

## Darren Criss and the League of Successful Gay Gentlemen

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# **Darren Criss and the League of Successful Gay Gentlemen**

by [chelliebean3](#)

## Summary

Sometimes it takes a village to raise a Darren.

Ryan Murphy is an awesome boss. He has his flaws, sure. For one, he likes to pry into his actors' personal lives, but Darren's never really been put off by nosy people. He's an open book, so why would he be? It only gets annoying when people start discussing his personal life with people who aren't *him*. And while he's never caught Ryan in the act, he's walked in on enough whispered conversations between Ryan, Brad, and Zach to have his suspicions. But Darren likes Ryan a lot, and so he tries not to let it get to him.

At the beginning, when he first joined the show, he and Ryan had a lot of "big important" talks. Many of them revolved around Darren's love life. They would joke around and Ryan would invite him to discuss his plans for the future, for marriage and children, wondering when he was going to "find a nice girl and settle down." He always had this weird smirk on his face whenever he asked that, as if he knew something Darren didn't. Now that was annoying. Darren has always hated being out of the loop. He would just laugh it off, though, making some comment about living the rock star life before retiring to the suburbs of San Francisco. And Ryan's expression would remain carefully neutral, his eyes betraying only the faintest hint of judgment, of restrained disappointment, before he would change the subject.

By the time Ryan finally has a frank, honest conversation with him, Darren's already started messing around with Chris. It began on the tour and hasn't stopped since: filming breaks spent making out in trailers; late-night phone calls ending with whispered pleas to *just come over, right now, I need to see you*; the occasional weekend spent almost entirely in bed as they both learned every way to make the other fall apart. It's just sex, though. Just two friends who happen to be extraordinarily good in bed together, that's all. That's what Darren keeps telling himself.

"It needs to stop."

Darren lifts his head from where it had been hung over the neck of his guitar, checking his fingering on one note he can't seem to get right. He looks at Ryan, strums absently. "What needs to stop?"

Ryan's leaning back against his trailer door, arms folded. He looks every bit the parent who tries to toe the line between stern and laidback. "Whatever you have going on with Chris. It needs to stop."

Darren stares at him, mouth gaping open. "How...How did you-?"

"You two aren't nearly as subtle as you think you are," he says, pursing his lips. When Darren doesn't say anything, just continues to let his mouth hang open in disbelief, Ryan sighs. "It's you more than him, you know."

"What-" Darren chokes, swallows, and tries again. "What do you mean?"

"I mean you're more obvious than him. You look at him like he hung the moon, you realize that?" He shakes his head, giving Darren a look that's almost pitying. "You always have, but it's gotten, like, a thousand times worse since the summer. Don't think I don't know exactly what went down in those hotel rooms."

Darren hangs his head, bringing a hand to rub up over the back of his neck bashfully. "I'm sorry, Ryan. I know it's unprofessional-"

"I don't give a fuck about what's professional and what's not," he says sharply. "That's not what this is about."

"But- I don't understand. You said it needs to stop, but-"

"Not because it's unprofessional. Because it's unfair. To you and to Chris."

Darren bites his lip. He already knows the answer, but he asks anyway. "Why?"

"Have you told him how you feel?"

When Darren doesn't answer, Ryan nods, reaching for the door handle. "That's why. So stop doing what you're doing, and be honest for fuck's sake." He already has one foot out the door when he turns back, for the first time wearing a look of sympathy. "You might want to try being honest with yourself before anyone else." He shrugs. "Just a thought."

Then he's gone. Darren falls back on his couch, guitar on top of him, and gets so lost in his thoughts that he misses his call time.

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It's a couple months after that when Neil and David invite him over for dinner. Darren's happily surprised at the invitation. He's met the couple in passing at several events over the past year, but Neil gave him a call two weeks ago lamenting the fact that they've never really had a chance to chat, get to know each other. Darren, of course, jumped at the opportunity.

He should have known something was up when Ryan let them leave early for the day and whispered good luck when Darren passed him on his way out. Darren had almost said thank you before he remembered that he hadn't told Ryan about the dinner tonight.

Neil and David are just amazing. Amazing partners, amazing fathers, amazing cooks.

"This all looks fantastic," Darren says, licking his lips at the spread on the dining room table. There's shiitake mushroom tomato bisque to start, and then slow-roasted beef tenderloin, grilled asparagus, and a squash, ricotta, and sage pasta bake for the main course. "I can't cook worth shit, so consider me duly impressed."

David chuckles. "Just make sure to save room for dessert. There's a flat apple and vanilla tart in the fridge."

Darren actually groans at that and Neil and David both laugh at him. They all dig in and, unsurprisingly, everything tastes even better than it looks. The conversation meanders from harmless Hollywood gossip to college tales from University of Michigan (David's alma mater, which Darren didn't even know and is ridiculously excited to learn) to television set horror stories. Eventually the conversation comes round to how Neil and David met and fell in love. Darren hasn't taken a bite in five minutes he's so enthralled.

“I’m really lucky,” Neil says, covering David’s hand with his own. “*We’re* really lucky, to have found each other, to have what we have.”

Darren nods. “Definitely. You guys really are the perfect couple.”

“We know,” David says, grinning cheekily.

“Man, I hope someday I can have with someone what you two have. It’s really all anyone could ask for.”

Neil and David share a look. They keep their hands clasped, but Neil turns more fully towards Darren. “We actually wanted to talk to you about that.”

“About love and relationships in general,” David adds. “And how they work in this industry.”

“Particularly relationships of the, well.” Neil clears his throat. “Gay variety.”

Darren swallows around the lump that’s suddenly risen in his throat. He sets down his fork. “Oh.”

