

well sweetheart, it's just not that simple

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well sweetheart, it's just not that simple

by [Fleeple](#)s

Summary

Lydia has had about enough of being shoved into friendship with Gigi. They think that Gigi will understand her, that she knows what it was like, that she'll be a good influence. And as much as everyone's full of kind smiles and good intentions, and as much as Lydia is genuinely feeling a lot better, throwing her and Georgiana Darcy together just shows that nobody really gets it. Not really.

And after all, how could they?

~~~~~

Rated T for swearing and some implied things later on, perhaps.

Accompanying playlist I wrote this to:

<http://grooveshark.com/#!/playlist/Lydia+gigi+Writing+Mix/84828940>

## Notes

Playlist: <http://grooveshark.com/#!/playlist/Lydia+gigi+Writing+Mix/84828940>

Song of this chapter: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4sa2HoXpsE>

## dinner parties

The first time it happens is at Jane and Bing's reunion dinner.

Although Lizzie has undergone a lot of change over the past year, she's still approximately as subtle as a spork in the eye, and so Lydia's eyebrows practically jump off her face when her sister attempts to skilfully manoeuvre Lydia and GiGi next to each other.

Lydia's attempting to sit down next to Jane and opposite Lizzie when Lizzie stops her with a panicked expression on her face. "Lydia!" she says, too-quickly, and Lydia pauses halfway into her seat.

"Yeah?"

"I- don't sit there! Come... sit between me... and Gigi!" She shoots a panicked expression across the room at Darcy, who just coughs awkwardly.

Lydia raises her eyebrows. "Isn't Darcy going to sit there?"

"No, William will sit on my other side."

"I thought Charlotte was going to sit th--"

Darcy catches the panicked expression on Lizzie's face, and awkwardly places himself on the chair on her other side. "No, I, uh, need to talk about some things with Bing, actually." He forces a smile, and 'forced' is really not a good look for him.

"And that means I can sit next to Jane," says Charlotte, her demeanour even more convoluted than Darcy's (if that was even *possible*). "We never get to catch up." It's clear from the expression on her face that this was most certainly not her idea.

"...Alright," says Lydia, and sits as directed.

Jane smiles brightly, but there's worry behind her eyes. "Right! Yes. Good. Perfect. Wonderful. I'll go get starters, then."

"Let me help!" says Lizzie, too quickly, leaving Lydia with no one to talk to but Gigi. Which she's pretty sure is her sister's plan. As she watches her sister dash away, she thinks to herself: *Who's deceptively deceptive now, sis?*

*Well*, she muses as she avoids all eye contact. *The design on Jane and Bing's table just got super interesting.*

She glances sideways towards Darcy. She's surprised that attempting conversation with her sister's socially awkward boyfriend *actually seems like a more viable option* than talking to Gigi. She has no interest in getting to know George's ex, and she's pretty sure Gigi has no interest in getting to know her. So that works out *perfectly*, as her sister once said.

“Hi,” says Gigi, quietly.

Then again, we all know how that story ended.

Lydia knows from Lizzie’s videos – and the Pemberley Domino videos that she pretended she never watched – that Georgiana Darcy is not shy, so she’s surprised to hear the tentative, unsure note in her voice, and it’s enough to get Lydia to actually *look* at her for the first time – the first time when she risked being looked back at.

And Gigi’s eyes are fixed right on her. And Lydia’s pretty sure that they haven’t moved since she sat down.

Lydia looks down at the table before she can take it all in.

“Hi,” she responds.

There’s a pause, and she notices that several members of the party are looking nervously at the pair of them. Lydia feels almost like she’s going to hurl. She doesn’t want to be shoved together with George Wickham’s fucking ex, with Darcy’s sodding sister, some perfect, smarter version of her who didn’t get hurt so bad, some together-girl who’s rich and happy and unscathed. She was doing just fine up until now. She hadn’t thought about him all day, but in Gigi’s tentative gaze all she sees is a thousand sunsets.

“Bathroom,” she manages to choke out for politeness’ sake, and she shoves her chair back and stalks out the room.

It’s not exactly a lie, because she does go to the bathroom. She shuts the door tight and locks it and sits down on the edge of the loo, and stares at the pink, pretty together look of Jane and Bing’s apartment. Everything down to the mirror is startlingly clean, not a speck in sight. It’s beautiful, but it’s the exact opposite of what Lydia loves. If she lived here, she wouldn’t be able to feel *home*. Home is blankets and empty cups of coffee, and dumping your jacket on the sofa when you come in after a long night, and collapsing on messy covers. Home is the mark of crayon from when you tried to draw on the bedroom wall when you were six. Home is not neat-pressed flowers and too-clean walls.

And more than anything right now, Lydia wishes she was home. Because in home, in cups of coffee, under blankets and books and bad reality TV, sometimes she entirely forgets about George Wickham. But when she looks at Gigi, it’s like he’s back again, and he gathering her in his arms, and turning her world upside down again, just to rip it all away to grey.

And most of the time she’s not hung up on him, really. But sometimes it gets to her.

She takes a deep breath and looks in the mirror. There’s mascara running down her face, and her eyeliner is all but vanished. She looks at herself in the mirror and feel entirely, truly, pathetic. She’s supposed to be better than this now. She thought she was done with this.

“Oh, George,” she whispers to the surface. “How many tears have I cried over you now?”

*Enough to fill a river.*

“Lydia?”

It’s Gigi.

Lydia doesn’t reply, and focuses on erasing the marks of tears that have stained her face.

“Lydia, I just wanted to check that you were-“

“I’m *fine*.”

There’s a pause.

“O-okay,” says Gigi.

“I’ll be back in a minute.”

“Alright.” But Lydia doesn’t hear footsteps, and she’s pretty sure that the other girl is still on the other side of the door. She breathes out a deep sigh, wishing her away, when she says something else: “Lydia?”

“Yes.”

“Did I... do something?”

“For God’s fucking sake, Gigi, not everything in the world is about *you*.” The words are out before she thinks about them, and Lydia regrets them instantly. They belong to some former, shadow of herself, a girl she buried under earth and hoped she would never see again. But she’s wrestling out of the grave, dragging out the hate and hurt that put her there, groping to damage everything in her path.

“I-I’m sorry,” Lydia stumbles out.

Silence.

“I’m sorry,” she says again. “I didn’t me-“

“It’s alright,” says Gigi. “You’re right. I’m sorry.”

*No, I’m not*, Lydia tries to say. But she hears footsteps at last. Gigi is gone.

# triple-layer chocolate mousse

## Chapter Notes

chapter song: help, i'm alive by Metric

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZoK63Bk7pgw>

They don't speak to each other for the rest of dinner, much to Lizzie's chagrin.

"Lydia," she says. "Gigi's a big fan of Florence and the Machine. I think she went to see them in concert last year, didn't you?"

"Yeah!" says Gigi with faux-enthusiasm. "It was really great."

*Lovely for you*, thinks Lydia, and adds it up in the rich-girl tally list. She probably had front row seats or something, too. Out loud, she mumbles "Cool," and remains intently focused on her mousse, given that it is approximately 500 per cent more appealing than anything around her. She allows herself to drown in it, musing that it may well be the best thing she's ever tasted.

"Isn't chocolate your favourite too, Gigi?" prompts Lizzie. "I think you suggested this dessert to Jane. Lydia's a *total* chocaholic."

*Oh*, thinks Lydia. So she loves *chocolate*, too. Wow, we really have *so* much in common. Because nobody in this world likes *chocolate*.

"Actually, I made it," says Gigi cheerfully. "We- William and I, that is, picked up the recipe when we were in Venice once. We went to this tiny little café because we couldn't find anywhere better and we were starving – we thought it was going to be dull, you know, but it really surprised me – and we had this for dessert, and I *love* chocolate, especially anything that combines the three types, and I was saying that I'd never tasted mousse so good, so William asked the café owner for the recipe – " Gigi pauses for breath for a moment and takes a bite of the milk layer of the mousse – "Mhmmm... Anyway, he wouldn't give it to us at first, so William ended up having to bribe him for it, and I've been making it at any chance I could since, even though William says that we could just *buy* it. But it's better home-made, right?"

Lydia sets her spoon down. Suddenly, it doesn't taste so great after all. And does Gigi Darcy ever stop talking? It's like she stole all power of speech from her brother.

"Well, it's delicious," says Lizzie. "Don't you think so, Lydia?"

Lydia wishes she could bail again. Instead, she prods at it with her spoon and says: "Mmm."

(She does finish it, in the end. Despite her wanting to avoid its maker, after the sound settles, she has to admit- it is fantastic.)

Lizzie opens her mouth to prod at them again, but she takes one look at her sister and decides to postpone it, turning to be engaged in talking to Darcy.

Lydia makes the mistake of glancing up at Gigi and finds her eyes fixed on her. They're filled with an expression that she can't quite read. Curiosity? Confusion? Sadness?

Gigi breaks the gaze, a little embarrassed, and mutters a 'sorry'.

*Sorry for what ?*

When they've finished dessert ("Man, that was *great*, GGD!" calls a slightly-drunk Fitz), Bing brings out champagne with the assistance of Darcy. Jane and Bing get up, and she clears her throat tentatively.

