

The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet: A Novel (Lizzie Bennet Diaries)

By Bernie Su, Kate Rorick

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A modern adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* based on the Emmy Award–winning YouTube series, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

Twenty?four?year?old grad student Lizzie Bennet is saddled with student loan debt and still living at home along with her two sisters—beautiful Jane and reckless Lydia. When she records her reflections on life for her thesis project and posts them on YouTube, she has no idea *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* will soon take on a life of their own, turning the Bennet sisters into internet celebrities seemingly overnight.

When rich and handsome Bing Lee comes to town, along with his stuck?up friend William Darcy, things *really* start to get interesting for the Bennets—and for Lizzie's viewers. But not everything happens on?screen. Lucky for us, Lizzie has a secret diary.

The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet takes readers deep inside Lizzie's world and well beyond the confines of her camera—from the wedding where she first meets William Darcy to the local hangout of Carter's bar, and much more. Lizzie's private musings are filled with revealing details about the Bennet household, including her growing suspicions about her parents' unstable financial situation, her sister's budding relationship with Bing Lee, the perils of her unexpected fame, and her uncertainty over her future—and whom she wants to share it with.

Featuring plenty of fresh twists to delight fans and new readers alike, *The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet* expands on the web series phenomenon that captivated a generation and reimagines the *Pride and Prejudice* story like never before.

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Editorial Review

Review
"Offers a fresh take on Pride and Prejudice—without ruining it. . . . [Lizzie's] voice is reminiscent of the sort of wry sarcasm that made Daria so appealing." (Washington Post)

"Jane Austen would, like, totally approve" (People Magazine)

"Fantastic. . . . This book hits all the high points of Austen’s most famous novel in satisfying ways (Darcy’s confession, Lydia’s bad choices), while updating it for the digital age. Though the videos are the catalyst for the novel, readers need not have viewed them to enjoy this story. Fans of the Web series and newcomers alike will be satisfied." (Publishers Weekly)

Praise for The Lizzie Bennet Diaries: "Addictive . . . In theory, it should be terrible. In practice, it's pure genius. . . . The Lizzie Bennet Diaries is faithful to the original without being slavish or full of in-jokes. It's a sharp, clever re-imagining of a novel about class, society and the things we do for love (and money). I like to think that if Austen was writing now, she might have created something very like this." (The Guardian)

"It’s AWESOME and AMAZING and WOW. . . . I loved, loved, loved this update. . . . Aside from just being a great series, and aside from showing how a retelling can be original, and aside from illustrating how an update can be faithful, The Lizzie Bennet Diaries is also an example of how story-telling evolves and how that evolution does not mean that existing methods of story-telling disappear. We live in a world where Pride and Prejudice can be a book, can be movies and musicals and TV shows, and can also be a 'video/social media' series. This retelling no more erases the Jane Austen book than an e-book means that linear storytelling and 'books' disappear and become choose-your-own-adventure/game apps." (School Library Journal)

"The Lizzie Bennet Diaries finds a new way to present a 200-year-old story. . . . [It is] the quintessentially 21st-century take on Austen’s novel . . . a unique piece of interactive media that has a big heart and a lot of soul." (The Onion A.V. Club)

"Brilliant." (The Awl)

"An impressive feat; a charming and creative twist on a familiar tale." (The Daily Dot)

About the Author
Bernie Su is the Emmy Award-winning executive producer, co-creator, head writer, and director of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* for which he received a Streamy Award for Best Writing, Comedy and Best Interactive Program. Su is a graduate of the University of California, San Diego, and lives in Los Angeles.

Kate Rorick is a writer of television, web series, and novels. She has written for a variety of television shows, including Law and Order: Criminal Intent (NBC), Terra Nova (FOX) and The Librarians (TNT). In 2012 she became a writer and producer for the Emmy Award-winning web series The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, which lead to her writing The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet.

In her spare time, she is the bestselling author of historical romance novels under the name Kate Noble. Rorick is a graduate of Syracuse University and lives in Los Angeles.

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Sunday, April 22nd

It's about 2 a.m., and if I were smart I'd be asleep right now. Check that—if I had a best friend who wasn't wasted and pocket-dialing me, I'd be asleep right now. But I just received a call from Charlotte that went something like this:

(*garbled noise*) . . . "Either I'm drunk, or this party just came down with a bad case of Fellini." . . . (*more garbled noise*) . . . "Why is my phone lit up?" (BEEP)

To be fair, I wasn't asleep yet anyway, since we just got home from the Gibson wedding about an hour ago. My mom is currently in a state of glee (or slumber. Gleeful slumber). Because, according to her joyous monologue on the way home, all of her pain and plotting were worthwhile as Mr. Bing Lee, admittedly good-looking wealthy type and recent homeowner, has now met and been smitten by one of her daughters.

