story. But do not worry, at the end they will have what they deserved. I do so love when the villains get the just desserts!!!!

What I wasn't so fond of: I would have just liked to have seen a confrontation with Mrs. Bennet and Elizabeth. I feel like Mrs. Bennet doesn't suffer enough in the end (wow...that's not nice of me). Let's just say she does get what's coming to her, but I think she deserved more punishment. I also wish that Elizabeth's younger sisters were more involved in the story. Perhaps a bit more of Anne and Lady Catherine as well. Also, when Elizabeth meets the women of the ton, it is mentioned she deals with their barbs with grace and wit, but I would have liked to read some of that dialogue. But none of this I think is worth taking away a star - as I didn't dislike anything. I just would have liked to have seen more :)

I would highly recommend this book to JAFFers who don't mind strong deviations from the original and also to Historical Romance lovers. This is also for MATURE audiences only!!!

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## **Leslie says**

I wanted to punch this book in the face.

A few weeks back I noted I had read this book and never wrote a review so I decided to re-read and review.

Sadly this was not one of my best decisions. This story suffers terribly in comparison to other books I have read recently. There are books I will say I can't put down, this was the opposite. I would put it down often.

Fitzwilliam Darcy an Honorable man is loaded with Angst, drama, intrigue, and scandal; but it is handled badly.

I hadn't read more than a few chapters when I began to think of this as a P&P / General Hospital mash up. Specifically the early 80s plot with Luke and Laura and the Cassadines (read about it here [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cassadi...](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cassadines))  
(view spoiler)

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### **Talia says**

I love this author's gothic romances. I think I have read them all now. Hoping she has another just around the corner. Love Richard and Darcy in this one. This story is out there but it is in the tradition of true gothic writing. Terrific!

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### **Sheila Majczan says**

I read the longer reviews and then had the "sample" sent to my kindle before purchasing this book. (Note: for those who don't have kindles you can read a sample on the Amazon site - "look inside" = "read a sample".) And now before posting this review I read ALL the reviews. This author stirred some passionate comments, both positive and negative. Personally, I expect a JAFF to vary (It is a variation!) from the canon. If I want the canon, I am re-reading P&P. (One person criticized using that abbreviation - really?)

This story definitely has a strong story line. I was fearful that there would be first hand descriptions of the abuse Elizabeth underwent at the hands of the Count but thankfully they are more in hindsight. (Not that this makes them less horrible, but it doesn't make me live through it blow-by-blow.) The scenes of Darcy weeping over her grave and of him seeing her walking in the storm are so stirring. I sit here with tears remembering the scenes. The author used such vivid words that I had no problem "seeing" these and other scenes in my mind.

There was just enough passion and "foreplay" between the main couple that I was holding my breath to read if they FINALLY consummated their deep love for each other. However, they continued to painfully NOT cross the last line. I love how the author actually had them marry (and what a story that rite involved) before that final step. Plus, I was gratified to read about the love of other married couples dear to our hearts - Jane and Bingley, Georgiana and Ewan gave us other secondary tales to follow. Enraptured with the story, I cared about whether the latter couple ever had children. I wanted to hug the former couple for going so far out-on-a-limb to care for and to seek a cure for Jane's sister and loved the way Bingley finally told Mrs. Bennett off and took action to cut her out of their lives.

As for the women drooling over Darcy, if one reads books about the British "ton", i.e., To Marry an English Lord, etc. one reads that affairs did go on between married and unmarried persons, even involving royalty. The idea of producing an heir and then having an affair seems more the norm than not. And with Darcy's looks, money, maturity and unmarried state he was a challenge. Jane Austen definitely had that in her book. That was part of the reason Meryton citizens reasoned he was "above" his company.

Part of the drama in this story is the peril into which Lizzy places herself by leaving Pemberley with Georgiana's step-sister-in-law. A few opinions/ideas: we read in Elizabeth's thoughts that she is fearful of what her relationship will do to Darcy, she is already considering leaving him to protect him and we read in the Bible, "Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for a friend". So Elizabeth's all-consuming love for Darcy could lead to her going off with Cecile Preston. My rationalization for what some say is improbable!

I liked the one reviewer's remark that this seemed a cross between Bronte's Jane Eyre and Jane Austen's P&P (Bronte would hate the comparison.) but I agree. Elizabeth's years with a mother who cared nothing for her, and a father who did little to guide his daughters and safeguard or plan for their futures compares somewhat with the darker childhood and teen years of Jane Eyre. And both love a man above their class.

I highly recommend this book and will be looking for this author's other book(s).

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## **Sophia says**

I've had my eye on this one since I saw a blog review for it some time ago. I was happy as a lark when I was offered it for review. Huzzah! Erm, um, I mean, sure I would be happy to read and review this book. Haha!