"Hi, everyone! So, thanks so much for coming out to see us. It means a lot." She smiles and wraps her arm around Bing's waist, who looks at her with an expression of perfect adoration.

She glances at him and then continues. "We actually had something we wanted to announce since nearly everyone's here." She smiles and then raises her hand up to present a shining ring. "Bing and I are engaged."

What happens next is a blur of champagne clinking, of congratulations, of smiles, of laughter and joy. Jane babbles happily about wedding plans to an excited Lizzie and pleased but quiet Darcy. Lydia feels strangely adrift, so after she has quietly slunk over to congratulate Jane, she retreats to a corner with her champagne glass. Curled up on the sofa, she watches people mill around to the soundtrack of nondescript indie music and laughter.

Nobody seems to notice or care that she's not part of the action, and Lydia is glad to have it that way. She's happy watching the proud celebration by candlelight, hearing snippets of conversation. She's surprised to see even Caroline making a wholehearted effort to congratulate them, though there's something about her that seems... not unpleasant, but tense.

Lydia's watching Lizzie laugh about how "Mom was going to *lose* it," to Darcy when she feels a hand gently tap her on the shoulder and starts.

"Sorry," Gigi says. "I just- Jane wanted you. And Lizzie, actually. Have you seen her?"

"Over there," Lydia says, and she mills over to Jane to be joined by Caroline, Charlotte, Gigi and Lizzie in time.

"There you are! I wanted to ask you guys something," Jane says, a huge smile stretched across her face. "Will you guys be my bridesmaids?"

"Of *course*, Jane," says Lizzie, and throws her arms around her. "Is that even a question?"

“Only if the dress is kickass,” says Lydia, surprised that she’s able to make a joke. It’s as if this has ripped her out of her reverie and made it all a little more real. She is genuinely happy for them. But something just feels off since her breakdown in the bathroom.

“I’m designing them,” Jane replies excitedly.

“Well then, they will be lovely, Jane,” says Caroline, and Jane’s eyes light up. Her voice is a little stiff but she carries on. “I... Thank you for asking me. Of course I will be a bridesmaid. If you really want me to.”

“Of *course* I do, Caroline,” says Jane, and hugs her.

“Well then,” she says. “Good.” She looks a little stunned by the warmth in Jane’s eyes – but then Caroline has never really understood Jane, not really – and maybe it will still be more time before she really does.

“And what about you, Gigi? Charlotte?”

“Well, *duh*,” says Charlotte.

“I- are you sure you want me to?” says Gigi, who has been silent. “I mean, it’s just... I love you guys, but I don’t really know you that well, Jane, as much as I’d like to, so it seems like a strange choice to pick me...”

“It just seemed right,” said Jane with a smile. “Trust me. If you are all my bridesmaids, then everything will be *perfect*.”

“Who’s the maid of honour?” asks Charlotte.

Jane smiles. “Oh, I don’t really like that tradition. It seems unkind. Picking just *one* person. I even had a hard time narrowing bridesmaids down to five!”

“Jane,” says Lizzie. “Only *you* would be too nice to pick a maid of honor.”



# On Christmas Eve

## Chapter Summary

Lizzie meddles some more at the Christmas gathering.

## Chapter Notes

song: 'Driving Sideways' by Aimee Mann  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LDGSqdT6Og>

It's Christmas Eve and Mrs Bennet is panicking.

This, of course, is a surprise to nobody, but somehow it's still an event. There's a large gathering of friends and family in the lounge, and the snacks are running dry. To most people, this would be a slight annoyance. To Mrs Bennet, this is *nuclear war*.

"Lizzie!" she screams from the kitchen. Lizzie, currently attached to her boyfriend, rolls her eyes and mouths *oh God, no*. But she gets up anyway, much to Darcy's distaste, and heads into the warfare.

(It's not that nobody has offered to help Mrs Bennet with the cooking – her houseguests are largely too courteous not to. But she's shooed them all away every time.)

"Yeah, OK, Mom, we'll organise it." She sticks her head around the lounge door. Lydia, who has been abandoned by Mary, feels the hairs on the back of her neck stick up.

"Lydia, Gigi! Can you do me a favour?"

*No. Nope nope no no nope. It'd bad enough that she's here.*

"Sure, what's up?" Gigi's heading to the hallway already, and Lydia reluctantly trails after her. It's not so much that she dislikes Gigi, exactly. She barely knows her. But with all that she connotes, and all the history there, and the way Lizzie seems to wholeheartedly love her, and people's apparent determination to make her and Gigi friends – Lydia just can't handle her.

And she doesn't understand her, at all. She doesn't understand the way Gigi looks at her.

"I gotta help Mom in the kitchen and she's having a panic because we're running out of snacks. Mind heading down to the convenience store and picking up some more? Chips, dips,

whatever you can find.” Lizzie hands over a fat wad of cash to Gigi.

Lydia shrugs and leans against the wall. “Sure, but there’s no need for both of us to go.”

“I just thought it’d be easier with two.”

“Why?”

Lizzie sighs. “I’ll let you drive my car.” She dangles the keys hopefully in front of Lydia’s face.

Lydia ponders it. Lizzie, having undergone a serious money rise with the success of her new company, had a *nice* car, and Lydia had been bugging her for months to let her take it out for a drive.

“Deal,” she says, and snatches the key.

Lydia grins as she sticks the key in the ignition and gets ready to drive off. She almost forgets about Gigi Darcy sitting next to her as she opens up the sunroof and lets the cool evening air swell into the car.

Gigi is shivering, but she says nothing. Lydia glances at her and drives a little faster. She hops out into the cool night air with a smile on her face.

“Shame the drive down here is so short,” she mutters. “That is a *great* car.”

Gigi is staring at her again, and smiling a little.

“What?” says Lydia, a little irritated now.

“Nothing,” she lies. It’s just that Lydia has actually voluntarily spoken to her for the first time, and it wasn’t at all awful, and maybe they could be friends after all, if Gigi carries on like this. “Well, we could always drive a little more after we grab snacks.”

Lydia grins. She almost says *I like how you think*, but she stops herself, and just nods.

“Yeah,” she says. “That doesn’t sound so bad.”

They weave in and out of the aisles, each carrying a basket, and loading it up with a ludicrous amount of food. Gigi gets excited over a bag of mini marshmallows (But marshmallows are like, ten times better if they’re *mini*! she tries to explain to a sceptical Lydia, who favours the regular kind) and Lydia levers a year’s supply of skittles into the basket. They’re pretty sure that Lizzie will regret sending them by the time they come back. They joke about it, and then Lydia shrinks, because just *maybe, maybe*, this girl isn’t so bad after all, and she finds that harder than anything.

They hop back in the car with their spoils of war, and Lydia winds her window halfway down and heads on to a main road so that she can feel the wind rush through her hair. Gigi’s hair becomes completely windswept, but she doesn’t even care.

“Hey, Lydia?” she says.

Lydia glances her way briefly and nods.

“Aren’t you cold?”

“Nope,” she says, and winds the window down further. Lydia loves cool nights like these. They smell of peace, and freedom, and being able to hide from a world that always wants to know *how you are* and *if you’re coping*. “Why, Georgiana, are you?”

“I’m alright,” Gigi says, even though she’s *freezing*. “And you can call me Gigi, you know.”

“We’re not friends,” Lydia says harshly. “I’ll call you Georgiana.”

Gigi is quiet. “Alright,” she says. “But you don’t have to be my friend to call me Gigi.”

*I didn’t mean it that way*, thinks Lydia. Trouble is, she’s not sure what she *did* mean.

She turns around pretty promptly, and they don’t speak all the way home.

# a goddess in pink

## Chapter Notes

Song: I Was a Fool - Tegan and Sara

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWrjGdJA6V4>

Jane's brow is furrowed as she concentrates on the back of Lydia's dress, pin in her teeth. "Gigi," she mumbles through metal, "Could you hold this, sweetie?" Any normal person would have just said 'hold this' – but Jane Bennet could not avoid politeness, even when balancing pins between her teeth.

Gigi obliged, and got a pin in her finger for her trouble.

"Sorry!" said Jane, dabbing at the blood with her sleeve. "I'm so sorry."

"Don't worry about it." She glanced down at Lydia's back. "Crap. There's blood on Lydia's dress."

"What?" says Lydia. "No. No no no no." The dress had been perfect, apart from the slight fitting issue Jane was attempting to remedy.

"I'm so sorry," say Jane and Gigi in unison.

"It's just a tiny speck," adds Jane hopefully. "Maybe nobody will notice."

"Can we get it out?" adds Lizzie.

"Okay," interrupts Charlotte, ever pragmatic. "Take the dress off, and I'll see what I can do."

Lydia finds she's oddly panicked, but she loves that dress. Jane has done the most beautiful designs, failing to fall into the usual bridal trap of buying a few knockoffs in a suitably terrible shade of tangerine. Even if Jane was vindictive enough to think about the need to be the most beautiful one at the wedding, she'll be radiant nonetheless.

Lydia whips off the dress and throws her jeans and a tshirt back on, watching Charlotte hurry off to work magic.

"It'll be fine," says Lizzie, rubbing her shoulder.

"I'm going to get some air," says Lydia, feeling stifled again.

