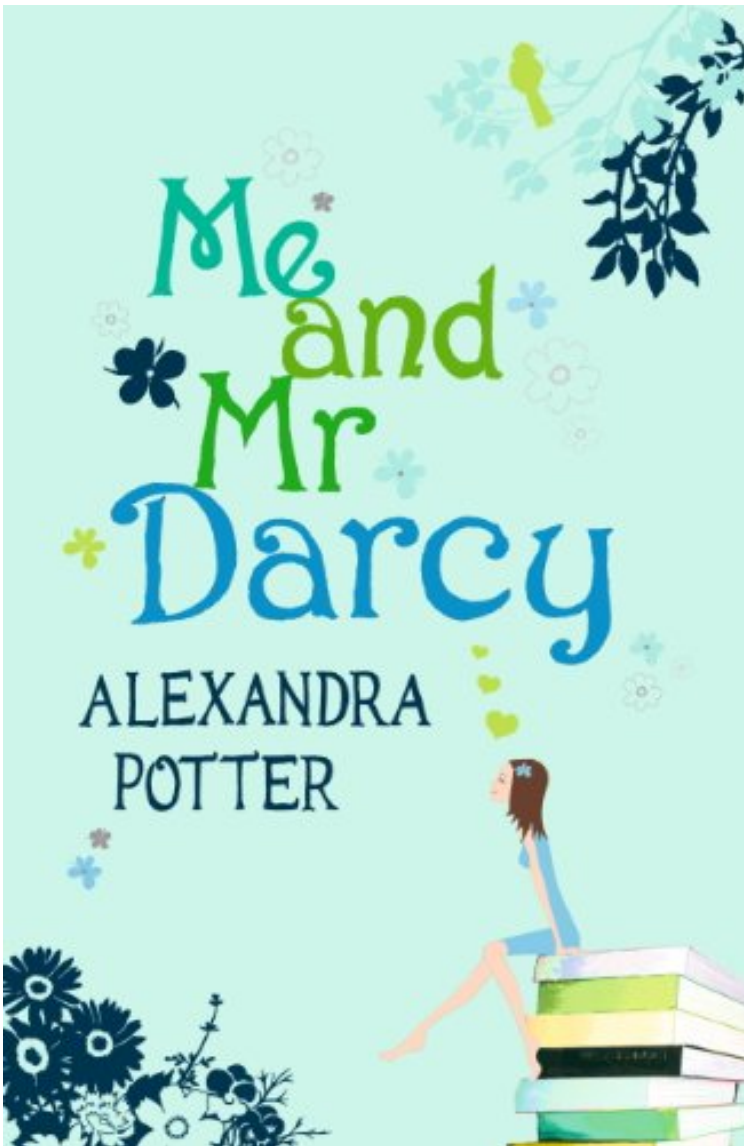


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Me and Mr Darcy (English Edition)



Par Alexandra Potter
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Description :

Présentation de l'auteurHe's every woman's fantasy.After a string of nightmare relationships, Emily Albright has decided she's had it with modern-day men. She'd rather pour herself a glass of wine, curl up with Pride and Prejudice and step into a time where men were dashing, devoted and honourable, strode across fields in breeches, their damp shirts clinging to their chests...So when her best friend invites her to Mexico for a week of margaritas and men, Emily decides to book a guided tour of Jane Austen country instead. But she quickly realises she won't find her dream man here. The coach tour is full of pensioners, apart from one Mr Spike Hargreaves, a foul-tempered journalist sent to write a piece on why Mr Darcy's been voted the man most women would love to date.Until she walks into a room and finds herself face-to-face with Darcy himself.

And every woman's fantasy suddenly becomes one woman's reality. . . .

Chapter 1 It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single girl in possession of her right mind must be in want of a decent man. There's just one problem So we had a drink each and shared a pizza, but you asked for two extra toppings on your half, which means you owe Hang on a minute, I've got a calculator on my BlackBerry

Sitting in a little Italian restaurant on Manhattans Lower East Side, I stare across the checked tablecloth and watch, dumbfounded, as my date pulls out his CrackBerry and proceeds to cheerfully divvy up the bill. . . . where on earth do you find a decent man these days?

Im having dinner with John, a thirty-something architect I met briefly at a friends birthday party last weekend. He seemed nice enough when he asked for my number nice enough to share a pizza with on a Tuesday evening after work, anyway but now, watching him hunched over the table, number-crunching, Im fast realizing Ive made a mistake. . . . an extra seven dollars and seventy-five cents, and that includes tax and tip, he declares triumphantly, and shows me the screen to prove it. A very big mistake.

