Life With Darcy

by Charlie the Fantastical

Summary

My life has officially been flipped upside down. My mother, after a yearlong absence, wants me to be a part of her life again. This life includes her CEO fiance and my soon to be stepbrother...Fitzwilliam Darcy. I'm happy living with my dad, and I have little to no intention of spending time with my mom. So- if they think I'll go quietly, well they have another thing coming.

Originally posted of FFN.
I am Elizabeth Maeve Bennet. My name is weird, I am weird, my existence is weird, and this story is just a tad bit weird. Weird.

I'm going to give you the rundown of my current life, okay?

The biggest part you should know right now, well, that would have to be the divorce. It's what caused everything, and I mean everything, you're about to read. My parents, Francesca and Mathew, who I always found to be in love, decided to split up last year. Sure, I didn't see it coming but we all have to be wrong sometimes. That I can deal with. I wasn't blind to the signs. We rarely are. I just choose to ignore them. They split up and I went to live with my dad. My mom didn't really want to take care of me at this point. She wanted to 'find herself' and 'cleanse her cluttered soul'. Why she couldn't wait until I was eighteen to go on this spiritual adventure, I'll never know.

The point is, for the last year or so it's just been me and dad. We've got our systems, our follies, and the occasional triumphs. It works. I like it. He likes it.

Mom doesn't.

See, she's finished with her cleansing and finding and she's back now. She doesn't seem to think her year long absence has put a dent in our relationship at all. That and she has this CEO of a boy toy clinging to her like a lost puppy. Well, he's her fiancé now so he can't technically be a boy toy anymore… but only technically. His name is Steven. I call him Stewart just to piss him off; problem is it only pisses me off because he doesn't care. He wants me to like him, he really does, and that's why I can't help but feel guilty. I mean, I've decided mom is pretty much public enemy number one, so that makes him public enemy numero dos by the transitive property… and that makes his son number three.

Yeah, he has a kid. A really, seriously, annoyingly, hopelessly arrogant kid submerged in his decadent lifestyle. His name is… pft….haha… FITZWILLIAM. Seriously, what kind of name is that? Doesn't just scream 'look at me- I'm rich'? Also- what kind of parents are that cruel?

But I digress. What I'm trying to say here is; I can't stand the guy. At seventeen, he's only a year older than me but eons less mature. He's a senior in high school and class president. Not to mention football team captian, baseball team star, and Harvard bound. Successful little Fitzwilliam. Everyone loves him and I hate it. Every time we talk, we don't. We argue and criticize. There is none of this 'talking' so to speak. That's about all I do in Steve/ Stewarts' house, argue with his son.

Yeah, I stay at their house now. It's only on weekends… and they have managed to monopolize my entire summer. It's seems like, if I have free time, it belongs to my mother and the Darcy's (The public enemy's last name).

You know what really sucks? Get this, my mother was ready to go to a custody hearing, guns blazing ,lawyers calculating, and my dad reasoned with her. He made this little deal up without even speaking to me. With the risk of sounding like a raging cynic, I guess I'm not too trusting of him either anymore. I feel like he was eager to get me out.. just like mom had been. Is this how it's going to be for the next two years, skipping from house to house? I don't want that. That's not me.

Don't get me wrong, the house is impressive. Impressive in a 'look how expensive and decadent we can afford to live' kind of way. The house has four levels, two decks, an outdoor pool (there
are two Plexiglas sides you can see into the pool with—TWO!), indoor hot tub, state-of-the-art kitchen, and countless other luxuries. I still get lost occasionally. One time I called it a mansion, which it totally is, and my mother got all upset. ‘That doesn't matter Elizabeth! Don't think of it as a house, let alone a mansion, think of it as a home.’ Have I mentioned recently that I dislike my mother? I have? Well just for good measure, I really don't like her.

I have a plan. It shouldn't be that hard, really, it's already set in motion. Fitzwilliam Darcy is my way out. You see, my soon to be step brother already can't stand me… I just have to make sure he feels miserable in this house. He has to hate me so much he doesn't want to come home. My mother and Stewart will have to let me live out the rest of my high school years with my father. His son was here first, that has to form some kind of obligation. Darcy has a right to be here, more than I. I just have to make them see that. As I said before, I've got a good start.