She can't believe she feels so worked up over a stupid dress. It's ridiculous, and she knows it, but when she looked at herself in the mirror – decked out in silken, shining pink – she felt

like herself again. *The Lydia Bennet*. Her smile felt real, and there wasn't sadness in her eyes. She rubs her hands up and down her jeans and steps outside.

And comes face to face with Gigi Darcy.

Typical.

"Oh," she says. "Sorry."

Lydia just freezes. "I... didn't know you were out here," she says after a minute.

"Yeah I'm... sorry, I just needed some air."

"Same." says Lydia, and walks down a few paces to crouch against a wall.

"I'll, um, go then. See you, Lydia."

She almost says: *You can stay*. But something stops her, and so instead she says, "Whatevs," and looks in the opposite direction.

And she's pretty sure the thing stopping her is named George Wickham.

# wedding bells

## Chapter Notes

Song: They Weren't There - Missy Higgins  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtGaXaQcmTQ>

The collection of bridesmaids stands awkward, nervous, outside the church doors. They're decked out in rainbow. Charlotte takes the helm in a stunning red, followed by Lizzie in a surprisingly stunning yellow that nobody thought would work – but totally did. Caroline follows in green, of course, and Gigi stands in front of Lydia in purple.

Lydia muses to herself that Gigi looks annoyingly beautiful. Is there anything that Georgiana Darcy does not do with absolute perfection? She wonders if she peeled it all back, if there's really flesh and bone underneath it all, or if she's robotic, calculated to the perfect girl, the perfect sister, the perfect... everything.

Lydia distracts herself by being glad that nobody had to be orange in the group.

"Guys," says Lizzie. "We don't need to stand to attention. Jane's going to be another half an hour, at least. Why don't we all relax for about twenty and then meet back here?"

They agree, and the four girls divert off separately. Lydia heads to the vending machine to pick up a packet of skittles. She feels it's suitable for the rainbow-themed wedding. Jane really went all out on the décor.

She inserts a dollar, and then thumps the machine in frustration when the sweets won't move. "Ugh," she cries out, kicking the glass.

"There's a trick to it," says Gigi's voice brightly. "Want a hand?"

Lydia feels like she could set her on fire with her mind. She turns slowly to see her. It's like the girl is stalking her or something. She's just – always – around, and Lydia still doesn't fully understand why it bugs her so much. "No. I'm fine. I can handle it."

"I wasn't saying you couldn't... I just meant... maybe I could help."

"Well, you can't. You can't help with any of it."

"...Any of it?"

Silence. They just entered new territory.

(They don't talk about George. Nobody does.)

Lydia resumes thumping the vending machine, and Gigi tentatively leans across and then gives it a series of taps on the side. The skittles fall to the bottom, and they're accompanied by a bedraggled friend. Lydia pulls out her pack and, half-rolling her eyes, offers the other to Gigi, who shakes her head.

Shrugging, Lydia opens the packet and dives in, picking out a purple skittle and holding it up. It's the exact shade of Gigi's dress.

She drops it back in the packet quietly and selects another colour. Gigi notices every movement, watching her carefully.

"Lydia?" she says. "About... well. I just thought, if you wanted to talk about it," Lydia's entire body freezes up. "...maybe I could help. I mean, maybe we could help each other. Maybe it would just make it a bit easier, you know? I know what he was like. I know how hard it was."

Lydia throws back her head and laughs. "Ha. No, you really don't."

Gigi stares at her, confused.

"You have no idea, OK? Yeah, what he did to you sucked. But it's not the same. Don't pretend it was."

There's a pause "I didn't mean--"

"Yeah, you did. But I'm not having it. Don't ever pretend that George Wickham was to you what he was to me. And don't pretend he hurt you like he hurt me. Don't act like you have to carry that on your heart forever like I will. Don't pretend like it follows you everywhere, because it doesn't. Face it, rich girl," she says, and her words have a real venom to them now, she's practically spitting at her, glaring at her, wanting to rip the heart out of Georgiana Fucking Darcy – "You got off easy."

Gigi looks angry for half a second, but then her face softens, and it just makes Lydia even more angry. She's tired of people walking on eggshells to protect her. They're still doing it now, even so many months on. Even though she should be better. But for once, she just wants to scream at someone, to yell, to feel something other than sadness.

But Gigi just says, "I know. It wasn't. I'm sorry. I just thought..." Then she looks at Lydia again. "Nevermind."

Lydia wants to scream after her, tell her she's a bitch, tell her she hates her, but none of those things are true, and Lydia's scared that the only person she hates – after everything – is herself.

# questions

## Chapter Notes

Short chapter this time, whoops, but we're getting to the good stuff.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RPVp2HPMdo>

She finally asks one day.

“Lizzie,” she says, when Lizzie is home for a visit and they’re drinking milkshakes in an old diner and the sun is shining through the window and Lydia feels comfortable and full and happy. “Why are you pushing Gigi and I to be friends?”

Lizzie, who had been draining her butterscotch milkshake, drops the straw and looks at Lydia. “We’re not pu-”

One look from Lydia shuts that avenue.

“Okay, so we were.”

Lydia just looks at her expectantly.

“We just thought... We thought it might be good for both of you.”

“Why? Because, like, I get it, Gigi was involved with George, he hurt her, all that, but it’s not the same. What happened to her wasn’t the same, and it kind of pisses me off that you guys think it is.”

“That’s not what we think,” says Lizzie, trying to catch Lydia’s eye. “Lydia, that is not what we think at all. We just thought... well, Gigi doesn’t have loads of friends, right? And you guys are kinda similar, and you like the same things. And yeah, okay, maybe we thought that talking to someone about George could help.”

“It’s not that simple, Lizzie. It’s not like just because... we were both involved with George we’ll become magic best friends, OK? So please... stop. Gigi brings back bad memories, and I really don’t think she wants anything to do with me either, so-”

“I’m sorry,” cuts in Lizzie, and grips her hand. “I was trying to help. But I shouldn’t have interfered.”

“Forgiven,” says Lydia, as Lizzie’s words play around in her head. Gigi doesn’t have loads of friends? That didn’t sound right. It doesn’t sound like the together girl, the better Her, that Lydia thought she had sorted into a neat little box in her head.



But maybe it's not that simple.

Lydia quietly resolves to herself at least not to be horrible to Gigi Darcy. Not that they were ever going to be friends. Nope.

Never.

# lonely

## Chapter Notes

sticks and stones: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jo7W8sWpqww> - jonsi

She sees Gigi from time to time after that, but they don't speak.

She's sort of a package deal whenever Darcy is around. She doesn't really have any other family, and neither does her brother, so they're nearly always together.

When she sees Gigi staring off out the window once, Lydia wonders if she's lonely.

When she catches herself doing the same thing, Lydia realises that she's pretty lonely, too.

Halfway through a gathering at the Bennet House, Lydia spots her leaning against the table in the kitchen, drinking champagne, staring into space. It's weird, because Gigi is something of a social butterfly. Everybody loves her, and usually she's surrounded by Fitz and Lizzie and Darcy or something, and even Mrs Bennet says "oh, what a *lovely* girl she is, wouldn't she make a great sister in law, Lizzie?"

But now she's alone, and there's something in the way her lips remain pressed to the champagne glass and her eyes gaze off into the distance that reminds Lydia of herself. It's not that she looks sad, exactly, more just pensive, like she's thinking about something that isn't there anymore.

So then Lydia does something she never thought she would.

She walks over to Gigi and leans against the table and says: "How's the champagne?"

Gigi allows herself half a second to be stunned – because Lydia Bennet hates her – because frankly she's not sure what she thinks of Lydia now – because the last time she spoke included the words *face it, rich girl* – words that Gigi's heard a thousand times before, the only thing anyone thinks she is – and yet here she is, asking her about the champagne.

Lydia's ashamed to think that she's almost expecting Gigi to knock it – to say, *sub-par*, *cheap* (because it totally *is* cheap, and it *still* took a thousand coupons to get anything half-decent). But instead Gigi smiles and says: "Good!" She glances over at Lydia. "Like, really pretty-good. Although, it could be a little... *stronger*."

Lydia grins. Full on grins at Gigi. That's new. Gigi half-wonders if Lydia's about to murder her, because frankly she thinks she gets why she doesn't like her now, and all this whiplash is all too confusing.

“I’ve got just the thing,” she whispers, more for effect than anything, and ducks into the pantry, pulling out a bottle of vodka.

Gigi’s eyebrows raise. “I like the way you think.”

Lydia wonders what she’s doing as she takes down two shot glasses and fills them. Gigi abandons her glass of champagne and swigs back the shot before Lydia even has time to pick hers up.

“Impressive.”

Gigi smiles. “I’ve had practice.” She winks.

Lydia downs the vodka too, and then shakes her head, internally thinking *bleck*. It’s gross, but it does the job. “Oh yeah?” she says to Gigi. “Well, good look out drinking me, sweetheart.” It’s a challenge on more than one level. She knows that getting horribly drunk at a party thrown by her mother is pretty irresponsible, and totally not something that almost-recovered, *totally-over George Wickham* (if anyone asked) Lydia would do, but she wants to figure out Gigi Darcy- and is Gigi Darcy the type of person who would get drunk in an inappropriate circumstance because she was issued a challenge?

Judging by the way Gigi grins and pours two more shots, she is.

They drink two more, each, and then Gigi says something that stops Lydia dead.

“Why are you here?”

