

WARMEST REGARDS,

Eliza B.



KEELY R. PALMER

Letter to the Reader

My name is Eliza Bennet. I know what you are thinking. Yes, my last name is Bennet, and yes, my parents decided to name me Eliza. They wanted it to be close enough to Jane Austen's famous Lizzie Bennet, while still allowing me to be my own person. Instead of the usual bedtime stories that parents read to their kids, my mom would read *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*. I loved it. Even after my mom left, I loved reading Jane Austen's books. Somehow it made me feel a little less alone.

Anyway, during my fall semester of freshman year, everything started to change. All of this happened because I took one class, a class that I didn't even want to take in the first place. The professor that was in the room while they showed us how to sign up for classes, pushed that this was the best class ever. Of course, it was her own class so, there was some bias, but she seemed like a pretty cool person. So, I decided I would go for it. What would be the harm? The class was ENG 324 *Adapting the Classics*, which didn't sound like too bad of a class. It was rather small compared to the

other ones that I had signed up for during that semester.

There were twenty-five people in the class. Thousands of students attended the college, but in that class of twenty-five, I found relationships that will last forever, and I found the strength to let go of others that I no longer needed.

To think, if there had been someone else helping me pick classes, I might not have taken that one. I might not be the person I am today. It is funny how things end up. There are so many things that could have changed me meeting those two obnoxious boys, but fate or some other mystical force was on my side.

The following is a recounting of what happened my first semester: how everything that I thought I knew was turned on its head. I am now in my final semester, so some details have become a bit fuzzy, but don't worry because the important moments are permanently ingrained in my brain, even more so than my favorite Jane Austen novels. Plus, being the organized person I am means that I have kept all my work from the class, and it has all been kept in pristine condition. Okay, so maybe not in pristine condition. It has been moved

*around a lot and there might be some bent pages,
but that is beside the point.*

*Warmest Regards,
Eliza B.*

August

Dear Jane,

I know this letter may seem out of the blue and strange. Why would I be writing a letter to you after all this time, it is not like you are going to respond. Yet, I think that is the reason I am writing. I don't need a response; I need someone to listen, or at least I need to feel like someone is listening. So, for that purpose, I think you are the right person to write to.

Lately, I have been thinking about the Regency-Era and how it has become popular again due to a Netflix show called *Bridgerton*. I was avoiding it for so long, but I finally caved and watched it. I have zero regrets. I have always wondered what it would be like if I had gotten to live during that time, but I don't think I would do so well. I am not one to go out to dances and try to fetch myself a husband. I would much rather sit back and watch everyone else fight for love. I am not exactly a romantic at heart, but even so, I fell in love with *Northanger Abbey*; it is by far one of my favorite books. Frankly, I can relate to Catherine's mother never really being around, which makes sense given that she is so busy with the other kids. Of course,

Pride and Prejudice is also up there for one of my favorites, especially as I feel like Elizabeth is my spirit animal. She is smart and couldn't care less about finding a guy to marry. I still remember the first time I ever read the book. Well, I didn't read it; it was read to me; I was a little too young to read it myself.

Anyway, I have been trying to get my friend Jenny to read *Pride and Prejudice*, but she is being as stubborn as ever. I think she could really learn a thing or two from Elizabeth, or at the very least learn that not everything has to be about finding a guy. She keeps telling me that my life is going to be very sad if I avoid love, but I don't think so. I am perfectly happy with my life at the moment.

Okay, enough about my non-existent love life and the annoying assumptions made by those around me, as I am sure you know all about the struggles that come with leading a single life. What I really wanted to talk about is that I am off on a grand new journey: college. I am so excited to be at a place where people actually want to learn and gain a greater understanding of life. But most of all, I can't wait to meet other English majors and discuss their favorite authors and books. Hopefully,

I can meet some fellow Janeites. Oh, and then we could start a book club, and look into the adaptations and watch the movies that have been made. I can't wait!

But yeah, I wanted something to ground me throughout this changing time, and I thought I would write to you. Jenny doesn't get the whole not looking for love. She has this idea that she wants to get married as soon as she graduates. I think her mom calls it ring before spring. It is this weird thing where you try to get engaged before the spring of your senior year. I know crazy right! I would get disowned if I went to college just to find love.

I need to bid you adieu, as we are pulling up to the building now. I can't wait to see where I am going to be living and get my stuff unpacked. It is going to be a great time; Jenny will make sure of that. I will write soon!

Warmest Regards,
Eliza B.

Chapter 1

The dorm is empty, or at least it feels empty. Everyone seems to be off at classes, or sound asleep. I am wide awake. How could I possibly sleep when in under an hour I will be at my first ever class for college? Oh god, in just under an hour I will be at my first ever college class. My heart begins to pound in my chest as I think of the many ways I could embarrass myself. What if I walk into the wrong room or I can't find a place to sit? Or what if I find a place to sit and then realize I am in the wrong room. I would have to get up in front of everyone and leave, and then I would be late for the actual class. I would have to walk into everyone staring at me. My brain continues to spiral down a very fun path of embarrassment, but a click at my door snaps me out.

Jenny walks in, a bright smile on her face, "Good morning." She slings her backpack down at the foot of her bed before she hops up on her bed. The mattress bounces slightly before settling. Her eyes bore into me with her smile still shining.

I laugh and roll my eyes, "How was your first class?"

Jenny lays back on her bed, "Oh, you know, it was class." She tries to shrug it off but ends up barely pausing before sitting up, "Oh, it was amazing! I felt like the coolest person ever, casually walking across campus to get to class. The summer breeze rustling my hair. I felt like an adult."

My face scrunches, "Uh, I think adulthood would be a lot more fun if it only involved walking while your hair blows in the wind, but last time I checked I think you might be missing a few things."

A pillow flies at my face, "Oh shut up!" She laughs, "Let me have my moment. You don't get it because you haven't had your first class yet. But just you wait, it will be

awesome. Plus, you get to walk to class with a pro.” Jenny flips her hair over her shoulder.

“You went to one class; I would not call you a pro.”

She sits up a little higher, “Maybe not a pro, but I am older and wiser.”

“You are only older by a few months, and as for being wiser, well, that’s debatable.” I jump off my bed and walk over to my desk, rechecking my backpack. I packed it last night, but I need to make sure that everything is still exactly where I put it.

“How wise I am is not up for debate. Are you seriously checking your bag again? You already did that like three times last night. What do you think you are going to forget; you only have two classes today? Just throw some paper and pencils in there and you will be good to go.”

I sigh, “I know, I wanted to make sure I had everything. I promise I will stop looking.”

“Omg, you know what you should not stop looking for,” She pauses, waiting for me.

I turn to look at her “What?”

“A beau.” She makes a heart with her hands and pouts out her lower lip.

I shake my head, “Only you would already be thinking about that. You know, some of us are more concerned about getting our education. Sure, if someone comes around that’s great, but right now my only focus is school.”

She scuffs, “Where is the fun in that? I am going to meet the one here, I can feel it.”

“You did not just say ‘the one’.” I gag, “Like no, no. You are eighteen, you cannot seriously be out looking for the one. There isn’t even a thing as the one, that is just in books or movies. It is a fictional idea.”

“It is not. Trust me, you will learn. Some day you are going to see a guy and it will be love at first sight.”

I audibly sigh.

She points at me “Don’t, don’t take this away from me.”

I hold my hands up in defense, “I wasn’t going to say anything.”

“Sure.” She shakes her head, “Hey, you want to go to the coffee shop before class? I need a caffeine fix if you are going to be grilling me on my love choices.”

“Yeah, that sounds good.”

I grab my bag and sling it over my back. I slide into my favorite pair of Crocs.

“Please tell me you are not wearing,” She looks me over from head to toe, “that”. She takes a step back.

“What is wrong with a t-shirt and shorts?”

She pouts, “Oh honey, it is the first day of class. Don’t you want to look cute?”

“Hmm, yeah, I am not trying to impress anyone or get a ring by spring, so, I’m good. We should get going though, I am really going to need that caffeine if I am going to deal with your boy craziness.”

“Fine,” she resolves and picks up her bag, “Let’s go.”

I grab my ID before opening the door and walking into the hallway. As we step out of the building, the warm air wraps around me. A smile comes to my lips. This is pretty cool. Jenny looks at me, eyebrows raised. I shake my head at her, “Don’t say it,”

“Don’t say what?... I told you so.”

I swallow my pride down, “Yeah, so it does feel pretty awesome walking to campus. All the gorgeous trees and the warm breeze, it is perfect.”

The walk to the main part of campus is short, almost too short with such nice weather.

“I know right, we totally made the right decision coming here. Anyone who doesn’t like the nature side of campus is insane and clearly didn’t see the campus before they decided.”

Jenny grabs the door to the main building. Cold air floods out of the building, chilling me instantly. We turn the corner and walk up to the counter where a barista awaits us. As soon as we order our coffees and sit down, more people start to enter the small cafe. A line forms at the front counter.

“I guess it was a good thing we left when we did.”

Jenny doesn't reply, she seems to be staring at something or someone.

“Eliza. Jenny.” The barista calls out, setting the coffees at the end of the counter. Jenny jumps up to get them, not bothering to even look at me, and that is when I see what she was so eager about. Standing at the front of the line are two guys. I guess one might say that their smiles are dazzling, but I wouldn't. They are ordering coffee, there is nothing special about them, but Jenny sure doesn't see it this way. She makes sure to take her time grabbing the drinks so she can run into them. They stop walking to talk to her. Not like that was a question. People always stop to talk to Jenny. But I just want my coffee. At that moment, the guy standing next to the overly friendly one looks over at me. His eyes brushing over me. And when I say brush, I mean quite literally. It was a slow glance that was strangely over before it even began. He grabs his friend's elbow and walks to the opposite side of the cafe. Rude.

Jenny walks back to me and sits down with a soft sigh.

My hand comes up to rub away the oncoming headache, “Oh brother.”

“Yeah. They are.”

“I'm sorry, what?”

“They're brothers. Can't you see us falling in love with them and then we could be officially sisters? Oh, and our kids would be cousins and spend all of their time together.”

My eyes widen, “Woah, earth to Jenny, slow down. We just started college, don't plan the rest of our lives out.

Plus, your plan won't really work out because that is not happening."

The bliss fades and she stares me down, "What do you mean that won't work? He is hot, they both are. My mother will love them, I mean did you see the Rolex on his wrist, they are loaded."

A laugh escapes, "Of course, that is the only reason your mother would love them for. Seriously, I thought you were able to learn from spending time at my house that money isn't everything, smarts are important too!"

"I know it is not everything, but it is nice to have someone who is good to look at."

"Only you would say that."

"Eh, I think a lot of people would say that."

A loud commotion from across the room grabs my attention. The two brothers seem to be in a heated discussion, one that is not only disrupting us but other tables as well. Yet, they don't seem to be noticing the attention that they are drawing.

"You really want to get involved with all of that," I say.

"With what? They are just talking."

"They are causing a scene." My statement hangs in the air. Jenny stares at me, eyebrows knit together.

"What are you talking about?"

I roll my eyes, "Oh, come on, they have everyone staring at them and they still are being obnoxious."

"You are insane. The only reason people are looking over there is because the TV is right above them. People are trying to see what's happening around campus this week. No one is looking at them, they are just talking."

"Yeah, because everyone in here wants to see what is going on this week. Trust me, they are being obnoxious. I know these kinds of guys; they don't care about anyone but themselves. They probably are really arrogant too."

“Okay,” She says drawing out the second letter, “Uh, you know we should probably get going to class. We can get there early and find a spot in the front.”

I glare over at the brothers one more time, “Yeah, that sounds good.” I collect my bag and coffee and walk around the tables to the exit.

As we pass by the brothers, I hear the brooding one, “She’s okay, I’ve seen better.” I have to fight every urge to turn around and talk some sense into him. I just know he is talking about me; I mean, he wouldn’t be talking about Jenny. I knew I was right; he is just one of those people.

Chapter 2

“Hello, class! My name is Dr. Polly Hill, and this is English 324 Adapting the Classics. Hopefully, that is why you are all here. If you are not here for English 324, you are in the wrong room, so get out while you still can.” The smile reaches to her eyes as she laughs.

I follow her every movement, entranced by her commanding demeanor.

“This class is going to be a lot of hard work, but it will also be a lot of fun. Of course, that is up to each and every one of you.”