I am going to argue. I am going to tease and taunt and bicker and complain until his ears bleed annoyance. It's going to be simple. He's easy to get riled up; it's real great fun to watch him. Most of the time, I'm not even the instigator, he is.

Next time I talk to you, you'll get an earful about Darcy. See, I'm going home for the week but—next Saturday the war begins.

Lizzie OUT.
Miserable

Waking up sucks, I think as I glare at the offending alarm clock. Sleeping in an unfamiliar room sucks. Having to get out of bed sucks. Life sucks.

I don't even remember setting that alarm. No one should have to wake up at seven on a Saturday. No one.

I sit up in bed and rub my eyes, not quite ready to face the day. I hate the room I'm in. Steve said I could decorate it however I want but... I'm not ready to make this home. I only have to stay here on weekends and during the summer. I can still be with dad... most of the time. I still don't get why she would do this. Anyways, I've hardly even seen her since I've gotten here. In my mind, she doesn't want me here. I think she wanted to show dad up, prove that her life is better without him or something along those lines. Wanting to be in my life is a lie. Everybody lies. I don't like everybody all that well right now.

Well, at least I've got some time to myself. I've always liked sitting in bed. Completely alone. No one is around to tell me who I'm supposed to be, so I can remember who exactly it is I am.

I slump back down. I'm going to sleep for a three good hours more. It's way too early to be contemplating about life like this. As I said before, waking up early on the weekend is inhuman. It takes a while but I start to feel drowsy. I let my eyes go into lock down just as there's a knock at the door. I flip over and groan into my pillow.

Assuming it's my mom, up bright and early to pester me first thing in the morning, I answer with an irritable "Come in. It's unlocked."

"Your mother wants you to come down for breakfast."

I shoot up in my bed. That's not my mother's voice. Repeat, that is not my mother's voice. Tis' decidedly masculine. Decidedly conceited. Decidedly Darcy.

"Why the hell are you here?"

Standing in my doorframe is no other than Fitzwilliam Darcy. Yeah, just standing there looking all high and mighty... in a snide 'you're seriously not ready yet' way. I speak the truth; his appearance depicts someone ready for the morning. At seven sleeping AM. All dressed in his stupid rich people clothes-Darcy looks ready to face life. Unlike me. I can't help but notice he has his dad's curly brown hair, though his isn't as styled as his fathers. He lets all the little curls free to wind and twist. His skin is obnoiziously light as his eyes are green, both a tad bit frightening. He has some serious nerve; standing there looking like Adonis this early in the morning. He also looks kind of pissed, so I can take that as a condolence.

"I kind of live here too. And may I add, before you ever did."

And then, with that signature air of entitlement, he turns on his heal to leave.

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When I finally get the energy to go downstairs, everyone is long gone. That's cool. Have Senor Stick in the Mud wake me up for breakfast only to bail. Real classy, guys. Real classy.

While fancy, I hate the kitchen. It's not something that really fits into a 'home'. It would be better suited in a five star restaurant. It's cold and calculated. Black granite countertops span the area and
match all the grays in the room. Everything is so shiny and perfect, I feel afraid to touch the appliances for fear of leaving fingerprints. It's not warm or homey or welcoming. It's Darcy.

My train of thought crashes when I hear my stomach growl in protest. While I'm here, I may as well grab some breakfast. I'm so tired, it's not even worth raiding the fridge. I'm still half zombie and not ready to try for humanity status. I take a looksey into the breadbox. Toast is about the only thing that sounds mildly appetizing. I mean, when in doubt eat carbs. Carbs are your friend. Carbs understand. Carbs don't wake you up at seven A.M on a weekend.

The breadbox is entirely empty. There is not a slice to be seen. Not a whiff of wheat. I would even settle for a roll of rye (if such a thing is even in existence.) Not even a crumb. It just sits there, all empty and mocking-ish. Stupid breadbox.