Lydia blinks. “It’s a party.”

“I meant with me.”

She shrugs. “I wanted to be.”

Gigi puts down her glass. “Yeah, but... you *hate* me.”

Lydia shakes her head. “I don’t hate you.”

There’s a pause, and then Gigi says: “Really? Because last month, at Jane’s wedding, it *sure* seemed like you hated me.”

“Well I don’t. And I... I want to be here, right now, for some reason, so just shut up and drink your vodka.”

Gigi doesn’t push her look, getting the distinct feeling that Lydia isn’t quite sure why she’s here, either. And she’s right about that.

In what might be the fourth (or fifth?) glass of vodka, Lydia finds some courage.

“I’m sorry about what I said,” she stumbles out.

Gigi pauses. “Okay,” she says, and smiles. “Forgiven.”

“That easy, huh?”

“Life’s a little too short for grudges, is all.”

Lydia is silent for a little while, and then stumbles against the table. “Well, Gigi,” she says. “Are you ready to give up?”

Gigi blinks at the mess before her and smiles. “Are we friends now, then?”

“What?”

“You just called me Gigi.”

“I’m drunk,” points out Lydia. “And you said that we didn’t have to be friends for me to call you that.”

“I’m going by your rules,” says Gigi, teasingly, leaning in towards her and grinning. Lydia Bennet is a firestorm, she’s noticed. She doesn’t do anything by halves, and maybe where Gigi screwed up was when she stopped being herself: wild and peppy and *energetic*, and became timid and meek and tried to impress her.

*So, she thinks. Maybe I’ll just be me, and we’ll either be friends or we won’t.*

And to her surprise, Lydia grins. “Yeah, okay, Gigi. We’re friends.” She stumbles again, feeling the quick ingestion of alcohol start to get to her. “Okay, we’re friends if you help me find somewhere to lie down... before I fall over.”

Gigi positively giggles. “Not sure I can... walk myself, but I’ll try.”

They both end up collapsed on top of Lydia’s bed, laughing until they fall asleep.

# morning

## Chapter Notes

the middle - jimmy eat world

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKsxPW6i3pM>

Lydia wakes up with a splitting headache and a body next to her in bed.

She panics.

This hasn't happened since... since George. She'd sworn off hook-ups since George. They never helped, no matter how good they may feel at the time. There's always the morning after to ruin the relief, and she just wasn't ready to do anything like that with anyone... *after*...

She can smell perfume and it's not hers. Next to her in bed is a someone. A *female* someone.

(It's not the first time, but it's a bit unusual regardless.)

Then Lydia realizes she's wearing pants.

And a top, for that matter.

*Oh.*

She breathes a sigh of relief as it all comes flooding back, internally cursing herself for being so stupid. No, the body next to her in bed is not a reckless, drunken hook-up, but Gigi Darcy, which is still pretty weird, but not necessarily *bad* weird.

Lydia lies there staring at the ceiling, trying to process the fact that somewhere after the third vodka, she and Gigi Darcy became friends. She glances over at her, sleeping, and thinks that she doesn't hate her. She hated the ghost of George that swam around her, but somewhere in-between Lizzie explaining why she thought they'd make good friends, and the twinkle in her eye when she pulled out the vodka, Lydia actually sort of started to like Gigi. Like a lot.

Gigi yawns and stretches, and hits Lydia in the eye with a curled up fist.

"Ow!"

A bleary-eyed Gigi quickly awakens at the yelp and starts. "Oh, God," she says. "I'm so sorry."

"S'alright," Lydia mumbles. "You just shocked me."

Gigi grins. "I'm not used to sharing a bed."

"No kidding."

"Oh," says Gigi. "We're sharing a bed."

Lydia just raises an eyebrow, wondering once again if she was wrong about Gigi Darcy. Is she actually so snobbish that-

"I was meant to go back home. I fell asleep."

Lydia laughs. "Oh. Yeah, we fell asleep somewhere after the fifth vodka."

Gigi scrambles for her phone in her pocket and pulls it out, finding a text from her brother and breathing a sigh of relief. "Georgiana – we observed you collapsed upstairs with Lydia. Whilst I don't approve of your drinking habits, we thought there was no sense in waking you. Lizzie is with me at Netherfield. Dearest love, William."

Gigi laughs. It's the most ridiculous text she's ever read, and it could only have been sent by her brother.

"What's up?" says Lydia, propping herself up against the pillows.

"Just my brother being a dope," she says, passing her phone over to Lydia to inspect.

Lydia giggles. "Oh, *wow*."

"Right? Who actually uses the word *observed* in a text message?"

"Your stone-age brother, apparently."

"More Regency era, to be honest," laughs Gigi. Then she sighs. "Oh, God, I'm going to get an earful when I go back to Netherfield." She mock-pouts. "Georgiana, *I do not approve of your drinking habits*."

Lydia raises her eyebrows. "Sure you *want* to go back to Netherfield?" She waves the phone in Gigi's face. "*Lizzie is at me with Netherfield*," she says in a mock-Darcy voice.

"So? I love Lizzie."

"Yeah, but..." Lydia grins. "*Lizzie is with me*. Why would he make a point of telling you that?"

"So that I didn't wonder where she was, I guess."

"I think that would be more important info for me or Jane, to be honest."

Gigi looks questioning, and Lydia decides to spell it out for her.

"Gigi, they took the opportunity for some *privacy*. Of an *intimate nature*."

“Oh,” says Gigi. “*Oh.*” She shakes her head. “Yeah, but they’re probably not *still...*”

Lydia snorts. “Their guest room is next to their room in San Fran. And I’ve been to stay a few times.”

“*Oh.*”

Then Lydia does something she hasn’t done in a long, long while. She full on breaks into obsessive, repetitive, crazy laughter. There’s something about Gigi’s cocktail of confusion, embarrassment and happiness that cracks her up, and before she knows it, Gigi is laughing too (though less enthusiastically than Lydia, because no one could compare) and they’ve both got tears in their eyes.

“Okay,” says Gigi. “So I won’t be going back to Netherfield any time soon.”

“Well, I mean, you *could*, but...”

“I’m still not entirely convinced you’re right about this, by the way.”

“Are you gonna chance it?”

“No.”

Lydia grins, and checks the time on her phone. It’s 11am. She groans. *Hangover cure needed asap.*

“Well,” she says. “Not really sure what I’m going to do all day.”

Lydia smiles. “I’ve got it covered.”

# Chapter 9

## Chapter Notes

Slow Me Down - Emmy Rossum

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiLcw4juIMk>

“You know,” says Gigi, as they walk along the pathway, each dabbing at frozen yoghurt, in the summer sunshine, “I always thought I didn’t like small towns.”

“Yeah?” says Lydia, still surprised by how easy it is to get along with Gigi, still shocked at the smiles and the banter and the way she wants to hear whatever she has to say next. Underneath it all, now, whatever she thought she hated is gone. She hated the girl she thought Gigi was: George’s perfect ex, a girl who got out unscathed, a girl who thought she knew everything. But really? Gigi isn’t perfect, and Lydia likes her a whole lot better that way.

“Yeah,” she says. “I think that’s just me inheriting my brother’s snobbishness, though. I mean, I wouldn’t want to live in one, but there are some things that are nice about them.”

“Like what?” Lydia’s not a big listener, usually, so it’s weird to find herself happy to listen to Gigi’s voice.

Gigi finds it strange to be really listened to.

“Well, I mean, the way everyone knows each other, and smiles on the street and stuff. It’s cute. Cosy.”

“Not always,” remarks Lydia.

Gigi pauses – about to say something – about to say *I’m sorry*, and *I understand*, but she’s beginning to learn that the more she says or thinks that about Lydia, the more clear it becomes that she doesn’t understand, not really, not at all.

Lydia thinks about the way people look at her now – the *sex tape girl*, the *scoundrel*, the *whore*, and her face flushes and she feels the need to change the subject. But instead what stumbles out is: “I wanna go to a big city. Like L.A. Or something. I was happy there.”

“Why?”

Lydia shrugs. “All those people... living out their lives... and nobody even knows your name... I don’t know, sometimes I think it might be nice to fade away a little. To not be watched.”



Gigi realises she's staring at her at that moment – at the way her brow furrows in concentration and thoughtfulness, and looks away. "Maybe. I don't know, it gets lonely though."

Lydia catches her eye. "Yeah. Yeah, well, I wouldn't wanna do it alone." *But that's not really much different from how I am now, is it?* She has Mary, sure, and Mary's sweet despite her prickly layer, and she is usually around, but since Lizzie and Jane and everyone left, the house feels cold and empty even with her parents around, and she'd just like to be someone's priority, maybe, even though she gets care packages and visits and smiles and hugs from time to time. She'd like someone to come home to and smile at and make dinner with and laugh about her stupid, dumbass day.

Gigi thinks how lonely it can be in a city when your brother spends most of his time with his girlfriend (who you love, and are glad makes him happy, and want to stick around forever) and your only other real *friend* in the city is almost ten years older than you, and William's friend really, and sure, you get along with everyone well enough, but everyone just assumes you're fine all the time because you smile and are smart at parties and seem to have it together.

"Maybe it's not where you are that matters, then," she says. "But what you do with it."