I am so focused on her every word that I almost don't notice the door opening. Unfortunately, I do notice it. My eyes glance at the clock: 9:25. Five minutes late. Huh, that won't make a good impression. I peek over to see who is already behind on the first day. My jaw drops when I see the two guys that walk in. There is no way that this is happening. They are so not in this class; they have to be in the wrong room.

“English 324?” Dr. Hill questions.

The friendly one nods enthusiastically.

“Great, take a seat. Oh, and don't make it a habit to come in late to my class. That goes for all of you...” she continues on, but I miss what she says. Jenny is waving them over. I look around the room and notice that there are only two open chairs, and it happens to be right across from us. I kick Jenny's leg.

She looks over at me, “Ow,” she whispers under her breath. “What, you want them to stand in the back of the room?”

I contemplate this, nodding my head up and down.

“Oh, stop it. They are perfectly fine.”

They sit down across from us. Jenny shoots them a smile that is way too big and too bright, whereas I let out a

breath and try to ignore the brooding one's eyes that bore into me.

“So, without further to do, let's get started. I want everyone to introduce themselves to those at their table. All the normal things: name, major, year, and then your favorite author and book.”

The room erupts in chatter, but our table still stays quiet.

Jenny leans over to the friendly one and begins talking, leaving me and the brooding one. He stares at me and I stare right back at him.

“Eliza. Bennet. First year.”

“Fitz Derby. Second year.”

The silence cloaks over us. My mouth goes dry as I try to swallow. He is not even trying.

“Creative Writing major.”

He crosses his arms across his chest. His t-shirt tightening around his biceps.

“Same.”

I sigh, “Favorite author?”

“Shakespeare.”

I snort.

He raises his eyebrows.

“You can't be serious. Shakespeare? What's your favorite play?”

He licks his upper lip and then smirks, “*Taming of the Shrew*.”

“Of course, I should have known.”

He leans towards me and I can't help but lean forward as well, “And what is your favorite Shakespearean play? *Romeo and Juliet*?” He mocks.

“Oh god, no. Get the star-crossed lovers out of here. No, the best Shakespeare play is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Puck completely steals the show. You get humor,

mischievous, love, human ignorance, it is amazing, and it is even better if you can see it performed live.”

“Okay, so you are not completely against Shakespeare, I guess that is redeemable. So, who is your favorite author then?”

“Jane Austen.”

“Woah, woah, woah. Hold up, you just insulted Romeo and Juliet for being star-crossed lovers, and then you turn around and bring up Jane Austen. Like all her books end in marriage.”

“I never said I was against marriage or romance. I am against the whole love at first sight thing.”

“Oh, so you like *Pride and Prejudice*.” He shrugs, “Fitting miss Eliza Bennet.”

I wag my finger at him “Oh no, no don’t do that. Yes, *Pride and Prejudice* is amazing, but my favorite has to be *Northanger Abbey*. I mean Austen, Gothic lit, and meta storytelling. I mean yes, please!”

He nods, “It still is a pretty basic answer to who your favorite author is.”

“Okay, Mr. Shakespeare.”

A giggle pulls both of us out of our quarrel and over to the other two at the table. In the time that we had been talking, Jenny and the friendly one have moved from sitting across from each other to sitting right next to each other. Her hand rest on his arm and their shoulders are practically touching. I look back at Fitz, who is still across from me, arms still crossed. Then I notice that my arms are also crossed, so I quickly uncross them.

“Well, they seem to be getting along, quite nicely.”

“Yeah, well, that is Jenny Hertford, for you.”

“Pfft, that is Chip.”

I look at Fitz, my eyebrows raised.

“Short for Charles. His name is not actually Chip. We have called him that since, well, since forever.”

Dr. Hill walks in front of the board and the chatter dies down. Jenny scoots her chair back next to me.

“Okay, so now that we know a bit more about one another, we can get into the meat of the class. In this class, we will be doing a semester-long project, where you will create an adaptation of your own. This can be whatever you want, a script, a book, a short film, even a graphic novel. You will be working in groups of two. Based on your interests, I will be separating all of you. On Canvas there is a spot called project topic. You will submit what you want your end project to look like and possible books that you wish to adapt. Please do this before the next class.”

She grabs a stack of papers from the corner of the front table and begins to pass them out.

“Here is an overview of the project, read it, live it, love it. If you have any questions, please consult this handout before coming to me. If the answer is not on the handout, you are more than welcome to come see me. My office hours are at the top of the sheet and if that doesn’t work, I would be more than happy to set up a meeting outside of those times.

As soon as the paper is placed in front of me, I am paging through, soaking in as much information as possible. My brain is already going through all the possible books I could use. Of course, it would have to be a Jane Austen novel, that way I could do an epistolary novel. It would be a great challenge, and with a partner, it could be a lot of fun. We could switch off writing back and forth, each of us a different character. A smile plays at my lips.

Jenny scoffs, “You so already have this entire project planned out. It is the first day of class and you don’t even have a partner yet. You should slow down, wouldn’t want you to plan the rest of your life out.” She jokes.

For the second time today, I kick her shin.

She leans over to whisper, “You are going to leave a bruise if you keep doing that.”

“Good,” I reply.

I look over at the brothers sitting across from us. They also seem to be in deep conversation, but I can’t make out what they are saying. When I look back at Jenny, she is practically drooling over Chip.

“So, you two really hit it off. Do you really think that it is the best idea?”

“Don’t bring your negativity over here,” She shuffles her chair a few inches away from me, “And it’s not like anything is going to happen. He barely even knows me.”

“Exactly, so what do you have to say for yourself?”

“What?” she feigns innocent. “He’s gorgeous!”

“Please tell me that is not the only thing.”

She sucks in her lips, “It started that way, but guess what, his favorite author is Charlotte Perkins Gilman. We got into this whole conversation about female authors from the Progressive Era. He is actually like pretty smart. But how were things with you and the brother, you seemed to be chatting it up?”

“Fitz? I mean, yeah. We were supposed to be talking.”

“Did he surprise you at all? I mean, he is not what you thought he was, right?”

“I wouldn’t say that. I mean, seriously, the dude loves Shakespeare, specifically *Taming of the Shrew*.”

“Well, I mean, there could be multiple reasons why he loves that play specifically, it doesn’t have to be the worst-case scenario. You know that, right? You always jump into pessimistic mode.”

I roll my eyes.

Dr. Hill clears her throat, “It seems like all of you are getting quite excited about this project, which makes me so excited. I know that this is going to be a great semester. Next class, we will have an intro to adaptations, and you

will all be getting your partners. I am going to let you all go early to continue thinking. Feel free to stay here if you want or leave and ponder ideas while wandering around campus.”

I slip the project guidelines into my backpack and throw my bag over my shoulder. Jenny is already standing next to Chip.

“I know you have one more class, but it isn’t for a while. We should all go explore. We could talk about the project it would be fun.” Jenny smiles while grabbing my elbow.

Fitz shakes his head. “Yeah, I’m good.” He walks out of the classroom without a second look back.

Jenny is still smiling at me. She keeps glancing over at Chip.

“Oh uh, I was just going to go find someplace quiet to think about the project while I wait for my next class. But you guys should go explore. I am sure you two will have a blast together.”

“Aw, that’s too bad.” She pouts for a split second. “Okay, well let’s go then.” She grabs Chip’s arm and practically drags him out of the room.

I shake my head. That girl is so obvious. I walk out of the room and towards my next building. There are large windows that I pass by, some with students sitting in. It seemed weird at first, but it actually looks like quite the comfortable hiding spot. The next open window. I drop my bag down and pull out my computer. I stretch my legs out and look out the window. There is a little pathway with a fountain and beautiful flowers. Yeah, this is going to be my spot.

Dear Jane,

Today was my first day of classes at college. I would love to say that it was amazing, and everything worked out perfectly, but there was this guy—isn't there always. He just seems so stuck up and rude. His brother seems like he is really sweet and friendly, and of course, Jenny (my best friend and practically sister) has fallen head over heels for him. Seriously, she would not stop talking about him all night. I tried to get a word in about some of the classes I was taking, but nope, she just wanted to talk about a boy.

I really wish I actually had you in my life, I feel like you would have the right thing to say. I need to channel my inner Elizabeth Bennet or Emma Woodhouse. They always were so strong and so smart. And me, well, I probably embarrass myself more often than not. Anyway, this guy, who is completely rude, doesn't care about anyone but himself has the audacity to sit across from me and then tell me that his favorite author is Shakespeare. Of course, the only correct answer, and what his answer should have been, was Jane Austen. I mean the enemies to lover's arch in *Pride and Prejudice* is amazing. Wait. I would like to

clarify that the enemies to lover thing, yeah, that is not what is happening with me and Fitz. We are just enemies, there is going to be no change in that, I promise you that.

On to the news that I was excited to share, I am going to be writing an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, for my adaptation class. It is going to be entirely in letters, and I am going to really work on my Regency-Era dialogue. I am so excited. Today we are going to find out who our partners are, and I cannot wait to see who I am matched up with. Surely another Jane Austen fanatic like me.

Warmest Regards,
Eliza B.

Chapter 3

Jenny and I walk into the classroom, finding the same spots that we sat in before. As I am getting settled, I casually look around. No Fitz or Chip, yet. The two seats across from us remain open, but I try my best to look as friendly as possible. At this point, I would be fine with anyone, just not Fitz.

Dr. Hill walks into the classroom and sets her stuff down at the front desk. My eyes glance over at the clock. Two minutes till the start of class. I look back at the door.

“Are you really that excited to see them?” Jenny questions.

“Pfft, I am not excited. I want to avoid them at all costs. Seriously, I don’t need them sitting over here again.”

Two girls walk up to the table, “Hey, is anyone sitting here.” They point to the chairs.

“Oh no, not at all. Go for it.” I rush to say, the smile on my face only slightly creeping out the two girls.

Jenny scowls at me right as Fitz and Chip walk in.

Chip looks at Jenny and then at the people across from us. He simply shrugs his shoulders and goes to one of the other open spots. Fitz on the other hand stares me down. Or at least it feels like he is staring me down. They find a spot behind us, and even though I don’t see them, I can still feel Fitz’s eyes on me like they are burning a hole through my skull. I can’t help but feel like he is mad at me for allowing other people to sit across from us. This is college no one actually has an assigned spot, so how mad can he really be.

“Okay, everyone. We are going to start class by finding out who all of your partners will be. Yay!”

I smile and lean forward. Jenny gives me the side-eye; she thinks I am crazy for being this excited about a project. In fact, she said that if I brought this level of excitement to my love life that I would have to be fending off suitors. Yeah, she said suitors, she is a little obsessed with

Bridgerton right now and would do anything to find her Simon.

“Sarah and James,”

I am snapped out of my thoughts when I hear the first partner’s names.

“Catherine and Henry, Jenny and Chip”

Jenny squeals beside me, like actually squeals. I am pretty sure she gets a couple of looks, but she doesn’t notice. She is already turning around in her chair to look at Chip.

At the sound of my name, I look back at Dr. Hill, “Eliza and Fitz,”

I know Dr. Hill is continuing to call out partner names, but I don’t hear them, I only hear Eliza and Fitz, like it is on repeat in my head. This cannot be happening. This project was supposed to be fun. I was supposed to get someone who liked Jane Austen, someone who wanted to do letter writing, not Mr. Shakespeare.

Jenny leans over to me, “I told you not to get ahead of yourself planning things, but don’t worry, this will be fun. We can all hang out now!”

I glare at her.

“Or not.” She whispers.

Dr. Hill has stopped talking and is turning on the projector. “Next class, if you could all sit by your partners that would be great, otherwise you will have to move around after class starts. We will have short breakouts throughout the class where you will be able to discuss with your partners about your own project.”

Of course, that would happen, I don’t know what could make this worse. Wait, I didn’t mean that. Fate don’t ruin me now.

The screen flashes to life and the word “Adaptations” fills the screen. Mindlessly, I reach into my bag and pull out my notebook.

My pencil at the ready to take notes.

Adaptations

August 2018

-Adaptations can come in many forms ex. graphic novels, movies, books, vlogs.

