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## Generous Hearted

by [Houseofhaeth](#)

### Summary

When Elizabeth first visited Pemberley, Mrs Reynolds described young Darcy as "the sweetest-tempered, most generous-hearted boy in the world". Now she is married, Elizabeth wants to know what her new husband did to merit this description.

Two weeks had passed since the new Mrs Darcy had arrived at Pemberley. Although it was strictly speaking a return to Pemberley, it did feel in many ways as though she had never set eyes on it before. Now it was her home, and much of it would be her responsibility.

In the first weeks she spent a great deal of time with Mrs Reynolds, learning how the household was run, and discussing the changes they would need to make. Now that Mr. Darcy was married, a few changes in routine were necessary, Mrs Reynolds assured her, and they were happy to alter things to Mrs Darcy's preference.

As important as all this was (and she found she enjoyed the freedom of arranging her house, with the receptive but intelligent observations from Mrs Reynolds to assist her choices) there was something she would much rather be discussing instead. She held onto it, waiting for an appropriate moment. '...I believe you understand the kitchen's schedule as well as anyone now, Mrs Darcy,' said Mrs Reynolds one morning in her second week at Pemberley. 'I'm not certain there's any more I can tell you.'

Elizabeth glanced at the door. It was a quiet day – she wouldn't be distracting the housekeeper from her duties (at least, not any more than she had been for the last fortnight). 'There are...one or two other matters. I think you can enlighten me regarding something I heard the first time I was here at Pemberley.'

'Certainly, Mrs Darcy,' said Mrs Reynolds. In the next moment she appeared to remember that visit – and remember that most of what Elizabeth had heard, had been from Mrs Reynolds' own mouth. '... what can I help you with?'

'You said, on my first visit – I believe I have this right – that in his youth Mr Darcy had been the sweetest-tempered, most generous-hearted boy in the world.'

Immediately, Mrs Reynolds smiled, as if she'd been waiting for Mrs Darcy to ask. 'I don't recall the exact phrase, but I can't deny the truth of that.'

'And you have known him since he was...four or five years old?'

'Yes, four.'

'Could you...tell me a little of what he was like? What generous-hearted things he did?'

'It would be my pleasure,' said Mrs Reynolds, with the same sincerity as she'd had when speaking of him all those months ago.

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It was late morning, and Mrs Reynolds was showing a new housemaid her duties. The girl, Elsie, was in her teens, and full of nervous energy. Mrs Reynolds happened to know that her father had died of a fever not long ago, which was the cause of the girl needing employment. She was eager to do a good job, though, if a bit jumpy-

The door banged open, when all the family should have been out, and a small figure ran in. 'Father! I found-'

Elsie leapt back in surprise, and her back hit the shelf, knocking off a vase of flowers which smashed. Master Fitzwilliam jumped back too, and Mrs. Reynolds reached forward – fruitlessly – to catch it. As the three of them surveyed the vase, she couldn't have said whose eyes were more round – the maids, or young master Darcy's.

'Fitzwilliam?'

The maid let out a strangled whimper, as footsteps approached the door, and the master came in. He took in the three of them, the expression of his son, and finally, the vase. 'What happened?' There was an awkward pause. Eyes on the girl, Mrs Reynolds opened her mouth reluctantly, to say it had been an accident-

'I ran in too fast,' said master Fitzwilliam.

Mrs Reynolds blinked at him.

'I'm sorry, Father. I was...wasn't careful.'

It was only after the fact that it occurred to Mrs Reynolds – the boy hadn't strictly lied. But he was flushed, arms folded stiffly – apparently ashamed of his action. Or afraid of his deception being uncovered.

Mr Darcy looked over his son gravely. 'You were not. We have spoken before about running inside, Fitzwilliam.'

'Yes, Father.'

'I think you will spend the rest of the day in your rooms. Reading, and other profitable activities, not running. At dinner, you will tell me what you've learned today.'

'Yes, Father.'

Mrs Reynolds watched, as the two left the room, with barely a backward glance.

The maid didn't move, until Mrs Reynolds told her to fetch a broom and a cloth, to sweep up the vase and flowers. She rushed to do so, but didn't speak a word until the lunch bell rang.

'He didn't have to do that,' she said, quietly.

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She almost bumped into the boy as they both rounded a corner at the same time.