Lydia nods. *Well*, she thinks. *I think I'm done here.*

Gigi sighs. "Well, it's almost 4pm. I think it's probably safe from my sibling's sexcapades now, right? I really ought to get back in time for dinner. We've got an 11pm flight." She smiles. "It was nice to spend time with you, though, Lydia."

Lydia nods and throws her carton into the bin. "Yeah. Yeah, me too."

"Wanna walk back with me? You could see Lizzie before she goes, too"

"Nah. Nah, I should go, too. Dinner and... parents and all that."

Gigi nods. "Okay."

"Alright."

She turns to go, but Lydia catches her wrist. "Hey, um, just, if you wanted to, like, talk, or something, I could give you my number."

The smile on Gigi's face could light up the whole, stupid judgemental town.

# messages

## Chapter Summary

Whoops shot this one out real quick so feel free to yell at me over typos.

Three days later, Lydia is on her break at work when her phone buzzes.

A year ago, this was an event that occurred about fifty times a day. She'd never put the thing down. But since the incident, things are a little different. It's not that people abandoned her, exactly – but they walk on eggshells, aren't sure what to say to her, want to help but are too scared to. Besides, most people left town after they finished college.

And Lydia's fine. Really. She gets by.

She's just a little lonely, and she's not really sure where she's going, and sometimes she remembers him and everything blurs for a moment when she remembers a time when she was *so sure* and then how it all came crashing down.

Her hand hovers over the phone. It's probably just one of her sisters. They're essentially the only people who text her anymore.

(But a little voice in her head hopes it might be Gigi.)

So she pauses with her hand on the phone, because maybe it's not, and she's kind of stupidly scared to shatter the realm of reality in which Gigi cares enough about her to text her. Which is totally stupid, because a week ago she didn't even like this girl, and now she's giddy at the thought of her texting her in a way that doesn't quite make sense and she almost doesn't want to think about.

But her break's running out, so she picks up the phone.

**Gigi:** Hey! :) What's up? xxx

She smiles a little, because even Gigi's *texts* sound like her: bright, bubbly, jumpy, and with a quick glance at the clock tries to formulate a response.

*Hey. :) At work :( Not a lot, really, u?*

She sends it off and immediately regrets it, because it's dumb and *oh my god did she actually just use text speak* and *why does she care so damn much anyway, it's just a text?* It's probably a good thing that she has to get off her break at that moment, because otherwise she'd spend the next few minutes staring at her phone, waiting for a response. Halfway through serving a

table she feels it buzz in her pocket and fights the urge to answer and instead stumbles through may-I-take-your-order? Five tables later she gets a chance to glance at it.

*Oh, yeah? Where do you work? :]*

Much to the chagrin of her boss, she shoots off a response: *Just some dumb pizza place. Hate it.*

The response flashes back in a second. *Look for something else?*

Lydia replies: *I'm trying. Kind of need the money atm.*

Gigi's response is like lightning: *Shame. I get it, tho. Xxx*

Lydia barely has time to wonder why she finds it so easy to speak to Gigi about things she doesn't say to anyone like *I really hate this job, why am I working in some dumb pizza place, it's actually sucking my soul dry* let alone text it to her before her boss interjects, looks pointedly at her phone and directs her back to her job. Lydia considers sneaking out her phone again before the end of her shift, but despite how much she hates it, she does actually need this job if she ever wants to move out of her parents' place, so she sighs (perhaps a bit too dramatically) and carries on, feeling the weight of Gigi's words in her pocket.

When she gets home, she hovers over the 'call' button for fifteen minutes – give or take – before she gives in, because something about Gigi's lightning responses gives her confidence that she wouldn't mind a call, either.

"Hey!" says Gigi's bright, bubbly voice on the other side. "What's up?"

Lydia shrugs, then remembers she is *on the phone, you idiot* and throws herself backwards on her bed so that she's lying with her head hung halfway down, staring at her shelves upside down. "Not a whole lot. Small town life, you know the drill."

"Not really, no," says Gigi. "I mean, only from visits. I don't know what it's actually like to live in one."

"You went to Sanditon," points out Lydia.

"You've... seen those?"

Lydia blushes for reasons she *does not want to think about, nope, nope, ever*. "Yeah," she says. "They were pretty good."

"Thanks!"

Silence.

"But anyway," says Gigi. "I mean, like, obviously Sanditon's pretty small, and I was there for a little while, but I don't know, I guess I don't know what it's like to be at home in a small town? I've always been a guest. A tourist. So I guess it could have seemed, like, *different* when you're visiting to when it's home. Kinda like a novelty effect, y'know? But the way

you talk about it, you make it sound like it's the *worst*." Gigi laughs nervously on the other end. "Sorry. Babbling again."

"I don't mind," says Lydia. *It's actually sorta kinda nice*, she thinks to herself. Gigi has so many thoughts, and they all run into each other, and it's sort of amazing. But she squashes that thought pretty quick and continues: "And, yeah, it's kinda a drag. I want to live in a big city, someday."

"So why don't you?"

"Huh?"

"Someday is today," points out Gigi.

Lydia sighs. "Money. Totes a drag. But I'm broke and I can't find a better paying job or afford to move out of my parents' house, let alone to a city right now. So I'm stuck here for the time being."

There's a brief pause on the other end before Gigi says: "That sucks."

"Yeah."

"What're you gonna do?"

"Keep going... and going... until I can."

Because isn't that what everybody does?

# sounds and shadows

## Chapter Summary

Long days at work make homes seem emptier.

## Chapter Notes

Sorry this one took a little longer, guys. Hopefully it's worth the wait. :]

In another life, when her home was dark and empty, Lydia would turn off all the lights and bring it alive with the glow of a cellphone. There was just... *something* about embracing the darkness and calling George with nothing but a bright screen and his voice to guide her that made her feel on top of the world. She would bathe in him; soak up his every word, listen to the way his voice danced through the crackle of a speaker, enamoured with his every word.

Now, she is ordinary. She comes home to an empty house and turns on all the lights, puts the radio and the TV on so that she can pretend that there they are voices, and sticks a microwave meal in the oven. She showers, plays music that she doesn't listen to, does anything to fill up the time until her parents come home.

And even then – it's not like when her sisters were here. It's not like Lizzie playing music too loud and screaming at textbooks. Or like Jane making a gazillion cups of tea and baking cookies so that the air smells like cinnamon. No, it's just the low hum of the radio in the study, the sound of the TV.

Lydia misses the smell of cookies.

She pulls out her instant dinner from the oven and curls up on the sofa, flicking through bad reality TV, but even the comforts of orange-skinned, arguing teenagers fail to soothe her. She feels empty, and she's not sure why, because tonight is like every other night in the world, she shouldn't feel different, she should feel *fine*.

And then, she realizes, as she takes a mouthful of bland pasta: that's exactly why she's not OK.

She needs something to brighten up her world again.

She reaches for the phone, thinking: *Maybe the past isn't all that important. Maybe it's where you go from there.*

A few hours away, Gigi Darcy is sat crooning over paperwork in her office at Pemberley Digital, straining to read line after boring line. The truth is, she just doesn't *care* about non-disclosure agreements. She half considers phoning up her brother for help – but – kind as he will be, as much as he will help her agreeably – underneath his every word will be tones of *You're an adult now Georgiana, you can do this by yourself*. And she just can't be bothered to deal with that tonight.

Besides, he's probably with Lizzie again. A fact which, like, she is totally over the moon about! She loves Lizzie, and she loves that she makes her brother happy.

(but sometimes her apartment feels a little empty)

(and she doesn't like coming home to darkness and sadness)

(and maybe she hates being alone)

(and maybe that's why she's still at work at 11pm).

She sighs and gives in, stretching her hand out to the phone. She could call Fitz. Fitz would help, and he wouldn't expect her to be *growing up* while doing it.

(Because Fitz treats her like a baby sister, and always will unless she grows up.)

That's enough to make her hand hover over the phone. Just as she's about to pull it away – miracle of miracles – it rings.

She picks it up without looking at the name, desperate for human contact.

"Hi," says a voice that Gigi somehow knows a little too well. "It's Lydia. Um. What's up?"

"Oh!" says Gigi, a little too enthusiastically, and both girls are internally scolding themselves for sounding so *dumb*. But then Gigi leans back in her office chair and remembers that this is Lydia, and she'd resolved to just be herself, and she speaks. "Hey! Good to hear from you. What's up?"

"I'm sorry for calling kinda late," says Lydia, then laughs. "Oh. Uh. Again."

"Don't worry about it. Anything sounds more fun than paperwork right now," says Gigi, not quite able to keep the nerves out of her laughter. "And I like talking to you."

*Shoot*, she thinks. *Keep your attachment in your head, Gigi. She only just decided she can tolerate you.* And she wants to say; sorry, that was *super weird*, forget about it, but before she can even finish thinking about it-

"I like talking to you too."

Silence.

“So,” says Gigi, a smile pressed to her face, “What’s new?”

Lydia stirs pasta with her fork. “Nothing. That’s kinda the problem, actually.” She sighs. “*God*, sorry, I’m so dragsville lately. I keep treating you like you’re an agony aunt. I’ll just. Don’t worry. What about you? How’s your exciting San Francisco life?”

