you ain't nothing (but a hound dog)

by BookPirate

Summary

Elizabeth Bennet loves Jasper the dog but then some jackass named Fitzwilliam Darcy adopts him.

Or the one where Darcy can't keep the dog quiet so Elizabeth has to save the day

A very long drabble based off a hot mess au prompt that was originally posted on FFN under Smurf213.

Notes

Fourth of five hot mess au fics. The prompt for this one was: ‘i asked a staff member and they said you’ve been coming to the pound every day to play with the dog i’m taking home today and that’s why you’re getting weirdly emotional’ au

I twisted it a little to suit my own needs and basically only used the bare bones of the original P&P plot because there was no way I could write a drabble and include all the drama that's in that book like seriously, and even then I still went over the world limit but whatever I love Darcy and Elizabeth too much to limit their love.

Title from 'Hound Dog' by Elvis Presley
There are many things that factor into the reason Elizabeth Bennet volunteers at the Brighton Animal Shelter. She started volunteering when she was 15 mainly due to escape her over-bearing mother and crazy sisters, but kept volunteering because she couldn’t have her own animal, and the shelter was no-kill so the animals that didn’t get adopted became sort of hers anyways. She had hoped once she had graduated and was getting her doctorate she’d be able to finally get a dog of her own but it wasn’t in the stars for her, because the apartment she could barely afford anyways didn’t allow animals. It was pretty much the story of her life at this point, really.

But one of the bright sides to her life was Jasper, the Great Dane that was probably a little Golden Retriever due to the golden sheen of his coat and the amount of shedding the shelter had to put up with. He was a little on the older side, and, though being a huge sweetheart, had been at the shelter for the past two years.

On days where she felt Jasper was feeling rather upset about that, Lizzie made sure to pat his head and whisper “I love you, boy, don’t worry” before she began her weekly ritual of reading a book aloud to him. (The other volunteers think she was a bit crazy, but with a family like hers who could blame her?)

And so Jasper remained a constant in her life like this. He was always someone she could talk to and would sit in silence with her for hours after returning from her semi-monthly trip to see her parents. (Silence was always necessary after those trips because Fran Bennet never shut up). Whenever she had her heart broken he was there with kisses and she bought him new beds, toys and treats and snuck them to him when she thought no one was looking.

Lizzie’s actually in the middle of updating Jasper on her sister Jane’s love life (“He’s rich, sweet, and blonde too so together they look like a pair of angels that have descended onto earth to bless us with our presence, I think you’d like him”) when one of the real, official employees comes rushing up to the cage.

“Lizzie! You’ll never guess what’s just happened?” Maria Lucas, a girl Lizzie had known since she was born, is panting with excitement, brown curls in complete disarray.

A growing sense of dread begins to fill her stomach. “What?”

“Jasper’s to be adopted tomorrow!” Maria beams at her through the chains of the fence, blue eyes twinkling to mirror her happiness. “Isn’t that fantastic?”

Lizzie smiles back best she can. “Fantastic,” she replies weakly.

And of course, as Lizzie lay in bed later that night, she really does think it’s fantastic if Jasper is adopted by a family that would love him and take care of him the way he deserves. As much as Lizzie loves him, the shelter isn’t supposed to be a long-term housing solution. It perpetually smelled of piss and the constant flow of new faces wasn’t good for Jasper.

She brushes away the tears best she can, and curls her hand around Rebecca, the book she had named him after. (Because of course he didn’t respond to Lord Tiddywinks or whatever the hell he had been named before the shelter). But, she tries to brush those thoughts out of her mind and soon falls asleep.

She races to the shelter after work and bursts in through the employee door. “Is he gone?” she asks Maria breathlessly.

The other girl shakes her head. “No, the bloke can’t pick him up for another half hour, so you still
Lizzie nods and rushes to Jasper’s Kennel. She gives him his customary ‘hello’ treat of a carrot and a swift kiss to the head before packing his things. The only thing that won’t fit in the bag Lizzie had brought for him is the orthopedic bed she had gotten him for last Christmas, when the cement floor really seemed to be bothering him. So she sits on it with Jasper’s head in her lap, doing nothing to stop the little trickle of tears that steadily make their way down her cheeks and nose.