Specifically, Jane.

I, however, am in a state of unbridled annoyance, because of one single person.

Specifically, William Darcy.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

The wedding ceremony was lovely. Outdoors, in the afternoon. Why live in a sleepy coastal central California town if not to take advantage of the weather for your nuptials? Our longtime friend Ellen pledged to love, honor, and cover her new husband on her work's health insurance plan for as long as they both shall live, while Ellen's mother sniffled her way through the ceremony—her sniffles only slightly softer than my mother's wails. (Note: Ellen Gibson was in the same class as Jane since first grade; her mother and ours cut up orange slices for soccer practice together. Mom can barely hold her head up in front of Mrs. Gibson now, as her daughters remain tragically unwed.)

Of course, during the entire ceremony, my mother was craning her neck across the aisle to better stare at Bing Lee and his companions. Luckily, he didn't notice, but his overly tall, stuck-up friend certainly did. He frowned at us from beneath this ridiculously hipster newsboy cap. Although I can't even be sure it was a frown now. From what I saw of him that evening, his face just stays that way.

Regardless, the newlyweds kissed, the recessional played, and it was time to party! But before we could even get to the car to drive to the lovely restaurant overlooking the town that was hosting the reception, Mom had pulled Jane and Lydia (okay, I went along, too) into Bing's path and got herself the introduction she'd been yearning for.

"You must be Mr. Lee! Or is it Mr. Bing? I know some countries put the last name first but I never know which!"

Yes. That actually happened.

Luckily, the gentleman in question just smiled, introduced himself, and shook my mother's hand. Then, he turned his eyes to Jane.

And they never left.

"Hi, I'm Bing."

"I'm Jane," she said. "It's so nice to meet you."

"It's nice to meet you, too."

And then, they just stood there. Basically holding hands. Until someone behind Bing cleared his throat.

Someone in a newsboy cap. And a bow tie. (The bow tie I can forgive, but seriously, who wears a newsboy cap to a wedding?)

"This is my sister, Caroline, and my friend William Darcy."

"Hi . . ." Caroline Lee said in a slow but polite drawl. While their friend Darcy might be a little on the hipster side, Caroline was a little on the my-hair-is-perfectly-shiny-and-don't-you-like-my Prada-sunglasses side. But at least she had the decency to say "hi."

"Bing, the driver will be blocked in if we don't get going soon," said Darcy.

Charming.

"Right," Bing replied, this prompting him to finally drop Jane's hand and notice the rest of us. "I guess we'll see you all at the reception?"

My mother could not get to the reception venue fast enough. She made my dad weave through all the traffic, run two stop signs, and almost cause an accident just so she could get to the card table first and fidget things around so Jane was sitting only a table away from Bing and Co.

Meanwhile, I was happy to sit next to Charlotte.

"I saw your mom finally managed to corner the elusive Bing Lee after the ceremony," she said, between bites of crab puffs.

I will say that the Gibsons really know how to throw a party. It was a beautiful room, with chandeliers, old-Hollywood table markers, a jazz trio near the dance floor, and some insanely delicious food, as evidenced by Char's devotion to the crab puffs.

My eyes immediately went to the table where Bing sat. Or rather, where he leaned over to the next table, talking to Jane. She blushed and smiled.

"And it looks like he picked out his favorite Bennet already," Charlotte observed. "Jane has thoroughly charmed him."

"Jane thoroughly charms everyone," I replied.

“Yeah, but maybe she’s charmed, too, this time.”

I continued watching. There was a lot of blushing and smiling and nodding going on between those two. But . . . “My sister is not going to fall immediately for a guy my mother picked out for her. She’s too smart for that.”

But Charlotte just shrugged and took another sip of her vodka tonic. “I’ll bet you drinks that she spends the whole evening talking to him.”

“It’s an open bar,” I noted. One at which Lydia had already parked herself.

“Hence how we can afford the bet. Every hour that she spends with him, you have to fetch me a drink. Every hour they spend apart, I fetch you one.”

“Deal.”

Just then, Darcy leaned over and said something to Bing, which brought his attention away from Jane and made Bing’s smile slide off his face. Like he had been admonished.

“At least Jane caught the eye of someone with manners,” I grumbled, “and not his friend. What’s his deal, anyway?”

“Who—William Darcy?” Charlotte asked. “According to my mom, he’s an old school friend of Bing’s. Apparently he inherited and runs some entertainment company, headquartered in San Francisco.”

“Oh, yeah, that bastion of entertainment, San Francisco.” (I have a dry wit.) “And by ‘runs’ I assume you mean he flips through the quarterly reports in between daiquiris on the beach.”

