Kitty had barely had time to start missing her sisters – Jane was not even home from her honeymoon yet – that she received a letter from Lizzie, renewing the offer that they all spend Christmas at Pemberley. She wondered why she was telling her in particular, as opposed to writing their father or mother, until she reached that part of the letter where Lizzie offered her to stay a bit longer. They might go to London before the end of the season, she suggested, or maybe visit the Lake District, as Lizzie never really had time to do so as she'd planned with the Gardiners before her marriage. It would be the middle of winter, but she was willing to risk it to see the Lakes under the snow. Kitty suspected she wasn't too keen on going to town and accidentally meeting Lady de Bourgh either.

Kitty was convinced that her father would refuse – he had been clear enough on his intent not to let her out of the house, after the incident with Lydia – but he trusted Lizzie well enough to agree to it. Which stung, in a way, but it wasn't news that he always favoured her. And in light of what had happened, Kitty could not really hold it against him.

It had sobered her up quite a bit, seeing her sister married, seeing Wickham look at Lydia like their father looked at their mother – and that may be a positive comparison in most families, but certainly not in theirs. Wickham did not love his wife, that much was sure: he regarded her with little more than contempt. And if Kitty was used to it with her parents (she didn't think they were
entirely unhappy together, her father just loved teasing her mother too much) she knew her sister and, even if she didn't realise it yet herself, Lydia wouldn't be so happy. She had always had pretty dreams – of red coats, yes, but also of romance like in the novels. And her chances to get any of that had stopped when she married Wickham. Kitty vowed to herself not to make the same mistake.

After so much travelling (in a coach, with both parents and her sister, to make things better), she was delighted to finally arrive - and discover Pemberley, of which she'd heard so much. Her sister looked so happy to see them! And aunt and uncle Gardiner were already there, and Georgiana welcomed her like a sister, with the warmest hug, and she felt so welcome - for once no-one seemed to hold against her the past events - that she could tell she'd have an amazing time here.

Still, her first thought upon seeing Pemberley was that it was so grand she would get lost, and in spite of the thorough tour of the house Lizzie gave them, that happened the very next morning. She went downstairs for breakfast, took a wrong turn somehow, and had no clue where she ended up. Trying to find her way back, she heard a faint music, and decided to follow it. Reaching the door it came from, she stood there, just out of sight. She was sure now that it must be the great room they'd been in the day before, with its grand piano, but she didn't want to interrupt. Georgiana must be practising, and if she saw her she would likely stop, and Kitty was so fond of music! If she interrupted, Georgiana might stop, and that definitely shouldn't happen!

Kitty must admit, there was something fascinating about Georgiana – how she was so friendly, even without knowing her; how she always seemed in a good mood, and happy to see her. How she didn't seem the least bothered by Kitty's relatives. Kitty wasn't kidding herself, her parents were difficult to bear with. But Georgiana didn't seem to mind at all, and that was positively intriguing. Kitty couldn't wait to know her better; maybe then she might understand how she could be so kind and lively all at once.

Eventually, Georgiana reached the end of her song, and Kitty couldn't help it, she had to go in and greet Georgiana. The second they'd both dealt with the obligatory curtsies, though, Kitty was practically begging her to play again.

Georgiana laughed, and with a smile she went on to play a dancing tune, and Kitty twirled to it around the room. When she stopped, breathless, Georgiana was grinning at her. Oh, but she wouldn't get away with it so easily! Dancing on one's own was only so much fun, after all, so Kitty got Georgiana up from behind her seat to have her dance with her. It meant no more music, but they could go about the room easily enough at a nice rhythm, the both of them humming the tune Georgiana had been playing minutes ago.

They couldn't stay serious very long, and they soon ended up laughing, holding on to each other's shoulder to catch their breath – and they would probably have gone on for a while, hadn't Kitty's stomach alerted Georgiana to the fact that she hadn't eaten yet.

It became somewhat of a habit, in the next few weeks, in the early mornings or when the snow didn't allow for an afternoon walk, or even when the others wanted to go outside but neither of them really felt like it. Georgiana might play the piano while Kitty listened, or she'd help turn the pages. Kitty would from time to time take a few turns around the room – this most often resulted in Georgiana quietly laughing and losing track of the notes, upon which Kitty would turn around and pretend to be vexed. Sometimes, she insisted that her friend should join her, and Georgiana would hum the tune as they danced. At times, Kitty regretted that they weren't a bigger party, so they could dance more easily all the dances that required lines or multiple couples. But realising
she'd then lose the complicity of those moments with Georgiana, she didn't regret for long.