“You’ll love it in your new home, Jasper, trust me. We don’t let just anyone adopt the dogs, you know. I’m sure they’re going to have a big yard for you to run around in, and you’ll finally have a proper family. Not just little old me in this big nasty place.”

“Um, excuse me?” A voice brings her out of her reverie. “Is this Jasper?”

She quickly scrambles to her feet after gently pushing Jasper to the floor. “Yes, sorry, come in.” She undoes the latch to the kennel with one hand and wipes at her face with the other. “You must be the man who’s adopted him!”

“Yes,” is his reply. She tries her best to beam at the tall, imposing man with a hard jaw-line, neat black hair and cold blue eyes, but he gives her nothing in return so she quickly drops the smile and turns instead to Jasper’s bag.

“Well, everything you’re going to need is in here. His bowls, a month’s worth of the food he’s been on, his favorite toys…. The only thing that wouldn’t fit is his bed but I expect it’ll probably fit in your trunk.” She holds the bag out to him.

He eyes it disdainfully. “I’m perfectly capable of purchasing things for my dog, thank you very much.”

Lizzie’s neutral expression dips into a frown. “I wasn’t implying you couldn’t, only that these are his favorite things and he’s been here for two years so maybe a complete overhaul of his life isn’t the best thing for him right now!”

The man looks mildly surprised at her outburst. “Well, I’m sure getting adopted is the best thing for him, but if you’re so impassioned about him, why didn’t you adopt him? Or are you unable?”

That’s it. Lizzie’s day of being shit on by her thesis advisor has already upset her enough on top of all of this, and his snide tone is the straw that breaks her back, so to speak. “If you’re implying something about the state of my life I’ll thank you to butt out. For your information, my landlord doesn’t allow pets but I’ve been volunteering here for ten years so they’re all sort of my pets and I’ll be damned if the best of them is going to be mistreated!”

“No, you look. My life is pretty shit right now, and Jasper was one of the only good things about it so you better fucking take care of him and take his favorite things or I’ll hunt you down, understand?” She shoves the bag into his arms and bends down to quickly hug and kiss Jasper. “Be good,” she whispers into his ear and, with another glare at the man who’s watching her with a slack jaw, storms out.

Hours later in bed while she eats a gallon of ice cream she accepts that may have not been the best way to deal with Jasper’s adoption.

But she tries to put it out of her mind as best as she can, throwing herself into her work on her
thesis and actual job, trying to ignore the little pit in her heart where Jasper used to reside. It’s silly, really, as her mother tells her, that she’s grown so attached to a dog when she knew, logically, he wouldn’t be there forever. But things like George Wickham happened and logic flew out the window once she threw him out of her life and broke her heart a bit in the process.

She’s told the shelter she needed a week or two off due to the stress of school (she knows they see through the lie but she tries to keep appearances up all the same) so it’s with more than a little surprise that she receives a phone call from them later that week.

“Lizzie Bennet speaking,” she answers, pressing the phone to her ear with her shoulder as she keeps typing away at the revisions her supervisor is making her do.

“Lizzie, thank goodness, we’ve just had a call from the man who’s adopted Jasper and he’s asked for your number due to an emergency. Is it okay if we give him that information?” Maria’s voice sounds tinny on the phone and she almost drops it in shock.

“What type of emergency? Is Jasper okay?” she asks, panicked, because Jasper is on the other side of ten and large dogs don’t live very long.

“He didn’t say. Shall I go ahead and give him your number?”

Lizzie pinches the bridge of her nose. “No, look, give me his and save us all some time.”

Fifteen minutes later she’s gnawing on her thumb nail and waiting for this man, Will Darcy (sounds familiar but she can’t place him) to answer.

Finally, he does, and she has to hold the phone several inches away from her ear when the call connects. A dog (Jasper) is in the background howling like there’s no tomorrow and causes the man on the other end to scream “Hello?!”.

“It’s Lizzie Bennet, from the shelter?” she screams back. “They told me you wanted to get a hold of me?”

“He won’t stop howling please help me!” He gives her his address and she must run several stop signs to get to his (very posh) town house downtown.