“He’s a little pale to be a beach bum.” (Charlotte’s wit may be even dryer than mine.) “And a bit too serious to be a trust-funder. Also, you should consider yourself lucky that your mother is not actively targeting him, too. The Darcys are worth twice as much as the Lees.”

I eyed Charlotte. “Why do you know this?”

“Mrs. Lu wouldn’t mind my marrying rich, either.” Charlotte took a final sip of her drink and held out the empty glass to me. “Oh, look, Bing is talking to Jane again. Why don’t you go and preemptively get me another vodka tonic?”

Charlotte was proved right about Bing and Jane. They spent the whole evening talking to each other. And when they weren’t talking, they were dancing.

But she was wrong about something else. My mother *was* going to actively target William Darcy. I saw the moment it happened. She was sitting with Mrs. Lu, gabbing away, her eyes on Bing and Jane. Then I saw her pump her fists in triumph. Mrs. Lu, not to be outdone, leaned over and whispered something in my mom’s ear. My mother’s eyes immediately zipped to where William Darcy was standing against a wall, frowning (of course) and typing on his phone.

Then her eyes zipped toward me.

That was when I decided to hide. I found a nice spot on a far wall, with some decent shadowing. With any luck my mother would not be able to find me and instead target her matchmaking onto Lydia, who was currently grinding against two different guys on the dance floor.

Of course, I don't have any luck.

I was pretty happy by my wall. I watched Jane and Bing dance. I watched my mom try to talk to Darcy and get a literal cold shoulder. And then . . . I watched my steely-eyed mother march over and whisper something in the bride and groom's ears.

"All right, everyone!" Mrs. Gibson called out. "Time for the bouquet toss!"

Oh, dear God.

This is every unattached person's least favorite part of any wedding. Might as well herd all us single folk into a pen to be gawked at like an exhibit at a zoo: Look! Unmatched pairs, in the wild!

But I could feel my mother's eyes staring daggers at me. I would be disowned if I didn't participate.

I found Charlotte in the crowd of reluctant young ladies. We shared a shrug of sympathy.

Jane came up next to me. "Hi! Isn't this such a wonderful wedding?" She glowed. If infatuation were radioactive, she would be Marie Curie. "I'm so happy. For Ellen and Stuart," she clarified.

"Aw, Ellen and Stuart are so super cute together, it's gross!" Lydia said from my other side. "But Stu has the hottest friends—which one do you think I should sneak out to the car with?"

Lydia finger-waved to the two inebriated bros she'd been dancing with.

Since there was only a 50 percent chance she was joking, I opened my mouth to say something that would hopefully cajole my younger sister into not banging some random dude in the car we all had to ride home in, when out of the corner of my eye I saw a bouquet of peonies headed right for my face.

Holding up my hands was a natural defensive reaction.

So there I was, bouquet in hand and a bunch of relieved single women around me clapping. I noticed my mother in the crowd beyond. She was giving the bride two thumbs up.

Next up: the guys. One guess as to which self-inflicted social pariah stood as far away as possible from the crowd but still got the garter slingshot into his chest.

William Darcy.

We locked eyes. He looked grim. To be fair, I'm sure I did, too.

As the music started up and the dance floor cleared for this most terrible of traditions, I was actually feeling a little sorry for William Darcy. He was clearly not comfortable. He didn't dance well—just sort of swayed in time to the music, and kept me at arm's length like a seventh grader, his chin going back into his face like a turtle trying to hide. (I'm not a professional dancer by any means, but I enjoy a good turn across the floor

with someone fun, and I regularly kick Lydia's butt in Just Dance.) He also did his best to avoid my eyes. Maybe he was just a little socially awkward. After all, Bing seemed fun and outgoing, and Darcy is Bing's friend, so there has to be something more to him, right?

Wrong.

I tried a little conversation to break the silence.

"This is a pretty incredible party, don't you think?"

"If you say so."

Wow. Okay.

"Well, it's what passes for incredible in our little town. How do you like it here so far?"

"I don't, especially."

Wow. Way to be open and accepting of my hometown there, fancypants.

"Do you . . ." I searched for something, anything. ". . . like to dance?"

"Not if I can help it."

"Do you like anything?" I couldn't help but say.

That got him to look at me. He was shocked, but hey, at least it was some response.

"Look, I'm trying here," I said, "but that was basically my entire small-talk repertoire. So, you could either lob the ball back in my court, or we could sway here in silence for the remaining two minutes of this song." I waited. "Your choice."

He said nothing.

And I don't know why. How hard is it to ask someone what kind of movies she likes, or what she studies in school? Basic chitchat stuff? Apparently for Darcy, lowering himself to converse with a townie-dwelling occasional dancer who appreciates all the hard work that Ellen and Mrs. Gibson put into a wedding like this was too degrading a concept.