As a big Jane Austen and Austenesque fan, I adore reading creative variations on stories about Jane Austen or her characters. In the case of this book, it is a *Pride & Prejudice* variation. I know lots of people prefer their JAFF and Austenesque work close to the original telling or characters. If that is you? This story probably isn't for you because it takes off in an entirely different direction from the original. Character names, places and some events will be recognizable, but that's it. This was a delightful deviation and a creative page turning story in its own right. It gives a nod toward the gothic doomed love affairs of the day with a sinister, mad villain, a tragic hero, a Perilous Pauline heroine, and a vast array of secondary characters to fill out the cast. It is a hefty story with a vast deal going on to keep the reader entertained with more than one plot thread. Honestly, some of the side stories were as engaging as that of the main couple.

The story assumes the reader is at least slightly familiar with the original *Pride & Prejudice* story though its not absolutely necessary that the reader had read or watched it. To give a starting point to those that are familiar, it begins about two years after a disastrous wedding proposal scene at Hunsford when the heroine rejects the hero utterly and completely. Darcy arrogantly and confidently thought Elizabeth would not only welcome his proposal, but look on it as a godsend since she came from lower gentry stock and he was wealthy with aristocratic bloodline. Yeah, no, not so much! She wasn't impressed and sent him off smartly. Darcy is devastated and leaves everything behind for two years trying to get over his misplaced love meanwhile those back home don't live in a vacuum.

Darcy returns to find a sister so happy to have him back and worried about his emotional state that she is matchmaking in earnest for him with her husband's sister. He discovers that his friend Charles Bingley married the sister of the woman he loved and hoped to marry, but Charles is desperate for his help with some matter. Darcy's cousin Anne was importuned by a scoundrel. And he truly believes he is ready to move on and that Elizabeth is firmly in his past. Ha! No, not hardly. But it takes a half-lie to bring him to his senses before he settles for the wrong woman.

Charles and Jane have been hiding her broken sister who went through such trauma that now she doesn't speak, doesn't seem to be a part of reality, has violent reactions to certain triggers and has a habit of escaping so that the people of Meryton are convinced a ghost walks among them. Elizabeth was betrayed by her own mother and given to a man she despised who ran her to Gretna Green and treated her abominably before she was thought to have died in a fire that consumed the home he held her prisoner in. The Count would come after her if he thought his wife lived and her mother would return her to him so the Bingleys hide her. They know it is only a matter of time before she is discovered and she is too much for them in her current condition so they form a scheme to appeal to a man they suspect loves Lizzy.

Darcy comes up to scratch and takes on the task of hiding his beloved Elizabeth and working to restore her mind. It is arduous and hard on him. He knows that if even a part of the truth is discovered that both their reputations and place in society will be done for, but he has a second chance with the woman he loves and he's taking it.

Meanwhile, scheming women, well-meaning family, greedy villains and despair for Elizabeth's recovery keep Darcy busy enough not worry about a little thing like reputation. It takes the support of his true friends and some luck to save him and Elizabeth from the trouble circling. But in the end, he wonders if she can accept that he has changed and can they both accept their new situation since she is still a married woman.

As I mentioned before, this is an exciting and venturesome take on the characters. There is a lot of drama, intense build up and exciting moments that kept me preoccupied. Several plot threads were part of this book and multiple narrators though Darcy was the most prominent. The historical backdrop is good and stretches from country estates and rural social life to the glittering ballrooms of London society. The pacing varied so

that sometimes it just flew along and other times it meandered. I enjoyed both the tense scenes wondering how the hero or heroine would get through something and the scenes that gave a snapshot of family life, time with friends or romantic development.

This story was not shallow, but it was a bit thin on character development. Characters tended to be a strong version of whoever or whatever they were though I do think Darcy's sister, Georgiana, who was a favorite for me, had some moments of growth as she worked through her feelings about Elizabeth being in her brother's life and letting her brother live his life without interference even though she means well.

I suppose this wasn't meant to be like this, but I kept thinking that Darcy is a bit of a rock star of the day. It was hilarious that he could walk into a ballroom and every woman, married or single, old or young was ready to swoon or toss their knickers at him. How could Lizzy resist this hunk of irresistible man, right? The scheming women after Darcy do take up a vast deal of the story, but since I found it amusing I went with it.

Darcy is the romantic figure. He screwed up when he got all high and mighty with the woman he loved, then he tries to forget her assuming that she will never change her mind, then he makes a huge sacrifice to have her with him even if she is a broken shadowy version of the woman she once was. He acted arrogant with Elizabeth before this book picked up the story, but the Darcy of the story is a changed man. He's actually pretty shy and sensitive so that it is painful to him to be an object to the women who notice him for his looks and wealth. His cousin, Richard, and his brother in law and Charles Bingley are his friends and they see the real Darcy. Richard isn't above harassing him about it all, but he totally had Darcy's back through the whole story and I loved it.

