

SIMPLE GIFTS

Written by

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INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY 1

MIKHAIL, 13, a shy foreign exchange student, reads at a computer station. In his hands is a heavily used Russian-English dictionary. He thumbs through it, reads an entry, and makes a note in his journal.

Mikhail watches as GIGI, 13, a perky American girl, enters and plops her backpack down at a nearby table.

Gigi pulls out a book, *Pride and Prejudice*, by Jane Austen. She turns to where a page corner is folded over to find her place. She twirls a small strand of her hair as she reads.

Mikhail smiles and returns to his work.

Gigi takes out a pencil with a chewed-up eraser on the end, underlines a passage in the book, and absent-mindedly nibbles at the pencil while she continues to read.

Mikhail closes out his computer windows. Gigi is so immersed in reading that he allows himself to watch her openly for a moment. He is smitten.

Mikhail slings on his backpack and walks past Gigi. EXITS.

Gigi reads on, oblivious.

The school BELL rings, and we hear an

ANNOUNCEMENT

Ten minute bell. You have ten minutes until first period begins.

Gigi looks up and sees on the table a tiny MATRYOSHKA (A Russian nesting doll). Surprised, she looks around the emptying library.

Gigi picks up the matryoshka and examines it. She twists the top half and pops it off. Inside is an eraser cap for a pencil.

Astonished, Gigi shrugs and fixes it to her pencil.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY 2

Mikhail gingerly places a slightly larger matryoshka at the table where he knows Gigi will sit. He takes the same seat at the computer station and works on a reading assignment with his dictionary.

Mikhail can't concentrate: his eyes wander to the clock, to the computer, to the entrance, to the circulation desk, to the matryoshka at the table, and back to the computer. Gigi isn't coming!

He looks at the clock again and a few minutes have passed. He is relieved when he finally sees Gigi at the entrance and quickly locks his attention to the computer.

Gigi approaches her usual table and halts. She sees the new matryoshka and scans the library.

GIGI

Who--?

Gigi cuts herself off and looks intently at Mikhail, but he is too freaked out to look up from the computer.

Gigi plops down her backpack and removes *Pride and Prejudice* from it. She takes a long look at the matryoshka. She takes the doll in her hands to examine it, runs her thumb along the edge that connects the top and bottom halves.

Mikhail steals a glance at Gigi and smiles.

Gigi twists the top half of the matryoshka off to reveal a foil-wrapped chocolate kiss inside. She smiles and again looks around the library for who left it there, lingering her gaze on Mikhail.

She unwraps the candy and pops it in her mouth. As she chews, she takes out her pencil with the new eraser on it. She opens her book and reads, tapping her cheek with the eraser end of the pencil.

Mikhail gets up from his computer station and packs up. Gigi balls up the foil wrapper and prepares to flick it at Mikhail. As he walks past Gigi, he startles as something pelts him in the face. Gigi, with a devilish smile, is completely immersed in her book.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY 3

A slightly larger matryoshka waits at Gigi's table.

Mikhail is at nearby table with a smart phone. He is pointing the phone's camera at where Gigi will sit. Through his phone camera we see Gigi sit down to discover the new matryoshka.

She looks toward Mikhail's usual computer station and then directly at Mikhail. He pretends to be engrossed in his phone.

Gigi takes a long look at the matryoshka. She picks it up and shakes it. It makes no sound. She places it back down.

Gigi picks it back up again, excitedly opens the doll and looks inside. Holding the bottom half upside down, she shakes out a leather bookmark onto the table. With a big smile she examines the bookmark.

Mikhail sneaks a photo of this moment.

Gigi reaches into her backpack for her book and pencil. She takes the book, smooths out the crease of a dog-eared page. She looks toward Mikhail's table.

Mikhail is gone.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY 4

Gigi, already smiling, takes a seat at her table in the library with another matryoshka already waiting there for her.

Gigi looks at the matryoshka. She looks at Mikhail, who is at his computer again, working. She holds her gaze, smiling, waiting.

Mikhail looks over at Gigi, and sees she's looking right at him. They lock eyes. A smile lights up his face.

Mikhail watches as Gigi opens the doll and pulls out a piece of rolled up paper. Gigi unrolls the paper.

INSERT - MIKHAIL'S SKETCH

It is a sketch drawing of Gigi smiling the day before, from the photo Mikhail took.

BACK TO THE LIBRARY

Gigi locks eyes with Mikhail.

GIGI
(silently, mouthing the
words)
Thank you.

Mikhail grins and nods. Gigi holds up a finger, then digs into her backpack to reveal a wrapped present.

She walks over with it to Mikhail and hands it to him. He unwraps it. It is a new copy of the book, *Pride and Prejudice*.

Mikhail and Gigi both smile ear to ear.

The school BELL rings.

A LOUDSPEAKER buzzes on with an:

ANNOUNCEMENT (O.S.)
Ten minute bell. You have ten
minutes until first period begins.

They each sling on their backpacks and EXIT the library together, talking as they go.