So he just pulled his chin back farther and let the song end.

"Thank you," he said, after stopping abruptly when the music faded.

No, Darcy, thank *you* for putting that dance out of its misery.

We separated. Luckily, the band struck up another song, and the rest of the partygoers filtered back onto the floor, masking any embarrassment. And I have to admit, it *was* kind of embarrassing. For him to not even pretend politeness? Way to make me feel like an unworthy troll.

But I found Charlotte by my lovely shadowed spot on the wall, and she had a way of making me feel better about the whole thing—by laughing about it.

“That was the most awkward dance ever,” she said. “Worse than your wedding dance with Ricky Collins in second grade.”

“True. Ricky at least had been enthusiastic. Although he did have to get a cootie shot before touching me.”

Charlotte laughed so hard, she got dizzy. “Whoa . . .” She closed her eyes. “Room spinning.”

“Yeah, I think you’re done with the vodka tonics for now. Although you won the bet, hands down. No contest.”

“Yup. Can’t wait to be invited to Jane and Bing’s wedding.” She smirked. Then turned green.

“Let’s get some air, okay?” I said. I didn’t tell her this, but the idea of Jane marrying Bing at my mother’s urging made me want to turn green, too.

Outside, Charlotte took some deep, easy breaths. The green faded from her face. We were about to go back in, when I heard two familiar voices from around the corner.

“Can we go home, please?” Darcy said.

“Come on, it wasn’t that bad. Could you try to enjoy yourself? A little?” Bing replied.

“In a town that wouldn’t know a Barney’s from a JCPenney? I don’t see how.”

“Well, you could try dancing again.”

“Because it went so well the last time.”

“It wasn’t that bad.” There was silence, and I imagine a sardonic look exchanged between friends that mirrored the sardonic look exchanged between Charlotte and me.

“Listen, you’re having fun,” Darcy said. “You have somehow managed to find the only pretty girl in this town. Go back in and keep dancing with Jane Bennet. I’ll go home and send the driver back for you.”

“Come on, don’t do that,” Bing said. “Stay a little while. I want to introduce you to Jane. Properly. You’ll like her. She’s . . . I’ve never met anyone like her.”

I had to give Bing props for that. Whether or not he’s good enough for Jane, he’s got good taste.

“I’ve never met anyone that smiles that much.”

There’s that Darcy charm. Finding fault with *smiling*.

“And you know what,” Bing continued, ignoring his friend’s attitude, “her sister Lizzie is pretty nice, too. I bet if you asked her to dance again, she’d say yes. Give you a do-over?”

Before I could even wonder if I actually *would* give him a do-over, I could feel icy derision coming off Darcy in waves, curving around the corner to my hiding spot and leaving me cold.

“Lizzie Bennet is . . . fine, I suppose. Decent enough. But why should I bother dancing with her when no one else is?”

My jaw dropped silently. So did Charlotte’s. I mean, seriously. Who the hell does this guy think he is? I didn’t really hear what was said next because of the rage flooding my ears, but Bing must have worked some magic on Darcy (or more likely had some dirt on him) and got him back inside the party.

“Wow,” Charlotte said.

“And to think, I was beginning to feel I had been too harsh on him.”

“Well, at least you have an out with your mom. All you have to do is relay that little conversation to her and she’ll never bug you about marrying into the Darcy fortune again.”

And that was basically the Gibson wedding. Charlotte was pretty tipsy the rest of the night, but held it together. I left her in good hands with her mother, her little sister Maria, and a tall glass of ice water. Lydia danced too much, and didn’t alternate water with her hard liquor and ended up vomiting in the bushes outside (very near where Charlotte almost did), and that was about the time the Bennet family decided to go home. Mom tried to persuade Jane to stay with Bing and have him give her a ride home (in his limo), but Jane was pretty tired by that point, too.

Tired, but smiling. A lot.

My mother crowed the whole way home about watching Jane and Bing dance together. Calling it the happiest day of her life. Which sums up my mother for you.

Charlotte was right, though. My mom was willing and able to dislike Darcy. She had found him pretty rude when she’d tried to speak with him before the Most Awkward Dance Ever (™ Charlotte Lu). I gave her a truncated version of our conversation while dancing, or lack thereof. I kept what I’d overheard outside to myself. Mom might be a little hyper-focused on marriage, but she’s also a mama bear. Don’t mess with her cubs. And under no circumstances insult them.

Charlotte was right about something else, too. At least I have plenty to vlog about when we record tomorrow. Although, considering the number of vodka tonics I fetched her (and the slurring pocket-dial), I may have to do this one without my bestie. She’s going to need to sleep her victory off.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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