"C'mon, even prisoners get bread." I can't keep my complaints to myself. I mean, seriously, you spend countless dollars on a high end kitchen but you can't even manage to keep bread in stock. Normally, this wouldn't piss me off as much as it does. Maybe it's because it's early. Maybe it's because I'm used to dad buying the bread. Maybe it's because I'm here.

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My phone rings and I jump to my feet. The caller ID identifies my best friend in the whole entire world…. Jane. YES! Just like that, life is good again. She's one of those people that radiates happiness. Seriously, Jane walks into the room and people get happy. It's always positive with this chick. I need some positive.

I click the doobly doo on my phone to accept the call. I hear the faint crackle in my ear. I smile and give a grateful greeting to Jane.

"Jane!"
"Hey, Lizzie….

That little phrase set off a wave of suspension. Jane didn't sound… *peppy enough* to be Jane.

"You know how I was coming over next weekend?"

Crap. That didn't sound so good. See, my mother wanted me to adjust faster. Make this place home. Still not sure what exactly her intentions were, but nonetheless, she said Jane could spend next weekend with me. I haven't seen Jane for five months. That's like ten years in best friend time. She moved to New York for her dad's new job. Good excuse… but still. I'm not great with making friends and Jane is.

"I can't afford the ticket anymore. The price went way too high and…. My dad still hasn't cemented his position and I don't make enough at the Capt. Clucks to make it down. I'm so sorry, Lizzie."

"Oh- um. Yeah, it's fine. I mean, I understand. Shit happens right?"

It's with that last sentence that I realize how dejected I sound; so I try to lighten it up.

"I guess I'll just have to describe how horrible Fitzwilliam Darcy is until you can get here……"

And from there on we talk like best friends are supposed to talk. Happy. Laughing. Whining. We don't talk about her visiting anymore. I just tell her all about Darcy and his infuriating self. I tell her about my mom and Steve. I tell her about my huge room. I tell her about the mansion I'm living in. I tell her about how I get lost in it sometimes.
I don't tell her about how completely and utterly miserable I'm feeling.
I'm sitting on the couch and staring out the window, contemplating what I'm going to do next weekend when I hear the door open.

I'm pretty sure you can guess who it is.

So, Darcy walks deliberately over to the seat adjacent from the couch. He give me an intense look before saying-

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing."

"Come on. You look like you just ran over a puppy. What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Sure, and that fat kid up the street is just big boned. You've been … more pissed off than usual. I want to what the problem is."

I want to laugh but I know I shouldn't. He's Darcy. He's the enemy. But he's also funny so I can't help but let a giggle escape. He has this tiny little smile in response. The smile seems to be talking more than he does. The smile is, for lack of a better word, nice. And I guess that's what makes it okay to tell him.

"It's my friend.. my best friend actually. She moved. Far away. A few months ago."

Why is it that I'm telling him about this? Maybe it's because he seems like he may care…. If only just a little bit. He's never been like this around me. I find it surprising but nice. I'm starting to think he may care more than most do in this house. My mom just blew me off earlier when I told her Jane couldn't come. I don't know why that stung just as bad. The not caring. I feel like an emotional watering pot. I see his expectant look, as though he awaits a further explanation. Being the dummy I am; I give it to him.

"She was supposed to come visit me next weekend. My mom thought it would make this more fun. Well, it turns out she can no longer afford the ticket and she can't miss school to drive up here. So . . ."

"Why not just find someone else to hang out with? I mean, if she can't come and she's never here… don't you need new friends?"

"They're not Jane. No one is like Jane. No one can listen like her. Talk like her. If you can just cycle your friends through, you wouldn't understand."

"I didn't mean it like- Wait. 'Cycle them through'? What that even supposed to mean?"

"You know exactly what I mean. What I don't understand is not appreciating what you have. I mean, at one point or another, those past friends you've forgotten about? Well they meant something to you. That should count for something."

He doesn't respond immediately. I'm expecting outrage but all I really get is this stoic contemplation. He finally turns his head to look at me. I can't help myself from noticing how vividly green his eyes are.
"You're an interesting girl Elizabeth Bennet. Really interesting."

