Sometimes, every once in awhile, Jane Bennet broods over things. --A one shot meant to take place after Jane and Bing have moved to New York. I do ship Jane/Bing, I swear.

Sometimes, every once in awhile, she broods over things. Almost everything is full speed ahead—she powers through work on fruit smoothies and blind enthusiasm, forces herself out of her comfort zone and into the city like she learned to in LA. It’s her dream job, her dream city, what she had imagined since she was a little girl making scrapbooks from her mom’s fashion magazines, so the fact that this life is draining, demanding, is hardly something she allows herself to admit. It’s only at night, alone, after she has told Bing that, really, he needs to spend some time at his apartment if he’s going to keep paying for it, that she gets in these moods, curled up in the corner of the IKEA couch that had seemed like such a luxury when she bought it on their first full day there. Now she’s seen the same couch in several offices and photo shoots, and even though Bing pointed out that it must mean she has good taste, it actually makes her feel a bit like she’s living on a set.

She didn’t expect it to be, but for some reason the weirdest part is when people find out they don’t live together. There are a few people—mostly higher-up colleagues who often say things like “I like that ambition!” and “You go, girl!”—who look as if they’re pleasantly surprised by it, who nod in approval like they just found out she’s a part of their secret club. The approval, wherever it stems from, isn’t unwelcome. Accepting it at face value isn’t the best choice, and she should know—Caroline calls her for a forcibly upbeat chat once a week—but Jane is tired of second-guessing friendliness. For the most part, though, the information brings a confused pause, and the conversation skips a beat before someone steers it in another direction. Lizzie says that they probably just assume that she’s religious and don’t want to step on any toes—she’s been running a similar gauntlet of introductions in LA—but then Lizzie moved to LA for her own reasons; Bing laid everything on the line for Jane, would have, he told her later, followed her anywhere; if you believed his parents, he had even dropped out of med school for her. She wants to tell these people: it’s not like this is the way she had always wanted it to be. She wasn’t afraid of commitment or of family or of building a life together. She had never been one to hold anyone at
arm’s length. But when he was there again, looking at her like that, laying out the torn up pieces of his life as if to prove that he had done his penance, that he deserved her, that they could be together again because he had neglected his own happiness as thoroughly as he had neglected hers, it was all she could say.

And she’s proud of herself, really, proud of the rules and the boundaries, the tiny little fences she’s set up. In those first awful days, just after he had moved to LA, she had imagined him returning so often, had pictured the anguish he would have in his face as he explained everything, had felt his hand on her forehead in so many desperate daydreams, that she’s actually surprised she was able to deviate from the script she had written for herself, to even, almost irrevocably, say it—no. She and her sisters really were alike; they took people too much to heart, trusted too instinctively. Even Lizzie, who had once prided herself on being an astute judge of character. And especially Lydia. Jane had hated having to see Lydia’s videos, that trail of breadcrumbs that she and Lizzie had entirely, catastrophically missed, and part of the pain of watching them was seeing herself in them, reliving the rush of those first days with Bing: the way she had thought she was being so careful, her blindness to the warning signs Caroline had laid out for her so deliberately, her own need. She wonders what would’ve happened if she were more like Lydia, if she were able to express that sharp thrust of pain, if she were able to yell at people when she wanted to. She wonders how they would’ve looked at her. But, of course, it wasn’t fair to think about it that way, to romanticize Lydia’s ability to burst into life; Jane remembers perfectly well those long nights of waiting for her sister to fall apart, of endlessly, ineffectually trying to comfort a girl who was no longer comfortable in her own skin. And it was a choice, really, that Jane made, to not let things come bursting out. She was the one who had decided not to leave Bing any more messages, who had locked herself in her room, her phone always pathetically close by, numbly searching the internet for ways that other people had expressed what she wouldn’t, leaving her own uninspiring breadcrumb trail on Pinterest. Maybe it wasn’t the best way to deal with pain, but it was the best way to make sure she didn’t inflict it on others. And that was worth it. That’s who she is.

And she knows that it’s time to stop brooding, to put her mug in the sink and go to bed, because she has work tomorrow morning and she loves her work, because Bing does make her happy, doesn’t rush anything, respects her little rules and boundaries like they’re inevitable, like there’s no other way. Because even though she loves his unselfishness, his unjaded approach to everything, even though he tries to cook for her when she has to work late and agrees to go with her to the craft store for the millionth time, there’s still a part of her that’s locked in her room, refusing to express anything in her own words, waiting for the ache to finally ebb away.

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