Finally, she throws her car in park, probably illegally, and rings the doorbell she hopes he can hear over Jasper’s howls. The door is flung open and the man, Darcy, stands there, looking haggard and exhausted. “He’s in the kitchen.”

She pushes past him and heads towards the howling. Jasper is on his bed next to the kitchen island and looks heartbreaking. “Jasper!” she cries as she throws herself on the bed next to him.

He immediately stops howling. Darcy looks at Lizzie in shock.

“Are you magic? Or have you just trained this dog to be so ill behaved no one will adopt him?” he asks exasperatedly.

She stands up angrily. “Of course not, don’t be such an arse. He’s probably missing our weekly book-reading. I told you his schedule is very important to him!”

“I’m sorry, you read to him? How old are you, five?” he snaps at her.

“You know, I would be a little bit nicer to the woman who just shut your dog up so I suggest you quit while you’re ahead.”
He scowls at her but keeps quiet as she sits back down with Jasper and reads to him from the novel she always keeps tucked away in her purse. (It’s The Three Musketeers and Jasper is very much a fan).

A half hour later he’s dosing and she’s standing up again. Darcy has been watching her from his place at the kitchen table. She sits down across him and eyes him warily. “How’s he been doing otherwise? No complaints?”

Darcy runs a hand over his face and through his hair. (Lizzie may not like the man but she can’t deny his hair is attractive when it’s that tousled.) “Yeah, yeah fine. I just can’t have him doing this every week. It’ll be easier once my sister comes home from university but for now it’s just me and I don’t have time to read to him every week.”

“What, too busy running the world?” Lizzie scoffs.

He gives her a weird look and several things click in to place at once.

First, he is William Darcy, of Darcy, Bingley & Co, the big media conglomerate that practically owns the country. For part of her dissertation she is covering the psychological tactics their marketing team employs, and second, this information must mean that he is business partners with Charles Bingley, her sister’s boyfriend.

“You didn’t recognize me?” he asks incredulously.

She shakes her head and buries her face in her hands. “I feel like an idiot.”

He laughs, and she peers out from her fingers, watching him throw his head back with a brilliant smile. He’s rather attractive, she decides, regardless of his personality.

“You’re a very strange woman,” he says as he continues to grin at her.

She doesn’t know what to do with his mood change so she simply sits back and blurts out, “You know my sister, Jane. She’s dating Charles?”

He blinks once, twice, and clearly he is processing this information. “Jane Bennet? You’re Jane Bennet’s sister?” He looks her up and down, clearly confused.

She scowls again. This is the Darcy she is acquainted with. “I know my sister is a glamorous fashion model but I’d like to think we don’t look that different.”

At least he has the decency to look a little embarrassed.

“Look,” she says, switching the topic because she feels a little uncomfortable, “I can come and read to Jasper each week if it makes things easier for you. I was doing it before you adopted him anyway so it really doesn’t change much for me.”

He considers this. “And what would you get out of it?”

“Perhaps I would get to spend time with my favorite dog? Clearly we’ve established I’m a bit crazy over him.” She crosses her arms over her chest and waits for him to come to a decision.

“Well, yes, I suppose that’s all right. My sister Georgie comes back in three months so you’d only have to do it until then.” He holds his hand out to her. “Thank you, Ms. Bennet.”

She shakes his hand firmly and ignores the little spark she feels when they touch. The things she puts herself through for Jasper, honestly.
The three months are a roller coaster of emotion. Small talk doesn’t really go that well (he’s always putting his foot into his mouth and she’s always quick to anger) but Jasper is happy so they make do. Sometimes he has food for her and other times he’s rushing her out the door. Lizzie learns about his life tangentially through conversations she overhears as he’s on the phone and through Charles, who thinks it’s hilarious his best friend and his girlfriend’s sister have this strange relationship.

“I really cannot imagine what this looks like,” he laughs over drinks one weekend. Lizzie and Jane usually try to get drinks once a week and for the past three months Charles has been at every single one. (Not that Lizzie really minds, but it’s the only time she gets with Jane alone and now she doesn’t even have that anymore).

“I imagine it looks like a really bad sitcom.” She pops the olive from her martini into her mouth and signals for another. “We hardly ever talk.”