One afternoon, between Christmas and the new year, it so happened that Georgiana was practising a waltz on the piano while the others were gone to see the lake under the snow. And for some reason the others could not fathom, she decided to stay inside. The fact was, she'd always loved the outside when she was with Lydia, but they were two then, and Kitty who'd never really been alone could not stand solitude. She'd found in Georgiana a new companion, and she in turn didn't want to leave her alone, just like Georgiana did not leave her to go alone on walks – no matter how much Georgiana assured her that she could go without her. She usually would have been happy to walk, but she was starting to have a cold, so she would not risk it. They would have ample time to go and see the lake's banks covered in snow when Georgiana felt better – or Kitty might just have a look from the higher levels of the house.

In any case, Georgiana was trying to play that waltz she recently got the score for, and Kitty was growing impatient.

"It's a nice tune, but you can't even dance to this!" she said when Georgiana reached the end.

"You sure can," her friend piped in. "Let me show you?"

And soon enough, Georgiana had her with a hand on her waist, trying to get her to learn the steps to a dance that certainly shouldn't be danced so close together. Blame it on those continental people and their racy ways! Kitty found herself blushing. She cleared her throat as they parted, feeling a bit embarrassed for some reason – but she couldn't help returning the small, hesitant smile Georgiana gave her.

That evening, alone in her room, she found herself wondering about what happened. She'd never felt like that with the men from the regiment, never when she danced with her sisters – out of breath, yes, but something more, something she couldn't quite place, something that made her smile uncontrollably. Maybe that was the improper dance, the unusual closeness, or just how nice Georgiana was... Whatever that was, she still felt elated at the thought of it. That night she fell asleep a smile on her lips.

New year came and went, with the same air of camaraderie all around the house – and the cries of her mother that this or that just didn't work, and Kitty, where are you in this labyrinth of a house, think of your mother, I can't run so much, my poor old nerves! - until it was time that her parents left her to her sister. Her father didn't leave her without a word of advice about running after regiments - "if she wanted to imitate her sister and find herself a Wickham", he scolded... she noticed Georgiana cringing, but she didn't have time to ask her if she was alright, before Mary came to wish her nice holidays, commenting on how herself would be so glad to make it home and finally catch up on her reading. Tediuous books, Kitty was sure – but she was happy that her sister wouldn't want to stay for the world.

And then her family was gone, and everyone was busy packing for the Lake district.

Georgiana had known for a long time that she liked ladies more than was probably considered proper. There had been that piano teacher, long ago, with whom she had a certain fascination that
her friends only seemed able to have for dashing young men.

But it was her experience that women could have long-lasting, even intimate, friendships, and no-one ever told those women anything, so there was no harm, right? Besides, her brother had told her repeatedly that all he wanted was for her to be happy. They didn't go into the particulars, of course, but she was convinced he would not mind.

She did not expect, however, of all the women she was acquainted with, to fall for her sister-in-law. And now, they were going to the Lakes all together, and they'd probably share a room to make things easier for everyone – that's what you're supposed to do, with your sisters, right? It should be no problem at all, but Georgiana suspected she wouldn't know what to do with herself, really.

She'd seen Kitty's flushed cheeks when they had danced so close together, and their shared smiles had brought warmth to those cold winter days... but she didn't want to read too much into it.

Georgiana was used to travelling; she often followed her brother to their aunt's. Before Lady Catherine decided that Mrs Darcy was not worthy of belonging in their noble family, of course. But journeys with Elizabeth and Kitty turned out to be so very different from what she was used to with her brother! With Fitzwilliam, they would spend most of the time in companionable silence; they would talk at times, of course, but Darcy liked better to look at the landscapes passing by their window, or to read a book; and Georgiana, not unlike her brother in tastes, had become used to doing the same.

But the ladies kept the same habits of conversation in the carriage as when they were in the drawing room at Pemberley, and with Darcy taking part, the first day flew by in no time, and she never even thought of picking up her book (some moralistic text Mary had been so kind as to advise her to read. She was struggling to get past the first few pages, but she had promised her new sister that she would, and she didn't want to disappoint her by admitting she didn't read it, when she'd write her on the way back from the Lakes).