"That's it?" I just insulted the guys' character, his opinions, and morality…. and all I get is an 'interesting indeed'. I don't think so. He gives a frustrated sigh before launching into his defense.

"People aren't meant to stick around."

I can plainly see that I've succeeded in frustrating him. His skin is flushed and his fists clenched. This plan of mine is getting to him. I take some pride in that. And by some, I mean oodles. Oodles and oodles of it. Yes, I enjoy my oodley pride.

"Tad bit cynical aren't you, Darcy," I spit his name out like a bad taste on my tongue. "I wonder what family time is going to be like in this house."

"Spare me the sarcasm. Meeting you was enough; I have zero interest in actually spending time with you. I'm only here because my father told me to."

That remark hurts a little more than it should. I don't care if he likes me. I'm happy he doesn't want to be around me…. Ok, I'm not sure if I can convince myself of this. Even if I don't like him and vice versa…. Whatever happened to a little thing called tact?

You know what; he wants to play like that? I'll play like that.

I will get you back Darcy. I will make sure of that.

Idiot.

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I'm leaving now because, I swear if I don't I might just punch my soon to be step bro in his high class face. I get off the couch and start walking away. If he's confused he's not voicing it- so I keep going. I go and go until I'm thoroughly lost in this annoying ass mansion. I go up a few flights of stairs until I'm at least sure I'm on the correct level of this madhouse. I amble about the endless puzzle of halls until I find my room. FINALLY. They need to install a directory.

As I freefall onto my bed, I'm feeling some conflicting emotions. There's this disappointment tugging at me. I mean, I was REALY looking forward to Jane visiting me. When times are tough, the tough need their besties to sit by them and agree that times are tough and that life sucks in general. That's just how it works. We we're going to do all those fun things; the same fun things that we've been missing out on since she left. Then I guess there was a small triumph that was just won. I got Darcy to fight with me. All part of the plan. I know I should feel happier at the small start, but I can't help but feel completely and utterly drained. I need to have that 'last word' in every argument. I just do. Sometimes, my brain gets a little fried as it searches for that last scathing statement. At least, it does after being forced into vocal combat relentlessly.

William Darcy. He is on the list. The Shit List. The list reserved for only those vile enough not to constitute has human beings in my eyes any more. Okay, maybe not that far but, I can't stand him. At all. And not only am I sick of him; I'm sick of his words, his family, and his face. I see a picture of him and I get annoyed. Instantly. It's like I'm allergic.

Maybe I could work that angle to get out of this place. I can see it now….

"Mom, I need to leave this house. Like, forever. It is detrimental to my health."

"What do you mean, Elizabeth?"
"I'm allergic to Darcy. Deathly."

"Oh my goodness! We better send you off to your father's! I'd hate to have you fall ill under my watch."

…. Okay. I get it, that conversation is just a little farfetched. If only, if only… Oh well, a girl can dream can't she? I've been dreaming a lot lately actually. Those dreams usually involve physical harm to a certain Darcy boy.

We've been fighting constantly since I've started coming here. As I said before, I'm getting sick of it. I know I know, Lizzie what about your plan? This is the way out! He's more than willing to fight! Well guys, a girl go only bicker for so long. I need to find new ways to get on their nerves. Ways that don't lead to constant exhaustion.

I don't like were this is going. I need to rethink my escape plan.

Lizzie OUT.
GUYS. GUESS WHAT!

You know what? Actually- no time for guessing!

JANE IS COMING!

I don't know how she got the money or the late ticket or why she won't tell me how or anything for that matter, but frankly- I DON'T CARE.

It's Jane and she can come next weekend!

I AM SOO PUUUUMPED. I AM SOO HAAAAPY. THIS IS GONNA ROOOOCK.

Okay, I will stop with the mental singing now. But still-

Don't you just love that moment when the absolute definition of disappointment is replaced with a feeling of pure excitement and happiness? Rhetorical question- but I don't care. I love it. I love it so fracking much.

She called this morning to tell me. She called at like six A.M. my time and I didn't even mind all that much. I was sleeping and then I was talking and now I am spazzing.