'Oh! Master D...' the boy was drenched from head to foot. Mrs Reynolds glanced out of the window. There had been a heavy downpour since early that afternoon...but she wasn't sure why the boy had

been out in it.

He looked down at his feet. 'I was...seeing Roberts.'

He didn't need to say any more – she knew who, or what, he was really seeing. Roberts was the stablehand. One of the horses had been injured in a hunt, and Roberts had been particularly upset by it. Mr Darcy had glanced the shivering beast over, shaking his head. 'We'll have to look at the market for another light mare – something calm, for young Fitzwilliam to continue his riding lessons.'

'Yes, Sir.'

She'd overheard the boy speaking to his father that morning. *'Father...I don't want a new horse. I want the veterinarian to come.'*

'She mightn't be any good for riding now, Fitzwilliam.'

'But I like her. And she's been here a long time – they're all sad about her.'

'Well...we shall see.'

Mrs Reynolds nodded, understandingly. 'And how is Roberts?'

'Dry,' said the boy, with a rueful expression that made her struggle to keep a straight face. 'I was hoping I could slip up to my room without...'

Mrs Reynolds walked to the window. 'Well young Master. I'm certain I'm not able to tell anyone what I haven't seen – and I can't say as I've seen anything of note in here this afternoon. Certainly not Master Darcy.'

'Thank you, Mrs Reynolds,' he said.

'I will, however, have some towels sent up to his rooms, for no reason in particular.' She heard him sigh.

*'Thank you, Mrs Reynolds.'*

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A loud screaming filled the corridor. Servants who were listening in wonder ducked out of sight as Mrs Reynolds came down the corridor. She stopped one.

'What is that awful din about?'

'Young Wickham,' the maid said, eyes wide, obviously having a very entertaining morning.

'What...what happened?'

'He can't go out to play, because it's too wet.'

Mrs Reynolds blinked. 'Is that all?'

'I think so, Mrs Reynolds.'

'And this tantrum will help? Perhaps it will give the clouds a severe fit of irritation, thus driving them off?'

The maid was trying not to laugh. Mrs Reynolds shook her head. 'But Master Fitzwilliam...'

From a young age, he'd simply looked disappointed, and found something else to do. This behaviour was new. Perhaps they didn't know how lucky they'd been with the young Master Darcy's temperament...

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Footsteps on the stairs. Mrs Reynolds stopped, abruptly. She had been discreet, not in fact mentioning the name of the other child she compared Mr Darcy to – but Elizabeth had guessed.

The door opened, and both women stood – Mrs Reynolds rather quickly, and Elizabeth more casually, as Mr Darcy himself entered.

'Ah, good afternoon,' said Elizabeth, with a slight smile. 'Mrs Reynolds, I believe we are finished?'

'Of course, Mrs Darcy.' She left without hesitation. Mr Darcy watched her go, thoughtfully. 'You didn't need to halt your conversation quite so suddenly on my account.'

'We had finished,' said Elizabeth, with a winning smile. Looking at her husband reminded her that this was the boy who bore disappointments stoically and sensibly, who had noticed – and cared – how the

stablehands felt about a particular beast, and who had taken a punishment for a frightened housemaid. And he had grown up, and become all hers.

‘You finished as soon as you heard my approach. One would almost think...’ he said, with a slight raise of an eyebrow.

‘That we were talking about you? Well deduced. We were. She has a very high opinion of you.’ He glanced back, but Mrs Reynolds was gone. He turned back to Elizabeth with a slight smile. ‘Mrs Reynolds has a very high opinion of me?’

‘Yes. An invaluable servant. Since the first time we met, she has only raised my own opinion of you. Is this listed among her duties?’

He ignored this. ‘So, you have a higher opinion of me now than you did this morning?’ he asked.

She considered this, and what teasing answer she might give – but none sprang to mind, for once. She took his hand. ‘I’m not certain. But if I do – that is again a fault in my judgement, and not in you.’

‘I...I’m sure your judgement is sound if you hold me in as high regard as you claim,’ he said, a slight gleam in his eye.

Glancing once at the door, Elizabeth stretched up and kissed him lightly. ‘It is sound, then.’

He blinked, and took her hands. ‘Good grief, what did she say??’

Elizabeth just smiled.

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