“Not very exciting,” says Gigi. “Again, sort of the problem.” Pause. Deep breath. “And I don’t mind you talking to me about stuff. In fact... I-sort-of-likeit. I mean. That you feel comfortable talking to me about stuff.”

Shit. She’s being weird again.

But Lydia doesn’t think so.

“It’s nice to have someone to talk to.”

“What about your sisters? Don’t they-“

“They try,” says Lydia. “But, I mean, they’re both super busy. Which is fine. Lizzie has her company, and Darcy, and stuff, and she tries super hard to make time for me but I know that she’s always rushed off her feet and it’s not, like, that I think she doesn’t care or anything, because I know she does, but I know she doesn’t really have time to listen even... even when she says she does. So I try not to bug her too much.” Lydia pauses, half expecting Gigi to interject, but is pleasantly surprised by just a murmur of assent.

“And, well, Jane,” says Lydia. “I love Jane, I really do, and she’s a great listener... but... she’s always so *sympathetic*, you know? And, I don’t know, I guess I need someone to talk to me about stuff sometimes, not just listen and tell me it’s gonna be OK, and not to worry, because like, who knows if it will be OK? You don’t. That’s not how life works.”

“I get it,” says Gigi.

“What about you?”

“Huh?”

“Do you have anyone to listen to you?”

Gigi shrugs, then realises she’s *on the phone*, *dumbass* and sort of mumbles into the phone. “Well, I mean, Fitz, I guess, and my brother, but like...”

Lydia giggles into the phone. “Oh God. I can just *imagine* what a great listener the Darcybot is.” She keeps laughing, breaking into almost-hysterics at the thought. “*Darcybot cannot compute feelings. Darcybot believes sister unit needs upgrade.*” Then she pauses. “Sorry. I shouldn’t make fun of your brother like that. He’s a good dude.”

“It’s alright,” says Gigi, who’s laughing quietly under her breath. “I’ve heard – still *hear* – worse from Lizzie. I know you don’t mean it. And you don’t really have reason to like my brother, so-“

“He’s OK. He looks after my sis. He may not be a rainbow skittle shots kinda guy, but he’s good people. And... you know, the whole... nevermind.”

Gigi decides to pick up on the safer conversation topic: the one not centred around the giant invisible abusive asshole in the room. “Well, contrary to my brother, *I* love rainbow skittle shots, so I compensate for his stuffiness.”

“Yeah?” says Lydia. “Well, maybe you and I will have to make some sometime.”

“I’d like that a lot, Lydia.”

There’s a creaking sound on Lydia’s end, and she quickly shuffles herself on the sofa. “Sorry, Gigi. I... I gotta go. Parents are home. And I’m kinda beat. But, like, can I call you again?”

“Obviously. In fact. Can *I* call you?”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah?”

“Anytime,” says Lydia, and she smiles as she hangs up.



**surprise**

The calls start off weekly, and then they're twice-weekly, and soon enough they melt into daily (at least.) The texts seemingly never stop, and eventually two months go by this way before Lydia realizes she hasn't seen Gigi in forever and kind of really wants to.

So that's *one* of the things on her mind when she texts Lizzie to ask if she could stay in San Francisco with her for a few days. She does genuinely miss her sister, and she has a break off work and wants to get out of the town, but she does make sure to let Gigi know that she'll be in town, and like, maybe they should hang out. And drink skittles vodka. Or something.

Lydia's pretty sure Gigi's response contains more smiley faces than she seen in her life up to this point.

She gets off the plane, and Lizzie throws her arms around her, and already Lydia feels a little better.

Lizzie throws her arms around her sister when she gets off the plane, and Lydia hugs her to her close.

"I missed you," says Lizzie as she pulls back from the hug.

Lydia smiles. "I missed you, too."

They make small talk on the way home about work, life, tv shows – until Lizzie stumbles out:

"I'm getting married."

Lydia almost chokes on air. Lizzie stops the car.

"You okay?"

"Yeah, sis, geez, why'd you stop the car?"

"Because you looked like I'd just told you I was dying!" says an exasperated Lizzie, looking with worried eyes at her sister.

"Well, that's not something you just *spring* on someone, Lizzie!" Lydia starts laughing halfway through the sentence. "You shocked me is all!" She grins and rolls her eyes, taking a glance at her sister.

"Wait," says Lizzie. "You're not upset? I thought you were upset!"

"Ohmygod, Lizzie, of course I'm not upset. Darcy makes you super happy, and I'm glad to see you happy."

“Oh,” says Lizzie. “Oh! Wait. Are you sure you’re OK with this? I mean-“

“Are you actually asking for *my* permission to marry your boyfriend? Why would you think I would mind?” Lydia’s shaking her head, still laughing quietly after every sentence. The whole daft situation is just so *Lizzie*.

“I don’t know, I guess, well, because, you never liked him that much, and-“

“Actually, that was more *you*,” quips Lydia.

Lizzie laughs. “Okay, yeah, fair point. I just, I know you two aren’t that close, and I really want you to be OK with this and everything, because I know in the past I just did stuff without even talking to y-“

Lydia has to interrupt at this point. “Sis? You’re being totes ridic. I like Darcy. I know that we’re not, like, cuddle-buddies or super close or anything, but he’s a decent guy and treats you well, even if he is *totally socially awkward* and misguided at times. And you don’t have to ask for my permission. You’re trying like, a *little* too hard there.”

“Sorry.”

Lydia smiles and knocks her head against her sister’s shoulder. “It’s all good. So when did he propose?”

“Last night.”

“Wow,” says Lydia. “Tell me it was romantic.”

“*Well*,” says Lizzie, in a tone that doesn’t bode well.

“Ohmygod.”

“He tried, but it sort of went terribly wrong, and then he almost chickened out, but he popped the question anyway, and it was so hilarious and us and he’d gone to so much effort that I didn’t really mind. It’s a fun story, and I’ll tell it to you later, but it’s kind of a long one.” Lizzie starts up the car again.

“Wait,” says Lydia. “Have you told anyone else?”

“Nope.”

Lydia grins. “I better be doing a stint as bridesmaid.”

“You know it.”

“Who else?”

“Jane, Charlotte, and, uh, Gigi. If that’s OK with you.”

“It is,” says Lydia. “We’re actually, uh, we’re sort of friends now.”

Lizzie glances over at her. “Wait, since when?”

“Since Mom’s gathering. We bonded. Over shots.”

“Interesting.”

“Hey, sis, there is no better line to friendship than alcohol.”

“That’s where I went wrong, then,” says Lizzie, and they both laugh.

There’s a pause, then Lydia speaks. “Um, actually, since you’re working on Monday, I was gonna spend the day with Gigi, if that’s OK?”

Lizzie smiles. “I think that’s a great idea.”

# a tale of sour skittles

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Lydia arrives at Gigi's place on Monday morning with a bag full of vodka and skittles.

She feels weird carrying alcohol at 11 AM, but the skittles have to be left to mix and it's just more fun to make them yourselves rather than buy them. So here she is, meeting up at what feels like an obnoxiously early time, not sure how she's going to navigate eight hours in Gigi's presence without alcohol to aid them.

She rings the doorbell anyway.

She hears shouting from inside but can't quite make out words, and then hears Gigi clatter down the hallway/ The door opens.

"Sorry," says Gigi, fixing a gem earring to her ear. "I wasn't quite ready." She smiles at Lydia as she fixes the earring in place. "Come in!"

Lydia closes the door behind her and sets the bag of skittles and vodka on Gigi's kitchen table, causing a burst of laughter from Gigi.

"Problem?" asks Lydia with a raised eyebrow.

"It's just..." says Gigi. "I already bought vodka and skittles."

"Oh," says Lydia, as Gigi brings out two bottles of vodka and 5 bags of skittles.

"Ohmygod," says Lydia, laughing, pulling out her mirror amount. "Okay, *that* may be a little overboard"

"Well," says Gigi. "We can each take a bottle of vodka back, and we can eat the skittles between us," says Gigi, then eyes the ten bags. "Actually," she corrects herself. "That's possibly too many skittles. I think it was too many skittles before it got doubled. I wasn't sure how many we'd need."

Lydia laughs. "There are never too many skittles. And you keep the vodka. We'll use yours, and you keep mine – it's probs way better, I can't afford the good stuff – but I'm not even sure Darcy will let me *have* vodka in the apartment, let alone this cheap shit."

Gigi laughs. "Oh, yeah. He'd probably throw it out and buy you a box full of champagne in protest. Alright. Deal. Thanks for the vodka, then."

They set about sifting the skittles into bowls according to colour, each sitting on a stool on either side of Gigi's *way posh* countertop.

"So," says Gigi. "How's the job?"

Lydia shrugs. "Same old, same old."

"Can you afford to move out yet?"

"I'm earning minimum wage."

"Oh."

Lydia shrugs. "I dunno, I guess I could, but I couldn't afford to move to a place I actually *want* to go to, y'know? So I could move out of my parent's house now, but only to some little town still, and then if I left town there's finding a job to deal with, and, I dunno. I just think, dream big or don't dream at all, I guess."

Gigi's eyes have left the skittles as she watches Lydia, and she almost says so many things, but instead she just nods, looks into her eyes and says: "I understand," and sneaks a purple skittle into her mouth.

"That's cheating," protests Lydia, and grabs three red skittles in protest.