-Require you to retain the spirit of the original workⁱ

-Making the material modern can be tricky, as moral standards change over timeⁱⁱ

-Copyright Act 1842: translation vs. adaptation

-translation works to stay true to the original work as much as possibleⁱⁱⁱ

-adaptations are not translations they are interpretations; they have lives of their own—separate from the adaptation^{iv}

Project this semester:

-not simply rewrite an original work, but to move it forward in some way

-bring it into the current era

-look at the work from a new angle

-cut out, and change—put your own spin on it

“Alright, it looks like it is getting to be that time. I hope you all have a great weekend. It might be fun to meet up with your partner to discuss the project, right?”

There are a couple of groans, but mostly laughs.

“Okay, so you don’t have to meet up with them right away but start trying to figure out what you want to do. Trust me, you do not want to put this project off till the very end of the semester. Also, don’t forget to sit by your partners next week.” With that, she begins to pack up her stuff.

I grab my things and stand up, only to run into Fitz.

“Hey, partner.”

I ignore him and look over at Jenny for help. Unfortunately, she is a little busy talking to Chip.

“What, not happy about the partnership? I am sure we can work something out. It won’t be too bad, well as long as you do the work.”

I scuff, “Excuse me? Did you assume I wouldn’t do the work? If anyone is going to let someone down in this project, it is most definitely going to be you. I am the best partner anyone could have.”

“Let me guess, you take over and control everything. Newsflash that doesn’t make you a good partner. It makes you annoying, but sure if you want to do the whole project by yourself, by all means, go do it. Or better yet, why don’t you just go complain and get yourself a different partner.”

I breathe out a laugh, “Of course. Of course, you would say that. Did you even read the project guidelines? It says in bold letters that once partners are picked, we are not allowed to switch.”

“Yeah, but I didn’t pick you.”

I take a step back, annoyed by his nonchalance. This project is going to be awful. “I didn’t pick you either, but we have to live with it. That is what the rules say. So, let’s try to make it as painless as possible, okay?”

He shakes his head, “Okay.”

He turns and walks away, like actually just walks away from me. I am left confused and annoyed. Jenny and Chip already left, hanging on to each other. The only people left in the room are me and Dr. Hill.

“How are you liking the class so far?” She asks.

I look up at her, putting on a brave smile, “It is great, I love the topic, and I was really excited about the project!”

Her eyebrows raise, “Was?”

“Oh, uh. Yeah. I don’t know how well me and my partner are going to get along. We are kind of opposites.”

“Huh,” She looks down at her bag before back up at me. “That’s strange, you two seemed to be in a very deep conversation last class. When I walked by, I think you were debating Shakespeare. You two had a good discussion going, I figured you would be perfect partners. Plus, in your response to the assignment, you wrote about wanting to do an epistolary novel. I think that would be really interesting with two contrasting views, don’t you think?”

“I guess, but you can’t tell me he wants to write letters.”

“I don’t know what he wants to do. All he wrote was that he wanted a challenge, and you seemed to challenge him the other day. Give it a try, don’t be so closed off. College is a great time to explore. I need to get to my next class, though. Don’t be a stranger, I want to hear all about how this partnership goes.” She throws me a smile before heading out the door.

I walk out the door and to a new favorite spot of mine, the window that overlooks the garden area.

I sit down and can already feel my muscles begin to melt. I take in a breath and sink into the corner of the window, and stare at the water falling from the fountain. Opening my backpack, I grab my headphones and laptop out. The second my headphones are on, it is like I am in a completely separate world.

Someone walks by, but then stops and turns to sit on the other side of my window. I am pulled from my cozy haven, who would do that, this is my window. When my eyes meet his, I know exactly who would do it.

“Fitz.”

“Eliza.”

“What do you want?”

“Jenny said your next class was over here.”

“Okay, and?”

“Well, I thought about it and I don’t want you to completely take over the project, I am actually interested in this, so even you can’t ruin it for me. But I don’t want you to take over and drag me along the way.”

I look down at my computer and the document opened, which already has possible sources to reference for our project, “Uh-huh, that would be a good plan.”

I look up at him, if I come out and say what I want to do he is going to shut it down immediately, I need to go about this in a different way.

“So, you are interested in the project, that is good. But what I wanted to do would probably be too much of a challenge for you. I mean, you probably want to do something easy, something that you know, like an adaptation of Shakespeare.”

He licks his upper lip, “No, actually I want a challenge, something that will push me as a writer.”

“Oh, really,” My eyes widen in feigned shock. “Well, if you want a challenge, you know we could write an entire novel, but in the form of letters. I am sure you have never done something like that.”

He pulls his feet up onto the small bench-type area, “Hmm, sounds interesting. A Jane Austen epistolary adaptation, it is almost like you have been thinking about doing this the entire time.”

“Oh no, I just thought you were up for a challenge, and well this would be challenging for you.”

His eyebrows lift, “And why would you say that?”

I freeze. There is no way that he writes letters, it is obsolete for most people, right? “Because it is a challenging art form to do well.”

“Uh-huh. Okay, well, we will do your epistolary novel, we can even do a Jane Austen novel, but we are going to do *Pride and Prejudice*. Oh, and also, the writing, I want it to

be the untold thoughts of Darcy and Elizabeth, like behind-the-scenes diary entries, or like unsent letters.”

My eyes widen. That is actually a pretty good idea, “I don’t know I will have to think about it, but I don’t think it is too terrible of an idea.”

“Sure.” He smirks. “Well, I don’t want to take up any more of your time.” He stands up and leaves like he never even stopped in the first place.

September

Dear Jane,

Things have gotten much worse since I last wrote. I was partnered up with him. The devil reincarnate. Okay, that was a little harsh, but still, the fact that I have to now work with him is going to be awful. I think I at least am still going to be able to do the project that I want to do, but I am worried that he won't be able to do it like how I want it to be done. Like he is just going to mess it up. I wish I could do the entire project by myself. My professor is nice and all, but she seems to think that this partnership will be the best thing ever. Or she wants to see us crash and burn, I have not really determined that yet. I seriously think that this is not going to go well, but she was all upbeat.

In other news, Jenny is officially now dating Chip, so that is fun to deal with. I swear any chance that they can get they are spending it with each other. I am happy for her. I think they both really like each other, but I don't get to spend time with her anymore. Even when I hang out with her, Chip has to be there. Frankly, they have become that annoying couple that is morphing into one person. I am worried that this is all happening so

fast, but she is happy and as long as Chip doesn't ruin it, I will be civil towards him, but no promises to his brother.

School is school. The coolness from the first week has worn off and now it is back to being normal school. It is already September, and I feel like this semester is going to fly by. I am either in class, working on homework, eating, or chilling in the dorm. Jenny keeps telling me I am focused too much on school and need to let loose more. In October there is going to be this party or dance thing. I guess I might have to check it out, but I am going to end up third-wheeling the entire time, so I don't know how much fun it could actually be. But I do kind of want to check it out. They are giving it a Regency-Era theme. Weird, right, but ever since *Bridgerton* the Regency-Era has been pretty popular.

Warmest Regards,
Eliza B.

Chapter 4

“Okay class, listen up. Today we are going to be starting with a little intro on a couple of different types of adaptations out there. I know some of you are already eager to get a start on your project, so you may already know the pathway you want to go, but I urge all of you to keep an open mind. Don’t worry, there is still plenty of time to do the project, as we are still at the beginning of September. However, I would recommend that you decide by the end of the day the route that you want to go. If any of you have questions about your project, I have a little time after class or as always please come see me during office hours.”

The class nods along, well most of the class. Fitz is just sitting next to me. I know he is not looking at me, but I don’t like how I can feel his presence, like I know he is there. Plus, he put his backpack on the other side of him, so his chair is closer to me. I on the other hand put my backpack right in between us. I need as much space from him as possible, especially because he doesn’t seem to understand the concept of personal space.

“So, to begin, who knows of some different ways that adaptations occur?”

I raise my hand, ready to not think about Fitz. Dr. Hill calls on me.

“Book to movie.”

“Exactly, and I already have a couple of requests from some of you to do this type of work. Write up a screenplay, cast your actors, and film a movie or TV show. I am very interested to see how that goes. Any other ways that books can be adapted?”

A guy raises his hand and answers, but I can’t focus on him because Fitz is staring at me, and not like the, I am casually glancing over, more like, stalker killer vibes. I shift my chair over a little, trying to get as far away from him as possible. Why is he looking at me, doesn’t he have

anything better to do, I don't know, like pay attention to what is going on in class?

He turns his chair to face me, "So,"

My eyes widen in confusion. Is he really going to start talking to me in the middle of the class? I am about to berate him for talking to me, but then I notice that Dr. Hill has stopped talking and now everyone around the room seems to be talking to those next to them.

I look back to Fitz, "So..." I draw out the word, hoping that he will take the lead.

He raises his eyebrows, that stupid smirk cemented on his face. I want to chastise him for it but know that I was not paying attention in the slightest bit, so I have no clue what to even say.

But that stupid smirk should be wiped clean off his face. "Why don't you start?" I say pushing it on him, I mean it is clear he wasn't paying attention to what was happening in class, he was looking at me, right?

"Start with what?"

"You know what?" I jump back.

He chuckles, "Do you know what?"

"Yes, do you?" His eyes glance over at me.

"Yes."

We both go silent as we stare at one another. The room is still abuzz with the chatter from the partners around us. Of course, it has to do with our project. If I had been partnered up with anyone else, I would know what was happening right now. I would be talking with my partner, but no, I had to be with Fitz. The master of distraction.

"How is everything going over here?" Dr. Hill asks.

I paste on a smile, "Good, really good."

She raises her eyebrows, "That is great. You two seem to have everything under control. I knew you two would work well together. What did you both decide?" She questions.

I take a breath, my head spinning as I try to think of something to say.

Fitz tilts his head up towards Dr. Hill. “Well, we took some time outside of class to discuss the project. We both are very excited about it. We decided we are going to do an epistolary novel of the unsent letters of Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth.”

“Wow, that sounds very interesting. I will be excited to see what you do with that.” She nods before moving on to the next group.

“You’re welcome,” Fitz whispers, leaning forward in his seat.

I lean back in my chair. Of course, he wants to take all the credit for this. He feels the need to act like he rushed in and saved the day like he is some sort of hero. Well, he is not.

“For what?” I spit out.

His eyes lock on mine, “For saving you back there. You clearly had no clue what she asked about.”

I scuff at him, “I knew what she was asking about. You were the one that didn’t. It is obvious that you just said something and hoped that it was right. I am not like you, Fitz. I actually pay attention in class.”

“What makes you think I was not paying attention? It seems like you would have had to be paying attention to me to notice that.”

“It is hard not to notice when you have someone staring at you, don’t you think?” I snap at him.

“What makes you think I was staring at you. Don’t think that you are that special.” He gets up.

I shake my head, “What are you doing now?”

“Oh, it looks like you are very concerned with me. Don’t worry, I will be back.”

He walks out of the classroom and I can’t help but search around to see if anyone cared that he just got up and

left. But no, everyone seems to be going about their own business. God, college is so different.

Dr. Hill walks back to the front of the class, “We are going to look at a less popular mode of adaptation, graphic novels,”

Types of Adaptations

September 2018

-GRAPHIC NOVELS—often look down upon when the term comic is used

-helpful for bridging the gap and getting young people to be interested in classic literature

-simplifies difficult texts for younger readers^v

-rarely receive the same level of funding as other works like film or theater^{vi}

Fitz strolls back into the classroom and sits down in his chair. He stares at the front of the board. I glance at the table, but there is no notebook or pencil, not even a computer out. The slide changes and I frantically look back to the board. My hand speeds across the page as I write down the new information that is presented.

-Helpful for readers to empathize with the characters^{vii}

-Comics require readers to look at the work from multiple angles

-drawings

-text

-speed lines

SCREENPLAYS/Film- transferring a novel to film is difficult good novel does not equal good movies^{viii}

-Movies are not made to do books justice^{ix}

Just forget about him he doesn't matter. What matters is this class and taking in as much knowledge as possible. I focus on the words being scrawled on the page.

-Rectify problems and smooth inconsistencies in the novel^x

VLOG

Lizzie Bennet Diaries-

-picked a popular novel and one that no longer was copyrighted^{xi}

-heavy dialogue novel—perfect for vlog format^{xii}

-Most important thing to remember

you are not the original author, and you will not be able to write like them^{xiii}

-Make it your own

The only problem is, every time I have to look at the board, my eyes have to glance past him and his face. Dr. Hill stops talking, causing me to pay a bit more attention to her and less to the guy next to me.