Charles downs his whiskey sour. “Yes, well, Darcy’s not really a talker. Being business partners with him is quite possibly the most difficult thing in the world.”

Jane changes the subject and thankfully Lizzie doesn’t have to talk about Darcy again.

Sometimes things happen that make Lizzie think Darcy’s got multiple personality disorder. He asks her how her day has gone and will generally be very nice, and then she’ll ask him about his family or something innocuous and he’ll do a complete 180 and shut down.

Other days he’ll volunteer information about himself, how he’s taking care of his sister even though he’s only ten years older than her, and Lizzie won’t know what to do, so an awkward hug or two seem like the best option.

Sometimes Lizzie finds herself thinking about what it would be like to date him, but quickly pushes that train of thought away. Even though 24-hour access to Jasper would be nice, she doesn’t think she could take his clearly bipolar issues all the time.

Finally, the last day of Lizzie’s read-aloud sessions with Jasper have come to an end. She gives him an extra carrot and a kiss on top of his head as she closes The Man in the Iron Mask. “Bye, Jasper,” she whispers as he whines and rolls over for a tummy rub. She denies him and brushes a few stray tears away. She’s doing much better this time around because, as much as she doesn’t like him, she knows Darcy is giving Jasper a good home.

The man himself is waiting for her by the front door as she puts her shoes on. “Thank you, Elizabeth. You’ve been a great help.”

“Not a problem.” She holds out her hand for a shake. “I’m sure we’re bound to see each other again, what with Charles and Jane dating.”

“I thought perhaps we could see each other next week, actually.” He’s looking at her strangely and she feels her stomach twist in confusion. “I was wondering, since you will be no longer working for me -”

“Wasn’t working for you in the first place,” she mutters, but he continues as if he hasn’t heard her.

“- if I could take you on a date. I recognize that socially we are nowhere on the same level and I would probably have to financially back whatever we decided to do, you’re very interesting and I
would like to get to know you better, even though you’ve a tendency to jump to conclusions and get angry far too quickly to be healthy. I know this may come as a bit of a shock, and, indeed I was shocked myself when I realized I was interested in you romantically, but I am quite sincere now that I know my feelings will not be dissuaded.”

Her jaw has dropped and doesn’t look like it’ll be closing any time soon. He snaps his fingers in front of her face after a few concerned, “Elizabeth?”’s and she seems to surface from whatever bizarro world she’s just been dropped in to.

She takes several deep breaths and tries to be civil. “Well, since you were so shocked at liking me in the first place, perhaps those same thoughts will help you in getting over me. Thanks, but no thanks.”

She’s still fuming as she wrenches open the door. She’s on the second step before he responds. “Wait! Are you turning me down? Can I ask why?”

She turns to him. “And can I ask why you thought it was a good idea to ask me out while simultaneously insulting me? I have honestly never been asked out with such disrespect. Excuse me if I don’t fall over myself in excitement at being asked out by the great Mr. Darcy.” She takes satisfaction in the paling of his face before she turns back around and reaches the garden gate.

She gets home in record time and cries herself to sleep.

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Lizzie doesn’t tell anyone what has happened, and congratulates herself on being able to fool everyone around her into thinking she’s fine. She throws herself into her work (again), and is so close to being done she can taste it. She fantasizes about receiving her diploma and introducing herself as Dr. Elizabeth Bennet.

She suspects that Jane suspects something has happened, but, God bless her, her sister doesn’t pry.

On a sunny day in May, a month after the ‘incident’ as she calls it, Lizzie walks across a stage and becomes a doctor (in psychology). Her family and Charles are there, supportive and embarrassing as she’s used to. She feels a little sad, but she’s been feeling that way for a while, and thinks she probably just needs more vitamin D.

A month or two go by again, and she finds herself listening to the voice in her head (the one that sounds suspiciously like William Darcy) more and more. Her temper improves and she’s promoted at work, her boss explaining that she was just waiting for Lizzie to learn to be a bit more even tempered before letting her become the manager of the PR section.