“We don’t know the details, and we don’t expect you to fill us in or anything,” Neil hurries to explain. “I’ve just been paying attention. I asked David about it and he’s noticed the same things.”

David nods along, sipping his wine. “If we’re totally off base, you can tell us. Please. I mean, there’s not much use having this conversation if there’s nothing going on.”

“There is,” Darren whispers. “There is something going on. You’re not wrong.”

The look the couple gives him is equal parts sympathy and concern. Darren isn’t sure how to explain exactly what Chris means to him— how he’s somehow worked his way into every part of Darren’s life, how what they have together makes him happier than he’s ever been, how he’s realized that he’s not quite sure how he could live without Chris in his life and just how terrified that makes him feel. So he doesn’t say anything.

“Look, I don’t want to make some big speech,” Neil says. “All I want is to make sure that you understand something.” He pauses, making sure he has Darren’s attention. “It’s okay to want things.”

“And it’s okay to have them, too,” David says. “If you’re happy, and he’s happy, that’s all that matters.”

Darren nods. He’d been expecting that, but it doesn’t stop tears from welling in the corners of his eyes.

“One more thing,” Neil says softly. “It’s also okay to be scared. It’s okay to do what you need to do to protect yourself. You don’t owe the world anything, so if you want to keep parts of your life private, that’s fine. Don’t do anything you’re uncomfortable with because of some naïve notion of doing the noble thing. Understand?”

Darren nods again, a few stray tears slipping out. “Yeah,” he croaks. “Yeah, I understand.”

David reaches over to pat his arm. “Are you okay, sweetheart? It’s fine if you’re having doubts, if you’re not sure about what you want.”

“No,” Darren says quickly. “It’s not that. I know what I want. That’s never been the problem.”

Neil nods understandingly. “Been there.”

“Thank you, guys.” Darren manages a half-smile before he picks up his fork again.

After so many unpleasant conversations with his team over the past month, about the nature of his relationship with Chris and what it means for his career, this talk with Neil and David is like a breath of fresh air. He doesn’t feel so alone anymore.

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Matt Bomer is a joy to have on set. He’s smart, funny, sweet, and unapologetically blunt. It only takes him about five minutes in a room with both Darren and Chris before he realizes what’s going on.

He catches Darren staring at Chris’s ass as he leaves the choir room set and he shakes his head exaggeratedly. “You’ve got it bad, bro.”

Darren rolls his eyes. “I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Uh, maybe the fact that you’re madly in love with one Christopher Colfer?”

Darren stares at him, shocked. “Who told you? Lea? Cory?” He pauses, trying to remember who knows. “Ryan?”

“Nobody. It’s written all over your face.”

“Jeez, I really gotta work on that.”

Matt laughs, claps him on the shoulder. “It’s okay. It’s sweet, really.”

“We’ve just been working really hard to keep it under wraps,” Darren explains, blushing a little. “You must be the third or fourth person who’s commented on how obvious we are. I am. Whatever.” He shrugs. “The first two were my parents so I didn’t let it get to me.”

“Are you okay with keeping it a secret?” Matt asks carefully.

“Don’t have much of a choice. I mean, I’m not *ashamed* to be with him or anything. It’s just better this way.”

Matt gives him an unreadable look. “Better for whom?”

Darren considers this. He knows both he and Chris like to keep their private lives private, Chris even more so than him. He knows the truth about them getting out could be detrimental to his career, and possibly Chris's if he got painted in a horribly negative light by the media. He knows his team is trying to sell a certain image of him to the general populace, and being in a relationship with his gay male co-star doesn't fit into that image.

The easier question to answer would be what it's better for. Their privacy, their careers, his image. But Darren can't say who it's better for. "I don't know," he says finally, and smiles. "All I know is I want him in my life however I can have him."

Neither of them say anything for a moment, and then Matt speaks up. "It's worth it, you know."

"Hmm?"

"Everything. All the bull shit that you're going through, that you *will* go through, it's worth it. He's worth it, judging by the smile on your face."

Darren thinks about the pictures Matt showed him on his phone of his family earlier this afternoon, thinks about Chris, thinks about one day having a family of his own. He imagines a little girl with rosy cheeks and glasz eyes and smiles again. "He really is."

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His encounter with Zachary Quinto is brief but leaves a lasting impact. Darren's been having a rough day. He's been having a rough couple of months, truth be told, but today has been especially bad. He agreed to attend this thing ages ago, though, and Darren's never been one to disappoint. The fact that he ends up seated next to Zach does wonders to lighten his mood to event-appropriate levels. They chat on and off for a few hours until, seemingly out of the blue, Zach turns to him, looking uncharacteristically serious. "Are you in love, Darren?"

Darren almost chokes on his water. "I, um." He scrambles for an answer and settles on the truth. "Yes. But we can't be together. He's- he found someone else."

Zach nods. "Love is a precious thing," he says. "Don't let it go easily. Some things- some people- are worth fighting for. Don't forget that."

"I-I won't," Darren stutters. "Thanks, man."

Zach lifts his glass in acknowledgement, turning back to the show. Darren slips away and finds a bathroom. He pulls out his phone, dials a number he still has memorized, and lifts the phone to his ear with a shaky hand. It rings twice before someone answers.

"Can I come over? We really need to talk."

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"Darren?" Chris looks up at him from where he's addressing invitations at their kitchen table.

"Yeah, babe?"

“Do you realize just how many successful, older, gay gentlemen will be attending our wedding?”

Darren grins as he stirs pasta into the pot of boiling water on the stove. “Funny, isn’t it?”

He makes a mental note to hand-make thank you cards.



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