At the end of the day, though, maybe an hour or two before they'd stop at an inn, they all fell silent, tired by the road. Kitty eventually dozed off on Georgiana's shoulder, and she had trouble repressing a smile when she looked at her sleepy form. Looking up at the other two passengers, she saw Darcy was lost in his contemplation of the landscape, but Elizabeth was looking at her with a bright smile, and those knowing eyes. Maybe she was just happy that the two of them got along so well, but to Georgiana, it felt like a blessing.

They didn't talk much at dinner that evening – after so much road, they were all exhausted – and Kitty fell asleep as soon as she hit the bed, and Georgiana joined her soon after. That took away most of the awkwardness Georgiana had expected to feel. That was something she had been dreading all day, unable to get it entirely out of her mind even in the middle of the lively conversations they'd had in the carriage.

Darcy could have gotten them separate rooms had she asked, of course, but it was the accepted deal for sisters to share one, and it made finding an inn so much easier. Had she asked for something different now, they might have thought she and Kitty didn't get along. Worse, Kitty might have thought she didn't like her company!

As it was, it was a non-event. And as much as she was relieved, Georgiana was also somewhat disappointed. She wasn't quite sure anymore what she had been expecting. Maybe that Kitty would be as apprehensive as she had been – maybe that she could tell, then, whether she had feelings for her more than a sister should, too. If they both felt awkward... But Kitty didn't,
obviously. Or she was too tired to care. Or she was just, quite simply, at ease with Georgiana. Which was a good thing, right? So why was she so worried? But there was no helping it.

Sleep was long to claim her as she chewed on this, but it finally did. She woke up the next morning with an armful of Kitty – she must have moved during the night, no longer used to sleeping with someone since her sister married. Well, or, most likely, Georgiana realised as she looked around her, she wasn’t so used to sharing a bed either, and was mostly occupying the middle. She’d have moved to give Kitty more space, but that couldn’t really be done without waking her up.

“Morning,” Kitty mumbled as she woke. “Oh, sorry,” she went on as she realised she was holding on to Georgiana and had practically slept on her shoulder.

“No, I... I don't mind, really,” Georgiana said, and that definitely sounded like an invitation to stay right where she was. Kitty wished she’d have the courage to, but it was awkward, and she couldn’t just, could she? There was a world between not minding, and wanting Kitty to sleep on her shoulder. Kitty regretted moving away the second she did, though, because the other side of the bed was ice cold. Why couldn’t she just have stayed close to Georgiana, huddled together as they were - warm? She got up.

They said nothing about it in the next few days – if there was anything to say, Kitty wasn’t too sure. When they finally reached the Lakes, everything was covered in a fine snow. They’d all dreaded that the winter weather would make the experience much less agreeable, but they were lucky enough that it was rather mild. Even so, it had taken some convincing on Lizzie’s part for them to risk the trip; Mr Darcy being always so thoughtful – and the ladies were happy that they were not proven wrong. Lizzie probably could not have suffered her husband’s (gentle) chiding if the snow had made travelling impossible. Kitty was glad they took that risk, however, as she could not imagine the landscape more beautiful in the summer than it was now, all covered in white fluff.

The next few days were spent riding, and walking, around the countryside. The lakes were beautiful, and so were the surrounding mountains, and none of them could seem to have enough of it.

One afternoon, in Bowness, Georgiana and Kitty walked a bit behind Darcy and Lizzie, to give the young couple some privacy. It only occurred to Kitty that it gave them a privacy of their own when Georgiana’s hand came lightly to rest on her arm as they were walking along the bank of the lake, close to the water.

They took a couple more steps together, but then somehow, Kitty tripped on a pebble and fell into the cold water. In no time, Georgiana had an arm around her, helping her up. She was drenched, and soon, with the wind, so was Georgiana’s dress.

“Are you alright?” Georgiana asked, worried. She didn’t seem to care about the cold.

Kitty was freezing, though – teeth chattering, trembling all over, cold seeping through her – and her ankle hurt, but in the shock she was in she couldn’t help but distantly worry about Georgiana too. They didn’t need to both get sick, she thought, and refused the coat Georgiana was trying to put on her shoulders. Georgiana helped her to a log over the bank, where she could sit.
“Stay here! I'll get Darcy and Lizzie!”

Soon they were all helping her back to the inn, and both girls got to change into warmer, drier clothes. The servant who brought more wood for the fire insisted that they should take a warm bath, but Kitty didn't want to have anything to do with water for the day, and preferred to stay in bed with bed warmers.