The thing is though, she was super duper vague. I mean she told me when she was coming and all that jazz, but she kept avoiding the how. Like how did you find the cash? Or perhaps how is it that you could actually procure a ticket? My plan is to interrogate her once she actually gets here.

I have absolutely everything planned out to the dot. The freaking dot man. It's been planned.

I borrow my mom's car, pick Jane up, go get some orange leaf froyo to celebrate, and then take her to the house to set her up in the guest room directly adjacent to mine. From there on we will have crazy adventures in bookstores, embarrassing moments in public place, and daring explorations in the gigantic mansion of a house.

It's going to be totally WICKED.

That is, it will be totally wicked next week. Until then I have the waiting.

I'm sitting in the second largest living room in the house and thinking about this waiting. And, yeah, they have multiple living rooms.

Anyways, I'm just sitting there minding my own business and thinking about Jane coming to visit when the doorbell rings. I'm not expecting anyone, so I look around for a second, half anticipating someone to come running and welcome their guest. It's been a couple a moments and nobody comes. I guess that leaves me, right? I mean, I'm not a social butterfly or anything but I'm also not the kind of person to leaves someone waiting on the front steps.

I open the door to a grinning idiot.

Seriously, he has this shit eating grin. It's that kind of smile that practically screams 'I'm oblivious to all things bad'. He also has red hair. Everything about him is just… bright.

A male ginger version of Jane is standing at the door.
And he's kind of hot. I mean, he's probably around six foot and has the face of a Greek god. Not to mention, he's got this polo on that's tight around the muscles on his arms and these hands that are- wow. Time to stop creeping, Liz….

"Who are you?"

It's hard to tell who says it first. His voice is upbeat whilst mine is befuddled.

"Wait a marvelous minute, are you Elizabeth? Elizabeth Bennet?"

"Uh… um, yes. Yeah. I am."

He thrusts his hands onto one of mine. He starts giving me this enthusiastic handshake; enclosing one of my hands with both of his.

"I have heard so much about. Frankly, he simply won't shut up! Elizabeth this or Elizabeth that. It's like you have some kinda hold on him! I'm Charlie by the way. Charles Bingley."

Ohhh my.

I am sooo confused. I doubt that I caught half of what he just said. My social interaction for the day has exceeded its limit in a matter of minutes. This guy has a talent. Or a curse. I'm not entirely sure yet.

"Hi."

I know I know I KNOW, OKAY? Random hot guy at doorstep that actually knows I exist and all I can be bothered to say is 'hi'. What's next? Do I ask if he wants to be my new friend? If he wants to share crayons while we fill in coloring books?

"Charlie!"

It's Darcy. He's running down the stairs, presumably to push me out of the way and take his friend to a (Lizzie free) safe environment. This is actually the first time I've seen him today and it's almost four. Do I carry the plague or something? Any who, he doesn't seem to notice me until he physically gets to the door.

And he's staring. Just looking at me, like he can't quit figure out why I'm here talking to his friend. Well, Darcy, if you don't want your friends to see me; maybe you should actually answer the fugging DOOR!

Charlie is now staring at Darcy, Darcy's shooting eye daggers at me, and I'm still drooling over Charlie. And it is suffocating quiet. I bet I could listen to the gossip from a flea tea party. If such a thing existed, which they totally should; I mean tea and parasites? They seem like things that would go well together.

Oh my. I seem to have gone off on a tangent again haven't I? Don't answer that.

"Hey, you know what? Me and Darcy here were going to go play some Call of Duty…. You want to join?"

Charlie is officially cool.

"I don't think that Eliza-" Darcy never has been.

"I'd love to, Charlie."
And I always will be.
I kicked major ass in COD. But, then again, did you expect differently? I am Elizabeth Maeve Bennet (if you required any reminding) and I shit you not. Compared to me, these guys are pansies in the art of virtualized warfare. I beat- no I DOMINATED them both. Maybe I can charge these rich kids for gaming lessons. Scratch that- maybe I can charge Darcy. Charlie is too cool for that. I'll teach him the ways of the gaming proficient for free. How generous am I?