"Red?" says Gigi, laughing. "Seriously, you go for *strawberry* of all the available flavours?"

"It's the *best* flavour," protests Lydia. "Did you seriously go for *grape*? Ew. I don't even bother eating those, let alone putting them in shots. It's a cruel thing to do to vodka."

"Well, I will drink all the grape, and you can take the strawberry for yourself," says Gigi, grabbing a handful of purple and popping them into her mouth.

"Deal," she says, and then raises her eyebrows. "If you ever *leave* any to make shots with!" She shoves Gigi lightly on the arm, and then makes sure to eat a strawberry skittle to ensure Gigi knows she's joking.

(Before they know it, the bowls are empty.)

Still, given the amount of sweets they have between them, they're replenished easily. Gigi reaches for one of the final two bags and starts to sort them before Lydia stops her.

"Wait, wait, those are the sour kind. You can't mix them in with the sweet. Gross."

"You brought *sour* skittles?" says Gigi, and sticks out her tongue. "*Ew.*"

"Sour skittle shots are awesome," protests Lydia. "If you, y'know, chase 'em down with something sweet after."

"Well, maybe I'm a little too sweet for sour skittles."

Lydia laughs, and catches herself. For some reason, around Gigi, some of her old giggles and laughter returns. She brightens, somehow, and she's surprised by how often she's caught by a fit of them. "Have you ever even – *tried* sour skittles?"

Gigi shrugs. "Maaaaybe."

“You haven’t have you. Oh my God. You haven’t lived.”

“It just seems so *gross!*” protests Gigi. “I mean, *sour sweets*? Isn’t it kind of the point that sweets are well... *sweet?*”

“If you’re gonna be a total *drag* about it, yeah,” says Lydia, and picks up the bag of sour sweets. “Go on, try one. I *dare* you.” She holds out a single red sour skittle in her palm.

Gigi looks at it sceptically, like it’s going to bite her arm off.

“Not poison,” says Lydia, tasting one to prove it. The way her mouth recoils does nothing to convince an apprehensive Gigi of their quality, but Lydia grins afterwards and it’s not at all fake.

“Go on,” she says, trying purple this time.

Gigi eyes it tentatively. Lydia decides she will have to do something drastic to get Gigi to be a tiny bit more adventurous, and rolls her eyes, looking as though she’s going to replace the skittle. Just as Gigi relaxes and looks away, Lydia is standing next to her and popping the purple sweet into her mouth.

Gigi’s impulse would be to spit it out, but Lydia’s finger lingers for a moment on the bottom of Gigi’s lip before she drops her arm to her side.

Gigi bites down on the skittle, staring at Lydia.

Lydia takes a step backwards, conscious of the complete lack of space between them, and trying to act like the look that passed between them wasn’t totally weird.

“So,” says Lydia, trying to break it up. “How is it?”

Gigi’s face recoils like Lydia’s, but then she smiles.

“Not so bad.”

## Chapter End Notes

I'm going to call a personal vendetta against the skittles parent company (nestle?) because there aren't pink skittles and they ruined my goddamn narrative symmetry.

Also, thank you guys so much for reading, and your sweet comments, and stuff I've seen on tumblr about this fic because it warms my heart like crazy and makes this so much more fun, so keep letting me know what you do and do not enjoy etc! <3

# nothing gets done without alcohol

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

They spend the day in a whirl of bad reality TV (which they both totally, unapologetically love, unlike their proud siblings) and takeout and laughter. More than once, their eyes meet in a pause and linger a little longer than is normal.

But there's always something to distract them. Gigi can think about how she's never been into girls before, and how this will totally pass, and it's just a phase, and hey, it happens to most girls, because girls are gorgeous, right?

*(Or maybe a specific girl is gorgeous.)*

And Lydia can think about how she doesn't want to think about it, how this girl is George's ex, and she's barely over him, and sometimes she's not, and who the hell makes out with their ex's ex? Especially when said ex-

Well, he was George.

Besides, like, Gigi's totally not into girls. There's nothing weird in the way she catches her looking at her sometimes.

Totally friendly.

Like the totally friendly fireworks that go off when their hands meet reaching for the bowl of chips and linger there, creating silent but bright sparks.

Eventually, it's time to finish off the shots. They take the water bottles full of oozing liquid out of the fridge and line them up in rainbow order.

"It's like a unicorn on drugs went to a liquor store and this was what he found," says Gigi in a voice that sounds totally serious and makes Lydia crack up laughing.

"Nah, this is like, the *blood* of a unicorn. Mixed with vodka." she responds after the laughter has subsided.

"I think I just became a vegetarian."

"Unicorn blood has totally *gotta* have magical powers. Really gonna ditch out on that?"

"It looks pretty magic."

They start the arduous process of sieving out the white gunk from the centre of the skittles. Lydia prods at it as it coagulates on the corner of the filter paper.



“Apparently if you leave it long enough it dissolves entirely, but like, I cannot wait that long for alcohol.”

Gigi stares at it. “Looks totally gross.”

“Dare you to eat some.”

Gigi shakes her head. “*No way*. I already had sour skittles on your insistence. That is enough eccentric food for one day.”

“Chicken.”

“If you’re so keen on it, *you* try it,” challenges Gigi.

Lydia looks at the coagulated mess, stained red from the vodka mix. Then she grins at Gigi. “The Ly-de-yuh never turns down a challenge.” She dips a finger into the sugary mess and licks it. It’s damp, but sugary. The mix of fragile solidity and alcohol is hard to get used to, however. She smiles. “Totes not as bad as you thought it would be.”

Gigi raises her eyebrow, then rolls her eyes and dips a finger in the mix.

She shrugs. “Okay. Not awful. Not nice, either, but not awful.”

“Decent enough,” jokes Lydia, and sends Gigi giggling.

They finish the process of sieving and pour of a long line of shots in rainbow before them.

“These are too many shots for two people,” says Gigi, and puts the remainder of the mixes in the fridge.

“There are *never* too many shots for two people.”

Gigi laughs. “Okay, but still, I don’t think we need to pour out many more.”

Lydia glances at the clock. It’s 9pm. Totes an acceptable drinking time. She grins. “Better start, then.” She reaches for a glass, and her fingers glance against Gigi’s as she grabs the one next to her. They both start with green.

Lydia downs hers instantly, feeling the sweet and firey mix blast down her throat, but Gigi stops and chokes as the mixture enters her mouth. Lydia quirks an eyebrow.

“Sour,” says Gigi, by way of explanation.

Lydia grins and reaches for another shot. She goes for red. Gigi grabs purple. They drink in unison.

“Ohmygodsogood,” says Gigi, downing another purple before Lydia can even reach for her next drink. “The problem with these is that they go so fast... and that I am a *total lightweight*.”

“Can see that,” observes Lydia, glancing at Gigi as she rests down against a stool on the bar. “You can slow down, you know.”

“Thought you were all about the challenge?”

“I’m not... I’m not for real, I’m just... messing.”

“I know,” says Gigi. “But still. I like shots. I like drinking. I like you. They are a... fabulous combo.”

Lydia grins and downs a third. “Okay. But we shouldn’t go through ‘em too fast.”

“When did you get responsible?”

“I’m not being responsible,” says Lydia. “I just don’t want to run out of alcohol too fast!”

“Fair point.” Gigi eyes the row of shots, feeling the alcohol hit her bloodstream all at once. “They are super good though.”

Lydia slides the leftover bowl of skittles down the counter. “This do?”

“It’ll help.” Gigi picks out every single purple skittle and places them in front of her. Lydia farms off the remaining red.

“Can I try a purple?” she says quietly.

Gigi smiles. “I’ll swap you for red.”

They end up eating most of each other’s pile, as well as dabbling from their own.

“Y’know,” says Lydia. “Maybe grape isn’t so bad.”

“I’ve never minded strawberry, really,” says Gigi.

They decide to retreat back to the land of reality TV, transporting the shots with them (which takes quite a few trips. A woozy Gigi drops a few on the way.)

Lydia finds watching these shows about like, tengazillion times more fun with Gigi in her apartment than she does at home. Halfway through episode four, she gets a text from Lizzie.

*Hey, she says. You have taxi money or do you need me to pick you up?*

*Lydia responds: I can walk, sis, no worries, it’s not far. Don’t be such a dorky worrywart.*

*Lizzie: You are almost certainly drunk and it is late. That’s not happening. I don’t mind getting you.*

*Lydia: Not drunk! See! Typing and everything.*

*Lizzie: Unconvinced. You went over to drink skittles vodka. If you aren’t drunk, you’ve had a shitty evening.*

*Lydia: Well, I'm not drunk. Yet.*

*Lizzie: Haha. What time do you need picking up?*

Lydia sighs. Deciding on when to be picked up, means, well, talking to Gigi about leaving.

And for some reason she just doesn't *want* to.

"You okay?" says Gigi, leaning over Lydia's phone.

"Yeah, I'm good. Just, Lizzie asking whether I need a ride home."

"Oh!" says a pleasantly buzzed Gigi. "Well, I can pay for a taxi if you like, or like, you can just crash on my couch if you want." She says it with a genuine brightness.

Lydia thinks it over for a second, and knows that the better option is the second one. She's having fun with Gigi, and she doesn't want it to end prematurely. "I'll crash, if that's okay."