“Now, I want you to talk to your partners. Discuss the ways in which you want to stay true to your adaptation, and how you want to enhance it. We have seen that there are multiple ways to do this, so think creatively and try not to get stuck with one train of thought. Think up multiple different ways that you could do this. This will be the last thing for class so, feel free to take all the time you want to discuss this, but please do discuss it. Other than that, you are free to leave anytime you want.”

Jenny looks over at me, “Hey you guys want to go to the library.” She nods towards Chip, “We are going to go work on our project, and I think I remember you saying that your professor canceled your second class for today. So, what do you guys say?”

Fitz is nodding, “Yeah, I would be down for that, Eliza?”

I fight the urge to roll my eyes, “Why not, we have to work on the project.”

Jenny squeals, “Yay, this is going to be so much fun!”

Chapter 5

Fitz leads the way to the library, then there is the happy couple; holding hands and sneaking kisses, and then there is me. I probably should have said no to this, but I want to get this project started. Maybe I could find a way that we can work on the project but never have to see each other. Fitz takes the stairs all the way up to the top level of the library.

“This is by far one of the best places on campus. There is not as much room up here, but people hardly come up here. No one will bother us.

Well, that doesn't seem creepy at all. Next, he is going to say that it is soundproof, and no one will hear our screams.

Fitz sits down at one of the smaller tables. Jenny and Chip disappear down a hallway. I let out a breath and walk over to the table and sit down. It is silent as I pull out my notebook and computer. Fitz stares at me, one of his more annoying qualities that I have noticed.

“So, we know what we want to do, but I think we should plan more of it out. Like where we want to go with it. Dr. Hill was talking about enhancing the adaption in some way. What are we bringing to the story by writing these unsent letters?”

He looks at me, eyes pouring into mine.

I stare back, eyes wide as I try to remember what he just said, “What?” My eyes flick down, and I run my hand through my hair. Seriously, do I have something on me? Why does he keep looking at me?

“Nothing, it's interesting.” He pauses, “I mean in class you are constantly taking notes, and with the project, you seem to want to plan everything out. Why not sit back and go with the flow? Take in your surroundings and play off of them.”

I squint at him, “No, we are going to plan this out. I want to create an outline. I want to know where we are going with this project.”

“Eh, I don’t want to do that. Since I am challenging myself, I think you should challenge yourself too. Therefore, no outline.”

“There is going to be an outline.”

“No, there is not.”

“Well, I am going to make an outline and you can’t stop me.”

“Go for it, but what are you going to do when I write my sections? Don’t you want something that is cohesive, something that enhances the adaptation in some way?”

I huff out a breath, “Fine, no outline.”

“Great, we should get started on the first letters.”

“Actually, I don’t really like writing when I am around other people. I will write my letter and then I email it over to you, then you could write your letter. We can just keep going back and forth.”

He smiles at me, “And then we will never have to see each other, except for class?”

“Right. I don’t need to see you any more than I already do.”

“Well, in that case, I can just leave. When you’re done with your letter, email it to me, I guess.” He stands up and storms off down the stairs.

I roll my eyes, “Of course he would leave. What did I expect? He always does whatever the hell he feels like, with no regard to anyone else. No outline, is he insane?”

My computer is aglow in front of me. Well, now seems like as perfect of a time as any to write about Mr. Darcy. I can understand Elizabeth’s frustration with men who act like they don’t care and would rather insult people than show kindness. My fingers fly across the keys in a rant.

By the time I look up from my computer, Jenny and Chip are walking down the hallway. Jenny smiles and runs over to me.

“Where is Fitz? We were going to head to lunch.” She pouts.

I shake my head, “Oh, uh, he had to leave. We figured out a way to do our project separately, anyway. So, it isn’t a big deal. You guys should head to lunch, I will grab something back in the room. I need to read over this letter.”

Jenny raises her eyebrows. “You need to read over a letter? Oh, for your project, right?”

“Yeah.”

Chip nods, “Your project sounds pretty cool, Fitz told me a little more about it. I think you two could put an interesting spin on things.” He smiles knowingly, but I have no clue what I am supposed to get out of it.

I stare back confused, but he doesn’t get a chance to explain before Jenny jumps in, “Our project has been going great. We are going to be doing a screenplay, we have been writing up the script, and guess who is going to be starring in it... Yours truly!” She squeals, not allowing a chance for anyone to speak. “I am so excited it will be great. Oh, and we might have some extra parts, so if you want to join in that would be fantastic.”

“Oh, I don’t know. You are more of an actor than me. I am not meant for the spotlight, that is all yours.”

“Like you could take the spotlight from me,” she laughs, “Well, have fun reading your letter.” She grabs Chip’s hand and drags him to the stairs.

I am back in silence, a silence that reminds me how secluded it is up here. I should probably go back to the room. I clean up and pack my bag before walking down the stairs and into the cool air. Living so close to water is awesome in the summer months, but it is also a downside as the breeze is killer in the fall months. I wrap my

cardigan tighter around my body as I walk between buildings.

Fitz probably wasn't upset with me earlier, he probably had something to do. But this partnership isn't going to work if he leaves every time things don't work out how he wants. Before I know what I am doing, I am walking towards the English hallway. Dr. Hill's door is open. I walk up and knock on the door.

She turns from her computer, a smile lighting her face up when she sees me, "Ah, Eliza, good to see you again. What is up?"

"Uh, yeah. I. I am really struggling with this partnership. Is there really no other option? I would be completely fine doing the entire project myself."

Her smile fades, "I am sorry, but I want you to work this out with Fitz. You know in life you are going to be partnered with people that aren't always the most agreeable, but you will have to keep working with them. It happens in workplaces all the time. You can either learn to work through it, or you can be miserable. I suggest finding a way to work through it. I wouldn't want you to feel miserable all semester. What is it he did that was so wrong?"

I am about to tell her about how he doesn't want to outline anything but decide against it, she will just tell me to work through it.

"It was nothing, in particular, our personalities clash. It seems like I can never really get any work done without causing Fitz to storm off. But you know what you are right we will work through it, somehow. I think I figured out a way to work with him, without actually working with him.

She raises an eyebrow.

"I am going to write a letter and then give it to him, and then he will write one. This way we can send them back and forth without having to really communicate."

Dr. Hill nods, “Okay, but you will have to get together at some point. Plus, in my class...”

“I know, but for now I think it is best that we stay far away from each other, except in your class of course.”

“Of course.”

“Actually, I wrote something up that I think could be used as the intro letter. Would you mind taking a look at it, make sure I am going in the right direction?”

She nods, “Yes, please. I am excited to see what you have.”

I grab my laptop from my bag and pull up the letter. “Okay, so I know it is not perfect and there are probably some grammatical errors, but ignore those, look at the content of it.”

She smiles, “Don’t worry, I won’t judge the grammatical errors, purely content, I got it.” She moves the computer around and begins to read.

I shift in the chair that is across from her. I watch her face to see if she has any reaction to it, but she still has the smile from before. Is that from my writing or is it still from before? Her smile slips. Oh no, maybe she doesn’t like it. She looks up from the computer and I try to look away, make it look like I was just chilling looking around the small office. When I finally look back at her, she is looking at the computer again. The smile is back on her face, at least I think it is a smile, maybe it is a grimace.

She looks up again, and this time I don’t have time to look inconspicuous. “Wow, that was interesting.”

Good, interesting, or bad. Good or bad.

“I think you really captured Elizabeth in this, and you captured yourself.”

“What? Myself?”

“Well, clearly all of this ranting is not just about Mr. Darcy. I think it could also relate to a certain partner that you have. Someone who now sits next to you in class.”

I scuff, “No, I mean sure he was the inspiration for the rant, but it does not relate to him at all. Fitz is the furthest thing from Mr. Darcy, and he will never be a Mr. Darcy. This partnership is not going to turn into some cute relationship thing. That is Jenny and Chip, but not me. So, don’t get any thoughts.”

She laughs, “Oh no, I did not mean that in any way. I know my students are not characters out of Jane Austen novels, I just, I liked how you used real-world emotions to bring Elizabeth to light. You put yourself in her shoes and I think that comes through. I think this is a great start. Do you have a plan for where things are going? An outline?”

Now it is my turn to laugh, “Oh no, we don’t because Fitz thinks he is too good for an outline.”

She holds her smile back, “Okay, that is fine, I think it could be fun to see where this ends up then. One of my favorite writing exercises is between a group of people, and you can only read the writing of the person before you. It creates a fascinating story when it comes together. Your letters will play off each other in a unique way.”

“Yeah, I guess that might be interesting. Thanks for talking. It made me feel a bit better about this project.”

“Glad I could be of help! See you, next class.”

I grab my bag, “Yeah, see you, next class.”

October

Dear Jane,

It is officially October. If I thought the semester was flying by before, it is the exact opposite now. Time seems to take forever to pass. Fitz takes forever to get letters back to me, which is stressing me out. If he continues to take this long for each letter, we will never finish the project on time. That is the other thing, even though time seems to be dragging on, all the final deadlines are starting to freak me out. This is going to be a lot of work, and Fitz is acting like it is no big deal. This is going to be a major part of our grade, yet he is just chilling. It is like he doesn't understand the value of working hard. Not like I am surprised. He and his brother live off-campus in a house, no, not a house, a mansion. There is no way two college kids can afford a house of that size by themselves. Our dorm room is smaller than the coat closet. It is insane. They try to talk it off like it is no big deal, but it made them sound richer. Chip said it was their winter home. Who has a winter home? Do they have homes for every season? Who has more than one house? I don't know it is insane, just insane.

The only good part is that I have not really talked to Fitz in a while. In class, when we have time to talk about our project, we will work on writing our letters. And I know what you are thinking. Why do you know so much about his house if you haven't talked to him? Well, Jenny goes over there all the time and constantly talks about it. There might have also been an occasion where I went over there for a tiny amount of time. But it wasn't for Fitz, it was Jenny. Something wasn't working out with the screenplay, and they wanted another set of eyes to look at it. Of course, by another set of eyes, they meant both me and Fitz, which was disappointing. But he stayed by Chip and I stayed by Jenny, so it all worked out, for the most part. There was one moment that I had left to grab a glass of water, and as I was walking back, I ran into Fitz. I wish that some of the water had spilled on him. Unfortunately, it was all on me. He apologized, gave me a towel to wipe up the water, and then disappeared. I was kind of annoyed. But then he came back with a sweatshirt. It was actually kind of nice. I ran to the bathroom and took off my soaked shirt and slipped on the sweatshirt. As I was putting it on, I

noticed it had a strong smell of cinnamon and cedar, and I am disappointed in how much I enjoyed it. It was like someone was giving me a warm hug, but that was probably because it was a warm sweatshirt and I had just been in a cold, wet t-shirt.

I know what you are thinking, and it is not the case. My life is not some novel, it is not a fairytale, and it is not some star-crossed lovers thing. Fitz couldn't be anything farther from Mr. Darcy. So don't get any ideas.

*Warmest Regards,
Eliza B.*

Chapter 6

Okay, so maybe I lied when I said that I had only been to their house once, but that doesn't mean it is like an everyday occurrence. I didn't want her to think that I was spending time at their house to get closer to Fitz because I am not. I am simply helping Jenny and Chip out with their project. They decided to be overachievers with their project, but it is not like it is a problem, they are with each other 24/7 at this time. I swear anytime I see Jenny she is like attached to Chip.

Right now, they are trying to act out one of the scenes that they wrote. And yes, we happen to be at their house, but that doesn't mean anything. It is easier to do project stuff here; it is a little challenging acting out scenes in a tiny dorm room. The scene in front of me stops as they break out into laughter.

“Okay, okay. I am going to go grab some snacks. I am sure you both are hungry for something other than that disgusting campus food.”

“Yes, please. Anything other than campus food would be amazing!” I say.

He leaves and Jenny bounds over to the couch, plopping down right next to me.

“Isn't he perfect?” She coos, leaning her head against my shoulder. “How did I get so lucky?”

“Lucky. I feel like you threw yourself into his pathway. I don't know how lucky that is.”

“Oh, shut up. I took the luck out of it. But I definitely fell hard for him. We are seriously like meant for each other. It is like he knows what I am thinking before I am even thinking it. I feel comfortable around him. To think my mom thought it would take until spring of senior year to find someone.”

My eyes widen, “Jenny! Don’t talk about it like that. Your mom is insane to put that kind of pressure on you, but what if someone overhears you saying those things?”