To be honest, I blame Mr. Darcy. I was just twelve years old when I first read *Pride and Prejudice* and I fell for him right from the start. Forget fresh-faced Joey from *New Kids on the Block* or leather-clad Michael Hutchence from *INXS* whose posters I had tacked to my wall. Mr. Darcy was my first love. Devastatingly handsome, mysterious, smoldering, and a total romantic, he set the bar for all my future boyfriends. Snuggled under the bedcovers with my flashlight, I couldnt wait to grow up so I could find a man like him. But now I have grown up. And here I am, still looking.

Digging out a twenty-dollar bill from my pocket, I pass it to John. Have you got the seventy-five cents? he prompts, his hand still outstretched. You have got to be kidding. Except hes not. Oh um sure, I mutter, and begin rooting around in my change purse. Dont get me wrong. Im not Rene Zellweger. I dont need a man to complete me. I have a career, I pay my own rent, I have a set of power tools and I know how to use them. And as for the other thing, well, thats what battery-operated toys were invented for. I hand John the seventy-five cents. Then watch in disbelief as he proceeds to count it. Still, that doesnt stop me hankering after a bit of that good old-fashioned romance Im always reading about in books. Or daydreaming about meeting someone who could sweep me off my Uggs and set my pulse racing. A dark, handsome, faithful man, with impeccable manners, brooding good-looks, witty conversation, and one of those big, broad, manly chests you can rest your head upon

Instead, in the last twelve months, Ive been on one disastrous date after another. Now, OK, I know everyone has a bad-date story to tell. Its completely normal. Who hasnt been out with Creepy Guy/Mr. Nothing in Common With/The Forty-Something Fuck-Up (delete as applicable, or in my case, dont delete any of them)? Its just part of being single. It has to happen once. And twice is bad luck. But a whole string of them? For example, here are a few off the top of my head:

1. Bart had issues with intimacy. Translated, this meant he wouldnt hold my hand as it was too intimate, but it was perfectly OK to ask me back to his place to watch a porn movie on our first date.
2. Aaron wore white cowboy boots. Which is bad enough. But after canceling on me at the last minute, telling me that he had to work late, I spotted the boots glowing in the darkness of the movie theater that night. Scroll up and there was Aaron in the back row with his tongue down another girls throat.
3. Then there was Daniel, the nice Jewish banker who invited me over for a home-cooked dinner. Unfortunately, he forgot to tell me it was his mother doing the cooking. Sorry, did I say mother? I mean, smother. Five courses and three hours of listening to how fabulous Daniel was later, I managed to escape before she got out the baby photos.
4. And now theres John, otherwise known as Mr. Chivalrous

So, how about we do this again? hes asking me now as were leaving the restaurant. Oh I open my mouth to reply but instead give a muffled yelp as John lets the door swing back in my face. I just manage to stop it with my elbow. Not that he notices hes already on the sidewalk lighting up a cigarette. Rubbing my bruised elbow, I join him outside. After the warmth of the restaurant the cold hits me immediately. Its December in New York and its way below zero. What are you doing Friday? he persists, raising his eyebrows and taking a drag of his cigarette. Oh, hell, what do I say now? I falter. Come on, Emily. Youre both adults. It will be fine. Just be honest and tell him. Tell him what? pipes up a little voice inside me. That youd rather stick pins in your eyeballs than go on another date with him? Um, well, actually I say in a constricted voice and then stop mid-sentence as he blows smoke in my face. Im kind of busy, I splutter. Busy being too busy to go out with a complete dickhead like you, pipes up that voice again. Only this time its yelling. Too many parties, huh? Trust me, I so want to be honest. Why let him off the hook with an excuse? Why protect his feelings? What about those of the next poor, unsuspecting girl hes going to date? Its my duty to tell him. I mean, not only is he cheap and rude, but he has hair plugs. Thats right. Hair plugs. I glance at them now. Under the streetlamp you can see the neat little rows dotted across his shiny scalp. Tiny seedlings of hair planted in a desperate attempt to disguise his receding hairline. Despite my feelings, sympathy tugs. Oh,