Don't answer that. I might just blush.

We're sitting in the recreation room in front of the television we used during our gaming binge. I'm sitting in the couch with Charlie directed in front of the screen. Darcy opted to sit angled off in the loveseat like the agoraphobic lobster he is. The doorbell rings again and mister antisocial gets up to announce that the pizza has arrived.

My stomach starts speaking in a series of grumbles and noises that I'm hesitant to describe. Yeah… that bad. Charlie defiantly noticed also.

"Hey, Lizzie, pizza?"

"Well, I actually have a book waiting for me in my room."


I've read *The Fault in Our Stars* about four times as of this moment, but does that matter? It's a book that you can read ten times over and never tire of. You find things deeper than before, more special and precious with each reading.

Oh my, I'm rambling again. Sorry bout' that!

"C'mon, you can eat while you read! Can't you?"

"I guess…."  

For Charlie, *TFIOS* can wait. Temporarily.

"Then it's settled! Darcy, my man, I'll go pay the pizza guy. You keep Lizzie entertained."

Charles bolts out of the room before either of us, Darcy and I that is, can protest. Seriously, the guy jumped off the couch and practically sprinted out of the den.

It's just me… and Darcy…. and the awkward. Oh the awkward. It's such an intense awkward I bet we could slice it with a pizza cutter.

"He sure is subtle isn't he…" I can hear Darcy mutter sarcastically. Someone isn't too happy about their one on one time with a certain Bennet. I wonder who it could possibly be.

"Scared to be alone with me, Darcy? I promise I won't bite…. Too hard."

He just scoffs and looks at me for a moment. He's deciding something. Perhaps he's not sure if I'm telling the truth. I have been known to possess a violent streak, you know, and I bit other kids until I was six. Don't judge six year old me. Everyone does shit at six. I bet you ate paste didn't you? DIDN'T YOU!? YOU LITTLE LYING GLUE SMACKER!
Sorry, tender subject.

"Elizabeth…"

"Yeah, Darcy?"

"What scares you?"

"You mean besides clowns, spiders, small spaces and –"

"Yes. Besides that."

On one hand, I'm kind of conflicted. Should I answer sincerely? I don't know. I mean, I know exactly what frightens me. It's always been there. I just don't know if I should tell Darcy. I know that he doesn't like me, and I know that I've given him good reasons not to, but…. At the same time I want him to still respect me as a person. Vulnerability is weakness and weakness does not constitute as a grounds for respect. Eva'.

On the other hand, it has always been there and I want to let it out. I don't want to silently fret anymore over this one big thing.

I don't know why he has this sudden interest in me or if I trust it; however, If he's offering to listen…. Why shouldn't I?

"What horrifies me the absolute most is the idea of being useless; that even if I am intelligent and brilliantly promising, I could easily fade into something completely average. That I'll put amazing off until I can't accomplish anything. Until I'm tied down. I'm afraid that I'm never going to be remarkable. … is that weird?"

I hear a slight intake of breath. Mine or his; never to be known.

"I've heard weird is a side effect of remarkable."

"…"

There is a quiet that settles over us. I want to ask what he would exactly define remarkable as; what it is that makes a person utterly extraordinary. So I do. At first, all I get is this look, and when he does speak it is with a distinct caution in his reply; like he's not sure if it's absolutely safe to answer my question. I don't blame him. Really, nothing ever ends well when I persist in conversing. It's almost always in a pursuit to get him angry.

In order to get me away from here… from mom. I don't know why, but in moments like these… I feel guilty. Like he doesn't deserve what I've done to him. Or his dad for that matter. It's like they're casualties in my mother and I's silent war.

AHHHHH-

I should not be getting this thoughtful waiting for pizza. I should be worrying about topping; not my life choices!

"It's not being afraid to be weird; having ideas that just won't quit. When you plan but are always willing to change everything around you, the world included."

"That's setting a pretty high bar."

"Lizzie, being remarkable isn't always about what you do. It's about who you are."
"You've never called me Lizzie before."

"I save nicknames for remarkable people."

And just like that….