“What? My mom will be ecstatic when she finds out how rich he is. She will say that I finally made it. That I am set for life.”

I shake my head, “I mean yeah she will be pretty happy, but it doesn’t matter what she thinks, only what you think.”

“And I think I love him.”

I push her off of me. “You did not say that. You have known him for a little over a month, there is no way that you can say that you love him. You barely know him.”

“But I know him, and he is amazing.”

“I am thinking that you are a little too attached to him, maybe you want to pull it back. Take it a little slower.” I try to reason with her, but the doe-eyed look in her eyes means she is already too far gone.

There is a creak from down the hall. My head snaps up. Chip is probably back with the snacks. But he doesn’t come. I get up, “I will be back.”

“Wait, what? You drop that bomb and don’t let me even defend myself before you leave. That is not cool, Eliza. Not cool.”

I shake my head at her and walk down the hall. There is no sign of anyone having been in the hallway. It was as if they just disappeared. I am at the end of the hall when Chip comes around the corner.

“Wow, I didn’t know you were that hungry. I would have gone faster grabbing the food if I had known.”

“Oh no, no, that is completely fine. I was just uh. Oh, it was nothing.” I shake my head, “But you know Jenny is probably really hungry. You are totally spoiling her with all this food, she never wants to eat on campus anymore.”

“Who would?” Chip laughs.

I choke, “Fair point.”

We walk back down the hallway together. Jenny is laying on the couch when we get back, “That was so not cool, we were having a conversation. You can’t just get up and leave. That is so unfair.”

Chip throws a glance over his shoulder before he walks over to Jenny.

“Yeah, but I was done with the conversation, so...”

“Well, I wasn’t, and we are going to continue this conversation later.”

“Okay.” I nod and move to sit in one of the chairs that are next to the couch and grab a piece of cheese off of the board that Chip placed on the coffee table. Only someone who is rich would say they are getting snacks and come back with a whole charcuterie board. Seriously, I would be fine with a bag of chips, maybe some Oreos, now that is a snack, but finely chopped meats and cheeses, who are these people.

Jenny sits up and looks over at me, “You know you love to criticize me and what I do in my life, but I think we should look at you. I mean, how is your project going with Fitz. It seems like you hang out with us a lot, but I never see you here with Fitz. I mean, shouldn’t you guys at least talk to one another.”

“We talk. Well, not talk. We write letters, which is basically like talking. Plus, this way we are getting our project done without the meaningless small talk.”

“You mean arguing?” Jenny questions.

“Shut up.”

“It’s not like I said anything untrue.” She sucks her lips in, trying not to laugh.

I glare at her. “You know I don’t have to help with your project, right? I could just stay back at the dorm.”

“Don’t even, you love me, and you would do anything for me.”

I shake my head, “Yeah, I know. It seems to be a really bad habit of mine.”

We hang out for a bit longer. Jenny enjoying Chip’s company, me enjoying the food. As we are leaving, I notice Fitz make an appearance from wherever he had been hiding the entire time I was there.

Jenny and I walk out of the house as Fitz pulls Chip aside. I turn around and throw my arm around her shoulders, “We should do something fun, just the two of us.”

We get into her car and start the short ride back to campus.

She sighs, “Do you not like Chip?”

“No, Chip is fine, but I want to hang out, just the two of us.”

“Are we really going back to this conversation?”

My jaw drops, “You were the one that said we would talk about it later, and guess what, it is later.”

“Touché,”

“So...”

She shrugs her shoulders, “I don’t want to talk about it anymore, but we should hang out. Wasn’t there some Regency dance type thing tonight?”

My eyes widen, “You remembered.”

“Of course, you wouldn’t shut up about it. And you kind of got me excited about it. We can go, just the two of us. No Chip, and no Fitz.”

The smile slips from my face as I narrow my eyes, “Fitz, really?”

“What? You two have that whole hate you love you thing going on.”

I roll my eyes, “No, no, no. It is pure hate. I mean occasionally he will do something that is not terrible, but it is so rare. Sure, he has been doing his part in the project, but it doesn’t mean that he is not the actual worst.”

She parks the car, and we get out.

“Oh, and what exactly makes him the worst?”

“You know,” I say, walking ahead of her.

“No, I do not.”

“Yes, you do. He thinks he is so smart, just because he is older. He acts like the most important person in the room when he certainly is not. Plus, he is some rich kid.”

“And what is wrong with being rich?”

I laugh, “Everything! You lose all your values.”

“Hmm, interesting. That is not really what I have seen with Chip, but as you would say, I don’t really know him that well, and apparently you know Fitz way better than I know Chip. I am sure it has to do with all of that time that you two spend together.”

I lightly shove her off into the grass. She catches herself and shoves me back, “Hey, not cool.”

“Eh, you kind of deserved it.”

“Really, what about what I said was false.”

“Nothing, and that is why you deserved it. You are supposed to agree with me no matter what. You know, hate the people I hate, just because I do.”

She sucks in a breath, “Well, you do know that it kind of works both ways. You are supposed to like the people I like, just because I do. So, it looks like we are at a crossroads.”

“I never said I hated Chip, you seem happy with him and that makes me happy.”

“Aww, I never said I liked Fitz, I mean sure you two would be cute if you stopped with all your little banter. I want to make sure you’re not jumping to conclusions.”

I put my hand to my chest, “Me, jump to conclusions, never. But if I am being honest, you are kind of jumping to conclusions to. You and Chip have been together for over a month.”

“Woah, it has almost been two months.”

“Exactly. Do you really think it is such a good idea to jump into this with everything? Maybe you should slow things down a bit. You don’t need to see him every day or go over to his house every day.”

“And you should mind your own business.”

“Ugh, how you wound me.” We get to our building and I swipe my ID to let us in, “So, just how happy do you think your mom is going to be when you tell her?”

“Oh, she is definitely going to start screaming with joy. She might even want to take me out for a celebratory dinner.”

I smile “Yeah, I could see her doing that.”

“You know I could probably get her to let you come with too. You are practically like a daughter to her.”

“Spending the night with you and your mother.” I take in a sharp breath, “I think I am good. I don’t really need someone asking about my non-existent love life.”

Jenny swipes her ID and puts in the pin, unlocking the door to our room.

“Well, it’s my mom she always wants to know about everyone’s love life. But she doesn’t mean to make you upset. I am sure she just wants to be that motherly figure since, well, you know.”

“Since my mother abandoned me and my father when I was eight.” I fill in for her.

“Well, you didn’t need to say it. I know.”

“It is not like it is some secret. She left, and there is nothing I, or anyone else, can do about it. We just have to move on.”

“Great, so when my mom invites me to dinner, I will say that you are coming with!” She smiles.

I roll my eyes, “You suck.”

“Aw, I love you too!”

Dear Jane,

You will never believe what just happened. Everything was going fine; it was a perfect day. Okay, so it wasn't a perfect day. It has been raining since I woke up, and I have an assignment due tonight that I completely forgot about, but other than that things were fine.

Yesterday was perfect. It was just me and Jenny for the entire afternoon and night. After we left the Derby's house, we hung out and talked and then went to the Regency dance thing, which was really cool. There were not a lot of people there, but those that were there were Janeites, like me. I met some people that actually seem like they would be awesome. Like they would have been perfect to do the adaptation project with. Then after the dance we went back to the dorm and watched *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, which cannot live up to *Pride and Prejudice*, but it is hilarious seeing the Bennet sisters look for love while fighting off zombies.

Anyway, Jenny gets a text out of nowhere and she runs to the bathroom crying. By the time she came out, she was still sobbing her eyes out. It took her forever to say anything to me and when she

did; it came out more like a strangled cry. I was able to get her calmed down a little more over time, and I found out that Chip broke up with her.

I can't help but think back to when we were talking in the Derby's basement there was that sound: a creak. Someone had to have been listening to us, and I bet I can guess who it was. It is not like Chip would have overheard that and acted like everything was normal. It had to be Fitz. I can't believe him. He has to ruin everything. I am so frustrated, like does he find joy in this—being an obnoxious prick. Of course, he can just come in and blow everything up, but he is not the one that has to clean up the mess, no he left that for me to do.

If I can't get a new partner for this project, I don't know what I am going to do. Why would I ever want to see him again? I just know that it is his fault. Chip and Jenny were perfectly fine. Sure, they spent a little too much time together, but no one goes from being that obsessed with one another to breaking up the next day. As much as I hate to say it, it did really seem like they were each other's love at first sight. Ugh, no, no, I can't do it. They probably weren't, maybe it is for the best they broke up. I mean, Jenny's mom might

lose it when she finds out, but she will get over it, probably.

I really wish I could talk to you. I could use some advice right about now. I mean, Jenny is like my sister and I want to help her as best as I can. I mean, you have a sister, and you were close. What would you do if someone hurt your sister?

Right now, I want to hurt Fitz. Make him see what he did, make him feel how she feels. Chip is too nice to do something that mean, this was definitely all Fitz.

I want to go back to before she met him. Get her to avoid going to the coffee shop that morning, find different spots to sit in for class. Maybe we could have avoided meeting them altogether. Our lives would have been so much better if we had never met them.

Hopefully, you can help to inspire me, I am going to need all the help I can get.

Warmest regards,
Eliza B.

Chapter 7

The walk to class takes twice as long as normal. Jenny drags her feet, or more like I am dragging her. She didn't even want to get out of bed, but I told her she had to. I wasn't going to let her throw out her education over some guy. That would be the worst. We make it to the classroom with only a minute to spare. Fitz and Chip are already sitting at the table, but instead of sitting across from each other, they are now sitting next to each other.

Chip has his arms crossed and is looking down at the floor. Jenny is already trying to run out of the room. If it weren't for my hand on her arm, she would have been out the door and halfway back to the dorm by now. Instead, I keep her moving forward to sit in the chair across from Chip. We are going to get through this. I look over at Fitz, but it seems like he is also taking the route of avoiding eye contact at all costs. Eventually, this is not going to be the case.

Dr. Hill walks into the classroom and gets her things settled.

“How is everyone doing today, on this fall day? I just love the trees on campus this time of year. They are gorgeous.” She looks up at our table, eyes glancing at each of us. “As we get to the end of October, we are coming to a little over a month left of classes. I hope that all of your projects are coming along nicely. If they are not, I would suggest scheduling an appointment with me immediately.” Again, her eyes seem to linger on our table. “Today, we are going to be looking at some specific examples of adaptations. Your homework for today was to read or watch an adaptation of a novel you know well. Well, today we are going to be comparing them to the original.”

-Is the adaptation moving forward in some way?

-What is it adding to the narrative?

-Don't get caught up comparing it back to the original instead look at the ways it changes, and updates based on current culture^{xiv}

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies

-Adds in Zombies, which are all the rage in current culture

-Makes Elizabeth Bennet a badass zombie fighter on top of being smart

-Lady Catherine de Bourgh is still annoying, but now she also is a zombie slayer, which makes her a lot more interesting

-The best part was instead of fighting with words about Darcy's proposal, she fights one of Lady Catherine's henchmen

-Four main perspectives that critics look at

-Translation

-judges based on how similar to the original work it is^{xv}

-Pluralist

-Values the adaptative work as being in a world of its own while still paying tribute to the original work^{xvi}

-Transformation

-The adaptative work becomes its own work completely separate from the original work^{xvii}

-

-Materialist

-Look at the adaptative work as a product of cultural-historical processes^{xviii}

“Okay, we have about a half-hour left so I want all of you to take this time to work on your projects. I will be here if you have any questions or if you want to talk.”

Everyone around us breaks out into chatter, as they talk about their projects. Our table stays silent, each of us avoiding one another. Dr. Hill notices immediately, not like it was hard or anything. Normally Jenny and Chip would be talking non-stop and hanging all over each other. But now, it is dead silent. We haven't even moved out chairs to talk to one another, not like we would talk if we were closer.

She walks over to check in on us. "How are all of you doing? Are the projects going well?"

I look over at Jenny, but she is looking at the floor. Chip is doing the same and Fitz is staring at me. I let out a sigh, "It is really not going so great. I think we might need to figure something else out."

She raises her eyebrows and then looks us each over again. "Yeah, I think that would be an understatement. Did something happen that I need to know about?"

"Uh, nothing you need to know about. I think we need to..." I let out a sigh, "switch partners."

"You do realize that time is counting down for the final project. We are getting to the end of the semester, and you all have been working on your projects. I don't think switching partners would be the best plan of attack. We can work something else out. I don't want any of you to get behind because of whatever is happening here." She gestures to us.