"Totes."

Lydia raises an eyebrow. "Was that... a me-ism?"

"Totes," repeats Gigi again, giggling.

"Jeez," says Lydia, reaching for a shot. "How many have you had?"

"'Bout seven," says a perhaps less-buzzed and more-drunk Gigi.

"Lightweight," says Lydia, and Gigi just grins.

"How many you had?" she says, leaning her head against Lydia's shoulder

"Five."

"Better catch up."

Lydia smiles and downs two more shots, then reaches for the red as Gigi grabs another purple. They both down them before Lydia realises they were the last of each.

"Aw," she says, looking mournfully at Gigi's empty glass, stained with the resonance of purple. "I wanted to see what was so great about purple."

Gigi's eyes are fixed on her. "Maybe," she says, inching her face closer to Lydia's, her sense of inhibition lost somewhere in a sea of purple skittles: "You. Still. Could."

Lydia has not generally been one for inhibition, but somewhere in the alcoholic fuzzes of her brain she knows she has a choice here. They are both drunk. Gigi is like, probz being silly.

She can shake it off, laugh, and go and get a purple shot from the bottle in the fridge.

Or she can – and she glances at those lips – she can take another choice, one that's been itching at the back of her head all night, however much she's tried to ignore it.

Her empty glass clatters to the floor as she presses her lips to Gigi's.

#### Chapter End Notes

Can you tell I know nothing about units of alcohol? Because I do not.

# electricity

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The response is instant.

Drowsy lips are shocked awake - it's like Lydia lights a spark in Gigi, and suddenly there's *everything*, all at once and then there's nothing at all, the world fading into grey around them.

Lydia almost pulls away on first impact – almost says: *fuck, that was stupid, I'm sorry, I'll call a cab I should go just forget about it* – but it's Gigi grounding her, snaking arms around her neck that closes the brief gap between their lips. Lydia doesn't get why she's *nervous* around Gigi, but it becomes slightly clearer as she feels the butterflies in her stomach go crazy when the kiss deepens and she falls back on the sofa. There's a gap between their lips that emerges out of the transformation, two live wires inches apart from each other.

“Um,” says Gigi.

Lydia can feel her breath on her lips.

“Um,” says Gigi again, and they both smile at themselves. “Do you... want to talk?”

“Nope,” says Lydia, and the gap is closed again, the moment alight. *Nope. Definitely things I would rather do than talk right now.* Not that either of them were up for much talking with alcohol-addled brains.

It's almost scarier the second time, and Lydia can feel her heart thudding in her chest, because this isn't something she can blame on alcohol or being silly or *experimenting*, this is a *confirmation*, but she pushes the thought out of sight somewhere behind shot number five.

Gigi's brain isn't really capable of anything but *ohmygodohmygodohmygod* at the moment. That's partly vodka, and partly a one-track hyperactive mindset. And – okay – at least a third of it is because Lydia is an amazingly good kisser, and sort of makes Gigi's brain turn into mush as she feels a bite at her lower lip. She can't remember a time when kissing was this much *fun*.

Lydia feels the imprint of a smile against her lips, the ghost of happiness pressed into her. It is consuming, infectious, and Lydia feels like all her nerves are on end, in both good and bad ways. She tries to push all the feelings and questions out of the window, which, like, probably isn't healthy, but thankfully she has plenty to occupy her mind.

Like the trace of Gigi's fingertips against her side.

Like the smell of her perfume.

Like the *trace of Gigi's fingertips against her neck. And at the zip of her dress. And. Oh. Oh no. And yes. And no. Definitely no. Nope.*

She pulls back with the sharpness of a knife.

“Shit,” says Gigi. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean – “

“It’s... It’s... okay. I mean, no, it’s not, I’m sorry, I can’t, I just...”

“Hey,” says Gigi. “No, um, don’t apologize, it’s fine, I shouldn’t-“

“Look, I have to go, I – I’m sorry.” Lydia’s fumbling for her bag, and pulling herself off the sofa, stumbling across the room, and she can feel Gigi’s hand grasping hers, whispering *I’m sorry, no, just wait a second, I didn’t mean...* But Lydia’s mind is so clouded that it’s all she can do to focus on putting one foot in front of the other and walking to the door, pressing buttons on a phone and hoping it will produce a cab, and Gigi is frozen on the sofa, thinking *crap, crap, crap, I’m so sorry.*

And Lydia tries not to think, not to think at all, doesn’t want to explain the sense of panic that appeared, tries not to feel angry and stupid at herself for still being so broken, because she should be fine, fine, she was getting better.

And she tries not to think about what she might have just ruined by running out the door.

And Gigi tries not to think about what she might have had if she hadn’t gone too far.

## Chapter End Notes

I fully understand if you all hate me now.

# Static

## Chapter Notes

Is it a power move to update a fic you haven't updated in 10 years or just mildly deranged?

Lydia is awoken by the sharp flicking on of lights and a little squeak of surprise.

She groans and pulls a pillow over her head. Wait, not pillow. Cushion. Slightly too rough for actual sleeping use cushion.

“Lydia? I thought you were crashing at Gigi’s tonight...” Her sister’s clear and *faintly judgemental* voice.

Lydia groans again. She feels like she has been hit by a bus. A bus that leaves the faint aftertaste of candy.

“Goaway,” she manages to mumble, trying to pull a nonexistent blanket over herself and managing to only rumple up her skirt.

She hears what sounds like an *almost* sigh of disdain, before Lizzie cuts it short, seeming to remember herself. Then Lydia feels the pressure shift on the sofa next to her, and Lizzie’s soft hand touch hers. “Lydia, I don’t want you to feel I’m being judgemental...”

Lydia pulls the pillow down so she can see Lizzie. “But, you’re about to be judgemental.”

“No!” says Lizzie too quickly. Lydia loves her sister. She’s forgiven her for how awful she could be (it’s true to say that Lydia could be pretty awful too, at times.) But she wouldn’t be Lizzie Bennet if she wasn’t still just *slightly* convinced she was better than everyone else around her at all times. If Lydia didn’t have a headache that felt like a brick laying on her forehead, she would find it amusing.

“No,” says her sister again, too carefully. “But I am going to express a concern, which comes from a good place of caring about you as my sister. Well, several concerns.”

Lydia resists the urge to hit her with the cushion. “Please, Lizzie, *save it* .”

“What about if I make you coffee first, and *then* I’ll give you a friendly lecture?” There’s a tone of wryness to it that softens Lydia slightly. She pulls the cushion off her face and drops it by the side of the sofa. “I’ll consider it. If you’ll also bring me food.”

“Only because I am the best and most caring sister in the world,” says Lizzie smiling, getting up.

“That’s a lie and you know it, we’re both related to Jane.”

Lizzie laughs at that. Despite the mild bickering and her pounding head, Lydia can’t help but be mildly grateful for how far they’ve come. She may about to be *mildly* lectured, but at least know she knows it comes from a good place.

Lizzie goes into the kitchen. Lydia takes the opportunity to turn her face into the sofa cushions. What feels like moments later, but must be longer, Lizzie comes back with coffee and a stack of pancakes. The smell coaxes Lydia awake and she sits up, still sluggish. Lizzie smiles.

“Okay,” mumbles Lydia. “You are the *second* best sister in the world. You have beaten out me, but Jane still wins.”

“That’s very charitable of you,” says Lizzie, putting down the tray on the coffee table and handing Lydia a fork. Lydia pulls the plate of pancakes towards her (laden with Nutella and strawberries, her favourite, and as such, must mean she is really in for it) and almost inhales them, suddenly finding herself *extremely hungry*.

“Okay,” says Lizzie, bracing herself, and taking her own plate of pancakes. “So, my first concern is that I haven’t seen you this hungover in a while, and I’m not judging-”

Lydia narrows her eyes.

“I’m not, I promise. I’m just a little concerned about if something has prompted an unhealthy coping mechanism.”

Lydia shakes her head. Lizzie looks dubious.

“Secondly. I’m concerned because we have a spare bed, and you didn’t make it to it.”

“It was late,” says Lydia through a mouthful of pancakes.

“Thirdly... you were crashing at Gigi’s, I thought? What changed? Did something happen?”

Lydia shakes her head much, much too quickly, with much too much vigour.

“Did you argue? It’s okay if you did, I’m sure you can make up!”

Lydia starts to shake her head, then pauses. Argument. Not strictly what happened. But, easier to explain than *I kissed your boyfriend - fiancé’s sister who is also my abusive ex’s ex and then I freaked out when she actually touched me even though I wanted her to touch me and bailed and now we can probably never speak again and I’ve ruined everything because I do ruin everything and...*

Lydia nods.

“Do you want to talk about it?” says Lizzie, and Lydia can almost taste the careful practised gentleness in her voice that once would have frustrated her, but now that she understands her better, she can’t help but love her for it in spite of how annoying it is.



“It’s nothing,” Lydia says. “We were drunk. I... I’m sure we can figure it out.”

“Okay. You know you can talk to me about anything, right?”

Lydia rolls her eyes. “Yes. It’s not that big a deal, it got overdramatic because we were drunk. And I’m too hungover to talk right now.”

Lizzie pauses, then nods, seemingly satisfied, or at least not willing to press the issue too much further. “Okay. Well, if you change your mind, I’m here.”

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