comon, dont be so mean, Emily. He deserves understanding and kindness, not judgment and derision. Swallowing my annoyance, I force a smile. Yeah, fraid so. I nod, rolling my eyes in a Phew, Im exhausted from all this crazy partying kind of way. Honestly, I could be an Academy Award winning actress, not the manager of a quirky little bookstore in SoHo. In truth Ive been to one party. It was at the Orthodontists Society and I had a cold. I spent the whole evening popping Sudafed and discussing my cross-bite, and I was in bed by nine-thirty. The excitement nearly killed me. But it was nice meeting you, I add warmly. You too. John appears to visibly relax and I feel a warm, virtuous glow envelop me. See. Look what a difference a few kind words can have. Now I feel really good about myself. Saint Emily. Hmm, its got quite a ring to it. Buoyed up by my success, I continue: And the plugs are amazing. Plugs? John looks at me blankly. Shit. Did I really just say that? Er . . . I meant to say pizza. The pizza was amazing. Im flustered, blushing beet-red and trying not to look at his hairline, which of course my eyes are now drawn to with some kind of magnetic force. Argghh. Look away, Emily. Look away. Theres an excruciating pause. We both try to pretend were not aware of it. Me by picking my cuticles. Him by surreptitiously patting his hair and checking out his reflection in the restaurant window when he thinks Im not looking. Guilt overwhelms me. Now I feel like a really bad person. Maybe I should apologize. Maybe I should. In one seamless move, John takes a final drag of his cigarette, grinds it out under his foot, and lunges for me. Oh, God. This isnt happening. This cant be happening. Its happening. For a split second I freeze. Everything seems to go into slow motion. I watch him looming toward me, eyes closed, mouth open, tongue sticking out, and realize hes misinterpreted kindness for a come-on. Fortunately (or should that be unfortunately?), Ive been on enough bad dates in the last year to keep my reflexes sharp, and at the last moment I come to and manage to swerve just in time. His lips crash-land on the side of my face and he plants a sloppy kiss on my ear. Euggghh. I pull away sharply. Even so, its a bit of a struggle as he has his hand wrapped around my waist like a vice. We spring apart and face each other on the sidewalk. Well, in that case, I think Ill grab a cab home, he says curtly, stuffing his hands into the pockets of his pleated pants. Yeah, me too, I reply shakily, wiping my spit-soaked ear with my sleeve. Silence. We both stand at the curb trying to hail a cab. Finally, after a painful few minutes, I see the familiar sight of a yellow cab with its light on. It pulls up and I heave a sigh of relief and reach for the door handle, but John beats me to it. Im pleasantly surprised. At last! A bit of chivalry. Heartened, I soften and throw him my first real smile of the evening as he tugs open the door. Perhaps Ive misjudged him. Perhaps hes not so bad after all. Without hesitation, he jumps inside and slams the door. Well, thanks for a great evening, he says, sticking his head out the window. Happy Holidays! Hey! I yell, suddenly finding my voice. Hey, youve stolen my. But the cab takes off down the street with a screeching of tires. Abandoned on the slushy sidewalk, I watch the taillights disappear into the traffic and, despite my anger, I suddenly feel myself crumple inside. Unexpectedly my eyes prick with tears and I blink them back furiously. Honestly, whats gotten into me? Im being ridiculous. The man was a total moron. Im not upset. Im fine, totally fine. And sniffing determinedly, I stuff my hands in my pockets and head off in the direction of the subway. You should have called the cops. Its the next morning and Im at work at McKenzies, a small, family-owned bookstore, where Im the manager. I look up at Stella, my assistant, whos standing on a stepladder stacking books. Why? For stealing the first cab? Smiling resignedly, I pass her more titles. Please, Officer, my date stole the first cab. Hes not a gentleman. Arrest him. From Publishers Weekly U.K. author Potter makes her U.S. debut with Emily Albright, 29, a New York bookstore manager, who half-seriously blames Jane Austen's Fitzwilliam Darcy for her abysmal dating life: Darcy sets the bar too high. As Christmas approaches, Emily, to avoid a holiday with co-worker Stella, signs up for a tour of Darcy territory, lighting out, amusingly, with a gaggle of gray-haired Darcy maniacs. As the tour group weaves in and out of Darcy locales, Emily butts heads with Spike Hargreaves, a handsome young journalist interviewing the group. Soon, the jet-lagged, drink-laden Emily finds herself presto! time traveling and meeting Mr. Darcy himself, complete with frock coat. As her acquaintance with Darcy deepens, Emily, to her great surprise, finds herself thinking about Spike. Despite the plot's predictability, Potter's chick lit take on Darcy has a refreshing not-trying-to-equal-the-master feel. (July) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.