A doctor was called, who announced her ankle was sprained but not broken. He left soon after bandaging it, and advised that she needed to rest. He left them with indications in case of fever, while Darcy insisted Georgiana at least should take a warm bath, since she was still freezing too. He left the ladies together to go and order the servants to bring water. Lizzie sat on the bed next to her sister.

She smiled: “what were you thinking, Kitty? Did you think that because it worked on me when Darcy did that, it'd work on the sister?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“I'm teasing you, dear.” That smile again.

Georgiana was standing close by, and Kitty could feel her own cheeks heat up.

“Lizzie! Did something happen we don't know about? You fell into the lake at home?” Georgiana asked.

“Oh, no! Let us say he... Just had a dive when I met him there.”

“Is that when you knew you wanted to be with him, Lizzie?” Kitty couldn't help but tease her in revenge.

“Maybe,” her sister grinned. “Whatever that may be, you could have waited until summer to try this, dear.”

Kitty felt her face heat up even more. “I don't see what you mean.”

“Of course not.” She gently patted her leg through the covers, and left with her mischievous smile still plastered on her face.

Georgiana edged closer. “So... What she said... I mean...” She spoke very quickly then: “I hope you didn't fall because of me. Because we were too close to the water – I shouldn't have... I should...”

“Georgiana?”

“Yes?”

“It's fine! It's not your fault, you know. I was always a bit clumsy. Not as bad as Mary, but...” She sighed. “I'm sorry I'll be spoiling the holidays though.”

Georgiana sat on the bed next to her.

“What are you talking about?”

“Well, I won't be able to do much walking about now...”

“Nonsense, you're not spoiling anything. We can still travel and see things from the carriage.”
Servants started coming in with a tub and a screen. Georgiana made a face. She shifted, uneasy, but when they left she seized Kitty's hand, squeezing it – and Kitty's heart missed a beat. Georgiana smiled.

"Besides, I wouldn't mind taking care of you," she whispered, then blushed profusely, which Kitty decided was the cutest thing she'd ever seen. "I mean... If you're sick, I mean. If you... 'd like that."

She looked down. Kitty looked anxiously towards the door; when she was sure no-one was coming in, she held Georgiana's chin up so she'd have to look at her.

"Of course I don't!"

And on an impulse, she leant forward and pressed a kiss to Georgiana's lips.

She wasn't quite sure what she was doing – when Georgiana froze she feared for an instant that she had been mistaken, that she would be rejected, but then the hand that was holding hers gripped tighter, and Georgiana kissed her back. It was soft and sweet – only an instant, as footsteps coming their way made them pull back. As the servant came back with warm water, they were both left blushing and trying to look at everything but each other; but the moment she left, Kitty looked up and was met with Georgiana's soft smile. That's when she started sneezing, and Georgiana started fussing about to make sure she was alright, and warm enough, and did she want more covers? And was she sure she didn't want to take that bath, maybe it'd do her good, and Georgiana could wait, she wasn't the one who fell into freezing water!

"Hey." Kitty stroked the hand that was holding hers with her thumb. "I'll be fine. Go take your bath, I'm too warm here, I'd freeze if I got out."

"You sure?"

"Yeah, yeah. I'm tired, actually. Think I'll try to sleep."

Georgiana gave her a kiss on the forehead before disappearing behind the screen, and Kitty tried to settle down without hurting her ankle more.

She was pretty sure she wouldn't be really sick, Jane was the one to fall ill at the first drop of rain, she on the other hand barely ever caught colds. And she could actually go on without a nap, but they all seemed very intent on making sure she had ample rest, so she would humour them for the day – she didn't want Georgiana or her sister to worry – and go back to walking around as soon as possible. Soon, she yawned, though, and maybe she was really tired after all...

Some indefinite amount of time later, as she was drifting between sleep and wakefulness, she felt the mattress dip next to her, and arms wrapped around her waist as Georgiana snuggled close. And, well, she had a lot to figure out, she knew – she and Georgiana would have to talk, but if today was any indication, everything would be alright. And now that she felt warm and safe, that could wait another day.

End Notes
This isn't as developed as I hoped to make it, I had so many ideas when I saw your prompts! ... and then I had no inspiration to actually write them :( I hope you enjoy it still! oh, and that you don't mind the not-at-all-austenian language xD It's hopefully historically accurate, though.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!