We weren't enemies anymore.
Fitzwilliam Darcy's sitting on my bed as I brush my hair and style it into a braid. He's pretty much silent the entire time, making eye contact through the mirror I'm staring at. I can see his face twitch microscopically before he starts to speak.

"So," Will starts ", Can I come? You know, to meet the infamous Jane. I've heard that she's something special."

I tie the end of my braid.

"Sorry, Fitzy," I gave him that nickname a couple days ago ", this is a best friend thing. No boys allowed."

He lets out a groan and I instantly know what's coming. Turning towards him, I wait for the mini monologue.

"I had absolutely no choice in my name. For some reason, my mother thought that she should curse be with a name from the eighteen hundreds before running off to Mexico. Not my fault. So-Do. Not. Call. Me. FITZY!"

"Okay…..Fitzy." And I am OUT OF THERE. I am sprinting out of my room and down the stairs because I know what happens next.

"LIZZIE!"

Ahh, Fitzy….

I go straight to the kitchen and lunge for the keys to my mother's car. She said I could borrow it for the day. I can heat the thumping of Wills feet as he runs after me. But I'm faster. When I run out of books to read, I go running. Not like around the block a couple times running, more like hey I'm bored… four miles sounds like fun running. So, point being, I'm faster than ol' Fitzy.

I find the nearest exit to the lawn and take it. It's by the patio; so I take a chair and jam it against the door, effectively stalling my pursuer's chase. I glance around to locate the garage and start sprinting again.

When I get in the car I am positively GASPING. I can run, sure, but I cannot sprint worth shit. I mean, I'm fast at it but not that for that long. Too much sprinting. Oh God, I think I'm dying.

I see him running towards me and lock the doors.

Better luck next time, William.

Today, I am victorious.

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The gate for Jane's flight is PACKED. There must have been a business conference or something because everyone a.) above thirty and b.)wearing a suit. Needless to say, my jeans and button up tank are out of place. The pink polka dots on my shirt stick out like sore thumbs in this sea of black and grey.

And also, I'm tall but apparently not tall enough. All these guys standing in front of me are freaking lofty! I can't watch for Jane behind all these suited giants! It's not like I have x-ray vision.
and can see through this guy's head!

I tap on the shoulder of the man in front of me in hopes that he may facilitate my advancement to the front.

Before I go on, may I ask of you a simple answer to a very simple question? WHY ARE ALL THE GUYS I'VE BEEN MEETING SO FLIPPING ATTRACTIVE?

Seriously, this guy looks like a model from Abercrombie and Fitch. Blonde hair shining, blue eyes twinkling- it's the stuff of movies. And suddenly, I find suits extremely attractive. Apparently, this over thirty rule of mine doesn't apply to him. Dude looks twenty something! Maybe he's picking up the boss.

"Can I help you, miss?"

OHMYGOD. He called me miss. I don't think I've ever been called miss.

"Uh, yeah. I'm looking for my friend and… um, your head… it's kind of-"

"In the way?"

I look at his smile and give a numb nod in response. He grins, extending his arm in handshake.

"George. George Wickham. I apologize for my head's transgression against you."

"Oh, no- Your head is fine!"

"Why thank you, miss…..what did you say your name was?"

"Elizabeth," I say breathlessly. I officially sound like a bimbo. Congrats, Lizzie. You have officially lost half your intelligence in….. two seconds? That has to be a record.

"Nice to meet you, Miss Elizabeth. Now, how about we try to get you to the front, hmm?"

I nod numbly. He grabs me loosely by the arm and somehow manages to get me to the front of the crowd. His fingertips are firm and warm, confident. Before I know it, we are in front of all the suits. The gate opens just as I turn to thank him, but he is already gone. Lost in a sea of suits.

I crane my neck in an effort to locate my comrade. AHH- THERE SHE IS IN ALL HER JANE-HOOD. She's wearing a green and purple butterfly dress. It's flowy around her curves and extremely flattering. Her golden hair is softly curled in waves and her makeup immaculate finished. Totally Jane. Totally my best friend.

I let out an embarrassing squeak and practically tackle her.

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