"I don't know Dr. Hill, things are..." I look at Jenny and then over to Chip. Neither are looking up, "a little tense right now. But I guess taking the weekend to think things through might help everyone think a bit clearer." I glare at Fitz, but he doesn't seem to notice.

"Well, that sounds like a great idea, Eliza. How does everyone else feel about that?"

The table is silent, Jenny and Chip still refusing to look up. Fitz finally breaks the silence. "I am sure that that will

work out. We wouldn't want to get stuck doing a project all by ourselves, now would we." He elbows Chip.

Chip jumps and his eyes dart up to meet Dr. Hill's "Uh, yeah, yeah, that's good."

I lightly kick Jenny's foot, "What? Oh, uh-huh."

Dr. Hill claps her hands together, "Perfect, you all still have some time to work on your projects, so why don't you do what you can separately for now. Then next class we will meet before class and discuss how we are going to move forward?"

Again, no one makes a move to say anything. This time though instead of me having to step up Fitz does. "Yeah, that will be fine for all of us. Thank you for being so understanding."

She smiles before moving off to the next table.

I grab my laptop out of my bag and pull up the email chain of letters between Fitz and myself. Jenny still does not move.

"Jenny," I whisper.

She looks up at me, her eyes wide and shiny.

"It will be fine. Can you work on something, anything? It doesn't even have to be the project. It will get your mind off of things."

She nods slowly and grabs out a notebook from her bag. I look back at my computer at the last email. Fitz sent it to me before class started. I begin to read it but can't help as my eyes drift over the screen of my computer to where Fitz sits across from me.

He stares down at his notebook, scribbling something down on paper. He is completely unconcerned with everything that is happening between Chip and Jenny. He doesn't even notice that Chip hasn't gotten anything out. He is not doing any work, but I don't think he cares. My eyes focus on his dark hair, and the stoic expression that seems cemented on his face.

“Do you need something?” He questions, looking up from his paper.

I try to glance down at my screen, but our eyes meet before I have the chance.

I shake my head, a strand of hair from behind my ear loosens and falls in front of my face, “Nothing, I was just thinking. I wasn’t even looking at you.” I try to hide, not just from the sudden embarrassment I feel, but from the heat that builds in my face.

“Okay, whatever you say.” His smirk widens across his face.

For a second, I forget everything he has done up to this point. I just see him. His brown eyes although intense still have a warmth to them. Like somewhere deep down, he may not be as bad as he seems. But the soft sigh from beside me reminds me that the guy in front of me only looks out for himself.

I glance over at Jenny. She has a blank stare focused on her opened notebook. I close my eyes; this is never going to work out. I don’t think space is what they need at all. This is all Fitz’s fault. If he would have just kept his mouth shut, I would not be having to deal with this.

If I can’t get Jenny and Chip back on speaking terms, then it looks like we might all struggle to pass this class.

Around us people start to pack up and leave, signifying that the class is over, or at least that we are no longer required to stay.

I pack up my computer, “Come on Jenny, let’s get going.”

She grabs her stuff and stands up to leave. I loop my hand around her elbow and pull her out of the room.

“If you want, I could run back to the dorm with you. I have time.”

She shakes her head, “It is fine, I will be fine. I think I am going to walk back and get a jump start on all the

homework I have. Maybe I will start on some of my final papers.”

“Okay, well if you need anything, text me. When I get done with class, I will pick up some ice cream from the store and we will chill tonight. We can watch *John Tucker Must Die*.”

Finally, a hint of a smile breaks through her mask. “That would be nice. I will try to get a lot of work done before that. We can make it a fun girl’s night, create a blanket fort and everything.”

“Good. You will get through this Jenny because I’ve got you. Also, any revenge plots you want to come up with, I am all in, just let me know.”

She laughs and we part ways.

November

Dear Jane,

We made it to the end of the weekend and that is an accomplishment in and of itself. No, we were not fighting off plagues or ravenous suitors. Nor were we fending off parents who wished to marry off their children. Nope, it was heartbreak that we were dealing with. Jenny was still struggling with the breakup, but I think we made progress in forgetting Chip.

On Friday night, we hung out in the dorm. We pulled a bunch of pillows and blankets onto the floor, and then we stretched a blanket between our beds. We curled up in our little eating ice cream and watching a movie where girls exact revenge on an idiot guy who was dating all of them at once. For a moment, I got the old Jenny back. The Jenny that didn't think constantly about finding love. The Jenny that just wanted to enjoy the time she had currently, instead of freaking out about the future.

Did you have moments like this with your sister? Did you ever stay awake all night long gossiping about the latest outbursts in town? When I was younger, I always wanted a sibling,

specifically a sister. But I never got one, or so I thought.

I met Jenny on the first day of middle school and we have been so close ever since. From that day forward, I always thought of her as my sister. We were always together and if I wasn't at my house; we were at hers.

Ugh, I don't know what I am writing anymore, I guess, I guess I am just scared that, eventually; she is going to find someone and not be there anymore. She was with Chip for barely two months, and it felt like she had practically moved in with him. Everything she and I did became her, Chip, and me. I don't want to lose her. Were you ever worried about losing your sister to love?

I don't know. I am trying to find a positive in this situation. Or maybe I am slightly happy about their breakup because I get my friend back. I know that is selfish of me, but I hate how forgettable I became when she found someone else to hang out with. I don't want to be forgotten, left in the dust while she rides off into the sunset.

But I am not going to focus on that. Right now, I am going to focus on how to make my friend

happy and if that means eating ice cream and watching movies every night; I am all for it.

*Warmest Regards,
Eliza B.*

Chapter 8

The weekend ends too quickly, before I know it Jenny and I are walking to class. Early. I don't think anyone is ready for the conversation that is to come.

Jenny and I are the first ones to arrive. We sit down at our usual table. She plops down in the chair right next to me.

“Hey, it is going to be okay, it will all work out. It is already November; we just need to get through the rest of this month and finals will be here before we know it. Then we can be done with all of this, we can be done with both of them.”

“What if I don't want to be done with them?”

My eyes glance over her face, her lip quivers, and her eyes shine. “Jenny.”

“Don't, don't say that I need to move on or get over it because I don't want to. Anyway, he never even said why. He just broke it off. It came out of nowhere, and from the looks of it he seemed upset.”

I shake my head, “I wasn't going to say that you need to get over it, you can take all the time you want, but do you really want to get back with someone that broke up with you with no explanation and then completely ghosted all of your texts?”

“I don't know, what if there is something that I am missing? I... I just. He is not like that; he wouldn't do that.”

And for once, I have to agree with her. I don't think Chip would ever do that either, but I know someone who would. I know someone that rushes in headfirst without thinking of the consequences for everyone else.

He walks in without a care in the world, taking the spot across from me. Chip follows after like a lost puppy. I shake my head, annoyed at Fitz for caring so little about his brother.

There are no friendly hellos, not even a smile from any of us. We mostly try to avoid eye contact while we wait for Dr. Hill to arrive. However, this becomes increasingly hard to do, as Fitz seems to have other plans. His eyes continue to glance over at me, I can feel it. I become more aware of my body and everything I do feels awkward. My arms are crossed and leaning on the table, but that probably looks stupid. I adjust and rest my head on my hand and look over at Jenny, except she is not looking back at me. I glance over and Fitz is still staring at me, so I let my hair fall in front of my face and act as a shield against his eyes.

Dr. Hill walks in, grinning from ear to ear. “Oh good, we are all here. I hope you all had a great weekend. Hopefully, you each took some time to think things through, maybe even came up with some solutions.” She pulls a chair up to the end of the table and looks at each of us, respectively. “Anything? Come on, you are all very bright. I know we can come up with something to make this work.”

“We should stay with our partners,” Fitz jumps in, “It is almost the end of the semester, and both of our projects are in the final stages. It would be a waste to just throw that away.”

Of course, he would be fine continuing on. He didn’t have his heart broken. I tap my foot against Jenny’s.

She turns to look at me.

At least she no longer looks like she is about to break down.

“Yeah, I think that would be fine, but I think that instead of Chip and I acting in our project, we could have Eliza and Fitz do it.”

My eyes widen and I kick her leg. I mouth the words, “You are so dead.”

She pouts her lip and mouths back, “Please.”

I can't believe I felt sorry for her. "You know that sounds like a great plan," I say through gritted teeth and a fake smile.

"See, I told you we could figure something out. I knew you were all capable of coming to a solution. Fitz, Eliza, are you both okay with your partnership? I know your project is a little easier to do separately?"

"Our project is going great; I don't think we will need to make any adjustments. Right, Eliza?"

My eyes flick up to his. I don't know what I expected, but it wasn't that. "Yeah, that is fine."

"Perfect. I really think this is the best option. If you have any more troubles or you need help with anything, please come and talk to me. I really want this to work out for all of you." She puts the chair back and walks to the front of the class. "The good news is that today is going to be a workday. So, you will all be able to get some work done here."

At this point, I don't think Jenny and Chip are listening anymore. Were they even listening before? They haven't moved, and the only thing that tells me they are still alive is that they haven't keeled over.

People start to arrive for class. There are soft conversations that break out around the room, but like usual are table remains silent. I pull out my computer. Fitz has not emailed his letter back to me. I let out a sigh and pull out my headphones. Today, I am not going to get distracted by Fitz, or Jenny, or Chip.

I am nervous as I sent my last letter to him Friday night, he had the entire weekend to write me back, and he has not. I scroll to the top of the chain of emails and start to paste them into a word document.

At some point, Dr. Hill starts class. I tune it for a second or two, but she is just talking about today being a workday.

I go back to organizing the letters. In between copying and pasting, I hit refresh on the emails.

Fitz is working on his computer, he has to be working on the letter, but when is he going to send it.

Ugh. Focus. Don't think about Fitz. Don't think about him.

I look at the clock on my computer. Still, a half-hour left, great. I tap my fingers on the keys. Okay, okay. I can still get some more work done. I don't need Fitz's letter. It is not like it is going to come as a surprise. I know exactly where we are in the book. It is time for Darcy's proposal to Elizabeth. Fitz will probably write something on that, so I need to follow it up with how Elizabeth feels about the proposal.

I stare at a blank screen. My mind is completely empty. Every time I write something down, I end up immediately erasing it. This is all Fitz's fault. If he hadn't eavesdropped on our conversation and then told Chip about it, Jenny and Chip would still be together, and then I could at least write without having to focus on both Jenny sulking next to me and Fitz's suffocating stares. I let out an audible sigh, grabbing the attention of everyone around me. Chip, Fitz, and Jenny all look towards me.

I give them all a half-smile and try to come up with an excuse, "It is taking forever to load. School Wi-Fi, am I right?"

"I don't know, mine is working just fine," Jenny says.

I stare her down.

"Oh, um never mind, your right my page just, uh stopped working."

I close my eyes. At least she tried to cover it up. When I look back up, Fitz is staring at me.

"What?" I ask.

“I just sent it to you. Hopefully, it won’t take forever to load. You know, with the internet being so bad on just that side of the table.”

I roll my eyes and look down at my computer. A one pops up on my email tab. I click and see Fitz’s letter waiting. Finally. I click to expand his message.

Derby, Fitz - derbyfw27

Wed 11/21/2021 10:30 AM

To: Eliza Bennet <elizab20@gmail.com>

November 1797

I have tried in vain to get her out of my head, but alas there is nothing for me to do. This is one battle I cannot fight, and I don’t know if I want to. Sure, she is not the most amiable girl, nor the most handsome in a room. But what are looks when compared to brains? Those that have enticing beauty have nothing going on in their heads, they would be a bore before the marriage is even complete. But Elizabeth, she is no bore.

No matter what I do, I cannot rid myself of her. She draws me in, a true curiosity. The more I see of her, the more I want to know. For the first time, I actually want to know. I want to know what makes the mind of her tick, what keeps her up a night, and when she is all alone, am I the one she can’t get out of her mind.

I have to be stuck in her mind like she is in mine. This is not one-sided, it cannot be, or else I would have not been so entrapped by her. This is purposeful, it has to be, but there is only one way to know for sure if she is as bothered by me as I am by her.

I shall propose, that is what I will do. Her answer will tell me all that I need to know. She is of quite lower status than me, and it has been very clear that her mother is looking

for her daughters to climb their way to the top. So, I guess if she denies the proposal, I shan't be too offended. It will at least prove that she is different and does not care about the money. But I will no longer waste time thinking of that because she will accept. She has to.