Madness was also a theme. Elizabeth was temporarily in a state of madness as a result of head trauma and long-term abuse and the fiend that married her, The Count, is most definitely mad. Oh and hey, some of the Darcy fan-club of women might have gone a bit mad too. I've read what it was like for those considered mad back then and the conditions of places like Bedlam so its a very serious and dangerous thing to be considered mad. So the fact that first Charles and Jane and then Darcy, hide Lizzy and try to get her help in private is a huge deal. The thing about women of that time being the property of their husbands and having little independence was also a factor in why they were so keen to keep her away from The Count or from the knowledge of Society. Parents could push their children into horrific arranged marriage situations (I felt so sorry for Richard's elder siblings that had sad marriages). Guys back then could beat their wives black and blue and this was not a crime by law and few saw it as a moral crime either (okay some did, but not enough). Definitely makes one grateful to live in the times we do.

Of all the characters, Lizzy is probably the one I least connected with though I don't mean this to say that I didn't connect at all or hated her. I am totally sympathetic to what happened to her as a result of a horrid mother and a villain. She experienced so much and it was no wonder that she retreated inside her head. But she is also the type of heroine that is always in need of rescue (by no fault of her own to be sure). She isn't a stupid heroine that rushes headlong into danger without thought, but she is the type that stuff happens to her making her reactive instead of proactive most of the time. Her big moments tended to be the 'I must leave because I'm a trouble magnet and I don't want to bring it all down on my friends' with the exception of her gumption during the climax to actually save Darcy's life. And because of the direction of the plot, I'd have to agree with her there, but I do wish to have seen some of the fire that made Darcy love her in the first place.

The strong thread of family and tight-knit friendship was most welcome. I loved the interwoven stories of Evan and Georgiana, Charles and Jane, Richard and the rest of the Fitzwilliams, the servants and even the obvious opposites like Caroline, Mrs. Preston and a few other of the women. Darcy and Lizzy are surrounded by others going about their lives and the romance isn't told in isolation. This was a nice strong

point. In fact, this book has the longest denouement that I've ever read I think as it gives a lot about what happens after the Happily Ever After.

So, I had a really good time with this one and look forward to more from the author. I would definitely recommend it to Austenesque fans who don't mind strong deviations from the original and also to Historical Romance lovers who enjoy a pinch of spice and drama to their reading experience.

My thanks to the author for providing a copy of the book in exchange for my honest review.

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### **Vaarin says**

Unputdownable!

This story made me laugh and cry and every emotion in between. I physically got goosebumps all over, by a scene with Mrs Reynolds towards the end. I like to be moved and this book moved me in every possible way. I absolutely love it!!!

With strong references to the 2005 movie, this heart-wrenching, romantic, passionate and thrilling read is probably the best "what if" I have ever read.

It's like Brenda Webb has read my mind of how a perfect variation of P&P should look like and then executed it to perfection. I loved both this Elizabeth and Darcy. There is a lot of interaction between ODC and it's more of a them against the world kind of plot rather than them at odds... Their understanding of each other comes fairly early in the story which leads to a lovely sprinkling of spicy meetings through the book. 441 pages of utter perfection, not a dull moment in sight.

Darcy has spent the last two years travelling Scotland and Ireland to forget his ladylove due to being rejected after his proposal in Kent. Finally feeling sufficiently recovered to go home he returns to Derbyshire and Georgiana. Georgiana is ecstatic to see her brother home and immediately starts to throw him in the path of eligible ladies, thinking if he marries he will stay at home.

Meanwhile, Charles and Jane are desperately seeking his aid with a difficult and dangerous problem. Elizabeth is dead after a fire at her husband's estate or is she...?

I adore this book and heartily recommend it!

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### **Jennifer says**

Wow! What a great story. There was angst, gossip, adventure and of course lots of romance. I loved Fitzwilliam in this one! He had a rock star like status in this one among the ton and I felt like every woman wanted him. So much happened in this story that it really could have been two books. If you love JAFF you'll love this. ♥?

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### **Mary says**

This was a great read - one filled equally with worry, angst, love, humour, despair and thankfully a happy ever after for our beloved couple. Lizzy and Darcy behave as Jane Austen wrote them -there is a very strong

connection both physically and mentally between, which is moving to witness. Having weathered their fair share of turbulent times, we are relieved to see them happily united as a strong, united couple relishing in their happiness and able to withstand whatever the winds of change shall bring. I recommend it to Austen fans.

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