She thinks about this (and Jasper) quite a bit and decides she probably threw away the chance at a great man. Looking at everything as impartially as she can, she does realize he had his heart in the right place (taking care of his sister and adopting her a great dog like Jasper when he’s only ten years her senior for one), even though he’s massively awkward (his many phone calls in her presence attest to the fact that he’s like that with everyone, not just her).

She finally realizes she’s been feeling sad because she thinks she’s an idiot (and she misses Jasper, of course), but that there’s really nothing she can do about it. She asks Jane and Charles about him as discreetly as possible, but the twinkle in her sister’s eye reminds Lizzie Jane is no fool.

“He’s been working rather hard on his manners, actually. He’s been asking me my opinions on his behavior, which is just unheard of.” Charles ruffles his hair as he leans back in his chair. “And he’s finally told Caroline to bugger off instead of standing there quietly when she drops hints
about wanting him. I don’t know what’s gotten into him, but he’s definitely improving for the better.”

Lizzie smiles because this is something she had told him to do. One of the nights he was feeling more friendly, he had confessed that Charles’s sister was making him uncomfortable with her innuendos.

“Tell her to fuck off!” Lizzie had waved her fork in the air quite passionately. She had a zero tolerance policy when it came to people who were that sexually overt and who had no boundaries. It always reminded her too much of Wickham. “She should respect your wishes but she can’t do that unless she knows what those wishes are, you know?” He’d eyed her with something akin to a smile before changing the subject.

Jane breaks her reverie by leaning in closely and whispering, “And he’s been asking about you.”

Lizzie blushes and changes the subject, but can’t stop herself from feeling a little bit happier than she has in a while.

It has officially been three months since she last saw Darcy and she’s given up. It’s not like she can just show up at his house and apologize now, can she?

The doorbell rings and she opens it only to slam it shut again. There’s no way Darcy’s actually on the other side. However, the doorbell rings again and so she opens it again, albeit much more slowly and cautiously.

It is indeed Darcy. He looks extremely nervous. “Hello, Elizabeth, can I come in?”

“Sure,” she answers, resisting the urge to chew on her fingernails as she thinks of how messy her apartment is. “Do you want something to drink?”

“No, thanks.” He shakes his head as he follows her into her living room.

She clears a space for him on the couch and hovers. “Are you sure?”

He nods. “Please, sit.”

She does, closer to him than she intended, but there is only so much space on her cluttered couch, so she has an excuse.

“How are things?” he asks politely.

“Good. I got my doctorate. How about you? How’s Jasper?” she asks back, internally screaming at herself to tell him what she’s been wanting to say for the past month.

“Yes, Charles mentioned. Congratulations. Jasper and I are fine. He and Georgie are getting along quite well, although he still whines a bit on Saturdays.” He’s watching her too closely. “I hope you don’t mind my stopping by. Jane gave me your address.”

Lizzie takes in a deep breath and prepares the speech she never thought she’d get to say, because if she doesn’t say it now, she’s never going to say it. “I’m glad she did, actually, because I just wanted to say, I’m -”

“- sorry,” they say together. Darcy winces. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to cut you off but I just wanted to apologize for being an ass the last time we spoke and that you really are one of the most
interesting women I know and I really do want to get to know you better but I behaved like an ass and I understand that now and .”

She shushes him by putting her hand over his lips. “Darcy, stop. I’m sorry, too, and I wasn’t behaving my best, either. If that offer still stands, perhaps we could go out to dinner?”

His eyes widen. He says something but its muffled by her hand so she quickly drops it. He grabs it and holds it, though. “You want to go out to dinner with me?”

She nods and blushes. “If the offer still stands, of course.”

“Of course,” he breathes. “Of course, Elizabeth.”

She smiles. “You should probably call me Lizzie now.”

“Lizzie,” he says, and smiles. “Lizzie Bennet is going out to dinner with me.”

“Only for Jasper,” she teases, because her heart feels like it’s going to burst.

He laughs. “Of course,” he says mocks seriously. He shuffles a little closer to her and gives her a look that sends warmth shooting to her belly. “Lizzie Bennet. Can I kiss you? Or is that too forward? Because I understand if you feel it’s too soon -”

She cuts him off by pressing her lips to his.

(Jasper almost pisses himself with excitement when she moves in six months later).

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