-Fitzwilliam Darcy

Reply / Reply all / Forward

I read it over one more time. Interesting. I never would have thought that Darcy pondered the idea of Elizabeth saying no, let alone that it might prove she is not in it for the money. Glancing up, I see that Fitz is staring me down. Immediately, I feel the heat rise to my cheeks. Does he really have to look at me like that? I glance back down at my computer but feel self-conscious of every move I make. He is still looking at me, I just know it.

I focus back on the letter. Okay, I take a deep breath and try to get my bearings. A scrape of a chair interrupts me. Fitz gets up and walks over to Dr. Hill. I can only hear hushed whispers, so I try to lean closer to their conversation. Of course, Jane scrunches up her face as she looks at me, "What are you doing?" She whispers.

"Nothing," I say, waving my hand at her.

"You are clearly doing something." She looks around, trying to figure out what has captured my attention. Her eyes fall on Dr. Hill and Fitz. "Are you serious? You cannot be trying to eavesdrop on that conversation."

"I am not eavesdropping," I argue.

She raises her eyebrows at me, "Oh, I am so sorry, yeah, you are totally not eavesdropping—just listening in on the conversation.

I glare at her, "Leave it alone."

“Oh, you are so obsessed. You were all high and mighty when it came to me, but now that the conversation is on you, what you can’t handle it?”

I roll my eyes, “I am not obsessed, I am worried about the final project. It is like our entire grade. If he is talking to Dr. Hill about it, I should be a part of that conversation.”

“Yeah, but then you would probably be in the conversation. Since you’re not, it is most likely about something else, which would mean you are eavesdropping.”

I turn back to my computer, ignoring Jane and doing my best to block out the whispering voices.

The voices stop and there are steps coming back to the table. I zero in on the letter and try to look busy. Someone stops right next to me, but I continue to look at the computer screen.

“Hey,” his voice whispers as he brings his hand to my shoulder.

I pull away from his arm, “Uh, hi. What do you want?”

“Dr. Hill said that we could go work in the library. I thought that that might be a good plan. It might be easier to get work done without having to worry about those two,” he nods towards Jenny and Chip.

I stare back at him. So, now he cares about them. “Yeah, I don’t know if leaving them would be the best plan of attack.”

“Come on. We need to look at the letters and it will be easier to focus.”

I roll my eyes, and turn to Jenny, “You want me to stay here, right?” I whisper.

There is a split second where her face falls, but it is quickly masked. “You two should go. I think it would be good for you.” Her head bobs up and down.

“But I should probably stay, right?” I repeat slower, my eyes practically falling out as I stare her down.

“No, I will be fine. Go!” She shooed me with her hands.
“See, they will be fine. Now let’s go!”

Why is he being so pushy? I throw my things in my bag and get up, throwing one more glare at Jenny. The small smile that plays at her lips almost makes it worth it. I roll my eyes and mouth “I can’t believe you.”

The smile grows, and she has to hold back laughter.

I cave and smile back at her while shaking my head, but this happiness doesn’t last long. Fitz grabs my hand and pulls me out of the classroom and down the hall.

I look down at where his hand and mine intertwine and then back up at the person dragging me down the hallway.

I gently pull my hand back, not wanting to spook whoever or whatever has gotten into him. He lets my hand fall. “Come on, hurry up.”

What is the rush?

We get to the library and he pulls me inside the elevator. So apparently it is not that big of a rush, I was half-expecting him to sprint up the stairs.

The doors close on the elevator and the silence feels suffocating, except it is not silent. Fitz cracks his knuckles.

The two lights up.

He stretches his neck from side to side.

The three lights up.

He shifts his weight from his left side to his right, moving side to side.

The four lights up.

I can’t take it anymore, “Dude, what’s your problem?”

He blinks and turns to me, confused, as if I hadn’t been standing there the entire time, “What?”

“Are you on drugs or something?”

He flinches back, “Why would you assume that?” his eyes narrowing.

“Oh, I don’t know, maybe because you are acting weird and jumpy,” I say, my voice rising as I turn to face him.

“If I am acting weird, it is because of you.”

My jaw drops, “You cannot seriously be trying to blame your behavior on me. Pray tell, how is this my fault?”

The five lights up and the elevator comes to a stop.

I realize just how close I have gotten to Fitz and take a step back as the elevator doors open. The person steps in and nods to us both. I sink back into the corner, glancing at Fitz every couple of seconds. He is in the other corner, eyes staring back at me. The elevator comes to a halt on the next floor and the person gets off.

The elevator doors close, leaving us alone once again.

I take a deep breath before coming at him again “How is your behavior my fault?”

“Because you are infuriating.”

“I am infuriating?” I question, letting out a breathless laugh.

“Yes, I can’t seem to get you out of my head, and it is maddening.”

“Oh, so I am maddening now. This seems like a you problem.”

Shakes his head, “No, because I was just fine before you came along. You showed up out of nowhere, nothing really making stand out from anyone else in this college, and you weaseled your way into my life.”

I blink back at him, “I weaseled my way into your life?”

“Stop, stop repeating everything I say.”

“I am so sorry how could I not repeat such... words.”

He shakes his head, “See, this is what I am talking about infuriating.”

I scuff at him, “You were the one who got us partnered together in the first place. So, if anyone is doing the weaseling, it is you.”

The elevator stops on the eighth floor, and I rush out immediately, heading for the stairs.

“Where are you going?” He questions still in the elevator.

“Away from you.”

He runs to catch up with me, “Wait, this isn’t how I wanted this to go.”

I stop right before the stairs, “How you wanted this to go?”

He stares at me.

“Oh, yeah repeating, so sorry,” I joke, “How is it thou wanted this promenade around the college to go?”

“Of course, you are joking about this now. I don’t know why I expected anything different from you.”

I roll my eyes, “What are you going on about?”

“Ugh,” He throws his hands in the air and starts to pace back and forth.

“What?”

He stops pacing and takes two steps to stand in front of me. “Go out with me.”

I blink back at him, “I’m sorry, what? Go where?”

He lets out an exasperated sigh, “On a date.”

I have to hold back the laugh that bubbles up, “And why would I do that?”

“Why not?” He counters.

“Oh, I don’t know because you just insulted me in so many different ways. You broke up my friend and your brother for no reason, you have to oppose everything, and you have shown zero interest in having an actual civil conversation with me.”

He smirks at me, and I turn away, walking down the first couple of stairs when I hear “Though she be but little, she is fierce.”

I walk back up the steps “Excuse me?”

He licks his lips “What? I thought you’d like it. *Midsummer* is your favorite play by Shakespeare, and that line makes me think of you. You are small and have this fiery spirit about you. You challenge me.” There is a small crack in his mask. The stony expression slowly softening.

“Okay, Mr. Shakespeare. You know the sentiment would be there, except you picked the worst quote possible.”

“I do, his work is great, but I don’t understand that quote fits perfectly. It shows how strong you can be.”

I laugh this time, “Yeah, sure. You are also basically calling me a bitch, but whatever helps you sleep at night.”

“What, no. That is not what I said, but it is the thought that counts,” He shakes his head.

“Is it? Does the thought really count when it is insulting?”

“That is not what it means, it is commonly used to show one’s strength.”

I roll my eyes, “Oh trust me if you have ever seen A *Midsummer Night’s Dream* performed live, it is not a compliment.”

He stares at me for a moment before proceeding slowly, “Maybe your right. But we should probably go to a performance together to find out for sure.”

My face falls as I let out a breath “Don’t need to, I am already pretty sure.” With that, I turn back to the stairs and leave Fitz standing alone at the top.

Dear Jane,

I don't know what to say. I don't even know why I picked up the pen to start writing this. But your books have been there for me in the hardest of times, so maybe writing is similar. I don't know. I am all confused, and it is all Fitz's fault. I can't believe him. He pulled me out of class to drag me to the library, where he said that I wasn't that special and infuriated him. Only to ask me out on a date. Who does that? Who insults a person that they like? Yes, I know Darcy did that with Elizabeth, but Fitz is no Mr. Darcy. I mean, he sure he broke up a perfectly good relationship and then refused to mention it, but if he were really like Mr. Darcy, then he would care about me. And trust me, Fitz does not care about me. He can't, not when he talks like that.

Even if he is a Mr. Darcy, nothing good can come from entertaining this fantasy of his. Sure, let's say we go out on a couple of dates and everything is good and fine, but nothing is going to come from it. I know people like him, the people with money.

They don't care who they step on, who they hurt. All they do is use you to get themselves

further ahead, and eventually, they will find someone younger, someone better looking. They will leave you alone and heartbroken and not care. They will take off in the middle of the night, not even leaving a note. No explanation as to why they didn't even bother to say goodbye. So, you are just left alone with only your thoughts, thinking that somehow you are the one to blame. You weren't pretty enough; you weren't smart enough; you weren't perfect enough for them. So, they left and didn't give you the decency of saying that it isn't your fault.

-Eliza B.

I rip the page out of the journal and fold it up, I look around, Jenny is passed out in her bed. Careful not to wake her, I get up and walk over to my desk. Slowly, I open the bottom drawer and pull out the small, locked box. I take off the key that hangs around my neck and fit the key into the lock and turn. The box opens to the previous letters. I tuck my new letter in with the rest.

There is a crinkle at the door. I quickly shut the box and lock it, before tossing it back in the drawer. I walk over to the door. There is a folded-up piece of paper on the floor. I look back at Jenny, but she is still asleep. Opening the door, I lookout. No one is in the hallway.

I lean down and pick up the paper. On the front, Eliza is scrawled in cursive. I bite the inside of my cheek as I sit down at my desk. The small book light on my desk

provides just enough light to read the note while not waking up Jenny. I unfold the paper and the bubbly cursive from the front is scrawled down the page.

Dear Eliza,

I know you must be rather upset with me at the moment. I only hope you know I do not wish to cause you any more distress in this letter. I only write to set some things straight.

I first want to address what could not be addressed earlier. I broke up Jenny and Chip; it was not out of jealousy or ruthlessness. I heard what your sister said, and I didn't think that she was in the relationship for the right reasons. My brother had gotten very involved in the relationship and I knew the longer it went on, the more it would hurt if he ever found out. I didn't want him to go through that pain, but I fear that instead of doing good, I caused more harm. I had not known that it would have such an impact. They had only been together a couple of months, and yet they seemed to already be entranced with one another. Chip has been a mess and from what I have seen in class, it has not been easy for Jenny. All I can say is that I am truly sorry for the role that I played in the demise of their relationship. I really only wanted to protect my brother and in doing so I became blinded to everything else.

Speaking of being blinded, I fear that I also was blinded by you. I was caught off guard that first day when you challenged my love for Shakespeare. You went toe to toe with me and I have never experienced that before. No one has ever challenged me in the ways that you have. You knocked me off-kilter and I have not been able to right myself, at least not when I am around you. I find simply stringing sentences together becomes harder. I want

to impress you, Eliza, and you should know I never feel the need to impress anyone.

After you left me in the library, I found a copy of *Midsummer* and I have to admit that I was wrong, and you were right. (Something else I never thought I would be doing; it seems like a pattern with you). I guess I should have probably read it, instead of looking up the most popular quotes. I can't believe I didn't understand sooner, I seriously have been sitting on that ever since you said *Midsummer* was your favorite. I went home and looked up the SparkNotes of it, I figured I could get by with that seeing as I read it back in high school and just needed a refresher. But boy, did I get a refresher from you.

I am surprised that I have gotten this far, but it is easier to put my words down on paper than to say them to you. This way I can actually think about what I am going to say before I just blurt something out.

I promise I am going to fix things with Jenny and Chip. I have already talked to Chip and I can talk with Jenny at some point if she doesn't want to talk to him. I will do whatever it takes to fix the wrongs that I have made. I judged too quickly and for that I really am sorry, but I will fix my mistakes. I am only hoping that you will allow me to fix the mistakes I made with you. I will not ask you out again, don't worry. You made it pretty clear what your answer was, but I wish we could be friends. You make me better, Eliza. I don't know if I could go back to a life without you.

Forever yours,
Fitz Derby

I sit back in the chair, staring at the note. I read over the note and then read it over again. He wouldn't have written

this if he didn't care, right? I mean, I never got a note when she left, so already this shows that he isn't like her, right? I take a deep breath and pull out my computer. I go straight to my emails and open up the chain between Fitz and myself.

I take a deep breath and then start typing. The words flowing out of my fingertips. When I am done, I don't even read it over before hitting send.

Bennet, Eliza - elizab20
Wed 11/21/2021 11:48 PM
To: Fitz Derby <derbyfw27@gmail.com>

November 1797

He proposed, he proposed to me. What am I to do with that? Who does he think he is coming into my life, ignoring me, insulting me, and then deciding to propose?

After all, he has done to poor Jane, he really would think that I would dare entertain the possibility of being married to him. He must think me for a fool. He took Jane's happiness and in doing so; he took mine too.

Yet, I can't help to wonder why he would propose in the first place. He said to himself that I am not the most handsome girl he has seen. He has admonished me for being from a lower class than his own, as if my family's class standing was in my power. So why then did he propose? He should have known that I would have no way of responding, but to refuse his hand. It probably shocked him to know that I wasn't like everyone else, trying to get ahead by any means necessary.

I don't understand how anyone could marry for money rather than love. Money runs out it is never a constant. It can't buy happiness and more importantly, it can't buy love. Why would I subject myself to a life in misery just to have money? I would be the fool then.

It is getting late, and I really should retire to bed; the candle is running low. Oh, if he could have thought things through, maybe it would have been different. I don't know if I wish to see him again or if I never wish to speak to him again. It is too conflicting; I really should get some rest. I have already devoted too much of my time to this matter. I wouldn't want to waste away by doing it all night long. In the morning, this mess will be behind us. In the morning, I will be able to take a turn about the grounds and clear things up.

Farewell,
Lizzy Bennet

P.S. I shall make it a point to wake up early, so I can be out on my walk at eight. Surely no one would possibly be out for a walk that early. It will be a perfectly quiet morning. One might say perfect for talking.

Reply / Reply all / Forward

I close my computer. I guess I should be getting to bed. It would be best, especially if I am planning on waking up early tomorrow.

Chapter 9

The sun streams into the room, waking me up. I stretch and grab my phone off the nightstand. It is seven-thirty already. I jump out of bed and get ready for the day. Before I know it, I am grabbing a light jacket and heading out the door, with Jenny still sound asleep in her bed.

I walk out of the building and see someone leaning against the tree across from me. I can't see who it is, but I don't have to. From the way he stands, I know it is him. Crossing over to the tree, I come to stand in front of him.

"Hi," I say. My voice quieter than I planned.

He looks up from the book in his hand, "Hey," A small smile comes to his lips, "I wasn't sure if you would follow through."

"I wasn't sure you would understand, I mean you did say you were blind when it came to me." I let out a small nervous laugh.

"Oh no, I understood after a second or two. I thought it was kind of weird for Elizabeth to write about the exact time she wanted to go for a walk."

"I don't know, I thought it was pretty clever. There were no expectations this way. If you didn't show, you didn't show, but you did."

"I did."

I look at him, not knowing what to say.

"Eliza," He starts, but then he closes his mouth. His eyes search mine, "I wanted to say I am sorry. I should have never broken up Jenny and Chip. I was being a protective older brother, but that is no excuse. Anyway. It made things worse. And I am sorry about what I said in the library. I am not really good at these things."

“I would say you are doing pretty well.” I grab his arm and walk over to the small pathway by the building.

“I am glad one of us thinks so.”

“No, really. I mean you apologized, which seems like something you would never do. You did say you were trying to fix things, and I think that is commendable. I mean, you were a complete idiot the other day, but you seem to have gotten back the ability to string together some more logical sentences.” I laugh.

“Oh, okay. I see how it is.”

We both stop talking and take a couple of steps in silence. I can't help but notice how nice this is, having someone. A small pond comes into view and we stop and have a seat at one of the benches that faces the water.

“You know I don't really know that much about you.” He says.

I look over at him, “And I know so much about you?”

“I guess we haven't really had the chance to ever talk about things other than the project or books.”

I raise my eyebrows, “So, you thought now would be that time.”

“What did you want to talk about something else?”

I look into his warm brown eyes, “Literally anything else.”

“So, you don't like talking about yourself, got it, but I do want to get to know you. Maybe we could start with what your parents are like?”

The smile on my face slips, “That is like the worst place to start.”

“Good, then let's get it over with, so we can move on to more pleasant conversations.”

I take a deep breath, “Well, it is just me and my dad. My dad tends to keep to himself, but if you bring up a good book, he would gladly talk to you for hours.”

“What happened to your mom?”

I raise my eyebrows, “That is awfully bold of you to ask.”

He does not respond, just waits expectantly.

I shake my head “She is not really in the picture. She left when I was like eight. Even then I barely knew her, she was hardly ever around. She was always on book tours and stuff like that. I don’t really know what happened or where she went when she left. But a couple of years back divorce papers showed up at the house. It ended up being really hard on my dad. He always thought that it was love at first sight with her and now he had divorce papers saying that love was officially over.”

“Oh jeez, that sucks.”

“Yeah, you are telling me.”

He turns away from me, looking out at the water, “So, book tour?”

“That is what you took from that?”

His eyes widen, “No, no, I am just curious.”

“She is a romance writer. You might have heard of her, Jane Crawford.”

He pauses, shaking his head, “No way is she your mom.”

“Well, I mean at this point not really, but yes, she gave birth to me.”

He smirks, “So, I guess that is where you get your writing talent from.”

I scuff, “Hell no, that is all me. She had nothing to do with that. Sure, she introduced me to Jane Austen, but that is all she gets credit for.”

He nods.

“What about your parents?” I ask.

He laughs, “Certainly not as interesting as yours, that is for sure. We are just a normal family.”

My jaw drops, “You are the farthest thing from a normal family, who has a summer home and who let’s there two college-age kids have an entire house to themselves.”

“Okay, not normal, but you have to know that that is our parent’s money, not ours.”

“Says the person living in a mansion, not a ten by fifteen rectangle.”

“Okay, okay, I get it not normal.” He chuckles. “But you and Jenny benefit from it, so don’t get so high and mighty.”

“Well, the only way we are going to keep benefitting from it, is if we get Jenny and Chip back together.” I give him a half-smile, “So, how exactly are we going to get them back together.”

“You want a plan. I thought he would just text her and it would be okay. At most, I would go talk to her?”

“Hmm, well that is a start, but I know Jenny. She is going to want some grand gesture.”

Fitz stops walking, “A grand gesture?”

“Yes, or at the very least something better than a simple text message. I mean, you could tell him to write a letter. In this technological world, I think it could be seen as a grand gesture, as long as he puts his heart into it.”

“Yeah, the only way he is going to do that is if he actually puts his heart into it. I love him, but he is not the best at writing his thoughts out. I think it would be better for him to tell her how he feels.”

I nod, “Okay, well Jenny is probably still in our room. She never gets up early on the weekend. Is Chip up?”

Fitz pulls out his phone and types something in. A second later, his phone buzzes. “He is awake and ready for whatever plan we come up with.”

“Perfect!”

December Chapter 10

Fitz and I sit outside Dr. Hill's office. Currently, Jenny and Chip are inside showing off the amazing video that they did. They made us watch it like a hundred times before they finally decided that it was perfect.

The door opens and Jenny and Chip walkout, their smiles taking over their faces.

"I take it, it went well?" I ask.

"Yeah, it did. She loved it." Jenny squeals.

Chip looks at Jenny, his eyes shining bright, "We should go celebrate."

"Not yet, we still need to turn in our project," Fitz says.

"Yeah, after that. We need to celebrate making it through the first semester. Well, we do." He gestures to Jenny, himself, and I. "Fitz, you don't need to come."

"Oh no, I am definitely coming, I have more than enough to celebrate."

Dr. Hill's door opens, and she walks out. "Fitz, Eliza, I am ready for you both."

Fitz and I stand up and walk in. We take a seat in the two chairs across from the desk. The chairs are close enough where my knees brush up against his. I look up and give Fitz a smile, before handing over the printed version of our project to Dr. Hill.

"Wow, this must feel really good to turn in!" Dr. Hill says.

I nod, "We are pretty excited about what we accomplished."

She opens it up and looks over the first couple of letters.

The room delves into silence and instead of looking around the room like the last time I was in her office, I have one thing that draws my attention or one person. Fitz and I

stare at each other, making goofy faces and trying to make the other laugh.

Dr. Hill looks up, right as I was crossing my eyes and sticking my tongue out at Fitz.

She laughs, “So, I have looked at a couple of your letters and might I say I am impressed, especially seeing as how you seemed to be fighting for most of the semester. But it looks like that has cleared up now.” She looks between Fitz and me, a knowing smile plastered on her face. “I am really proud to see that you both made it through this project and learned to work together. I am looking forward to reading the rest of these letters, but I won’t keep you here while I read through all of them. Great job, I think you both have something really special here.”

I look at her, wondering what exactly she meant by that, but before I can ask, she is already on to the next thing.

“I will be posting grades by the end of this week, so look out for that, but I would say that you two are in very good shape for finishing this class off with a very good grade.”

“Thank you, Dr. Hill. We both really enjoyed your class, even if it didn’t always seem like it.” Fitz says.

We bid our farewells to Dr. Hill and walked out.

“So, what now?” He asks.

“Hmm, now we celebrate.”

He throws his arm over my shoulder and pulls me into a side hug.

“I like that plan.”

Dear Jane,

After one semester, I think I finally have a hang of this whole college thing. We finished our projects and turned them in to Dr. Hill. I think we are all going to pass the class, so no need to panic anymore. Well, at least not about turning it in.

We managed to get Jenny and Chip back together. Chip showed up at the dorm, flowers in hand, begging her to take him back. She instantly ran into his arms. It was only later that she scolded me for not telling her he was coming by. Apparently, she was upset that she didn't have time to get ready before she had to open the door. God forbid he saw her with her hair messed up. I know, I know, she is a little extra, but that is also what makes her such a great friend.

Fitz is not as annoying as he used to be. He still gets on my nerves sometimes, but that is part of his charm... kind of. It turns out he might not have been as bad as I originally assumed. I probably shouldn't judge people based on minimal interaction with them. Fitz and I are hanging out more, and we will see where things go, but for right now there are no labels. I want to take things slow.

Turns out I don't want to get hurt again. I guess I have you to thank for that. I was so young when you left, but I still remember how you would read Jane Austen to help me fall asleep.

~~I wonder if you do that for them. I wonder if they are the perfect daughters that you always wanted. You know I always wanted sisters and I guess I do have them, but I guess we were never fated to meet. The only reason I even found out about them is dad left out the divorce papers; I saw your new address. I drove by the other day. You were outside on the front lawn. The three of them playing, smiling, laughing. Then a guy came out of the house, I swear he was young enough to be my older brother. He came over and gave you a kiss and then ran out to play with the girls. It looks like you traded up and I hope that makes you happy, clearly; we were never able to do that for you. I hope you know that even though you left me, I still found an amazing family. I found a sister in Jenny, and Chip is like a brother, and dad has been doing better. Plus, I have Fitz and even if it is nothing, I will know that I at least tried. I won't let you be the reason that I don't find love.~~

~~You wanted to climb your way to the top, and I hope you know that in my story, and in my life, you are the villain that kept me from what I wanted most. But you are the villain that I love to hate and hate to love. After all this time, and I still want you to know what is happening in my life, like maybe one day you will come back, and everything will be okay again. But we both know you aren't going to do that. You have a new life, a new family, and me and dad are in your rearview mirror, a past that you don't want to remember.~~

~~If you ever did want to remember, I wrote these for you. I wrote these when I should have been talking to you. I wrote these when I wanted you to know what was happening in my life. I wrote these as a way to feel like I still had you in my life. I wrote them, but you should have been here to listen and to give me advice. I shouldn't be writing this as if you are dead, because you are perfectly healthy, perfectly fine, you are simply perfect with your perfect family. Unfortunately, nothing is ever as perfect as it seems and that is going to be a hard lesson for you to learn, but you will. With three daughters and a husband who will~~

~~eventually age, you will learn. But it will be a lesson that you learn on your own.~~

This will be the very last letter that I write to you. I wasn't even going to write this one, but I needed to. I needed to show you that I don't need you anymore; I have the friends and family that I always wanted, and it turns out you aren't a part of that anymore. I only hope that you can be as happy without me as I have become without you.

Warmest regards,
Eliza B.

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