Pride and Cephalopods

by biobabe37

Summary

Doctor Elizabeth Bennet is quite happy in her world of marine biology, studying octopus and squid under a world expert for her post doc. Very little throws this fiery scientist, that is until a secret government agency tells her monsters exist and she’s been selected to study them in a secret facility... an offer she isn't allowed to refuse. T for language and violence.

Notes

Characters from Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, Universe from Larry Correia’s Monster Hunter International Series (Read it if you get the chance, it's AMAZING, especially if you enjoy a little gore, delightful characters, and an engaging storyline). Plot for this is from my head, will most likely include the main Elizabeth/Darcy relationship arch, but no promises past that! Inspired by the upcoming Pride and Prejudice and Zombies movie to combined some of my favorite books!
"What the HELL?" Elizabeth Bennet yelled, bursting into her principal investigator's office. She was waving her phone around like a mad woman, looking about ready to kill someone. "Doctor Gardiner, you've got to be kidding me! Why I can't work on the squid bioluminescence project? I gave Miriah the idea for her whole dissertation and now I'm not supervising it? And telling me by text? That's just low Roger!"

"Elizabeth, I was just about to call you in!" Doctor Gardiner was not alone in his office; a man in a sharp suit, clearly packing in a shoulder holster under his left arm, stood as she entered the room. His body language made it clear he was comfortable with the weapon, which meant the display of it was purely for intimidation purposes. Automatically Elizabeth didn’t like him.

"Elizabeth Bennet, I'm Agent William Darcy. Your expertise is required by the Department of Justice." The man said casually flashing a badge, as if that would clear everything up.

"What?" was all Elizabeth could muster as she worked valiantly not to slug the guy.

"You have been selected to fill a vacancy in our staff at the Nautilus, a facility dedicated to researching unique creatures. You'll need to sign this before we discuss anything further." He replied briskly, handing her a large stack of papers.

She stared, blankly at him, at a loss for words, which was not usually the case. "Sign. Now." He repeated, brandishing a pen in her face.

Grudgingly she took it and, after glancing at a nodding Doctor Gardiner, she signed it. At least 12 times. Each time she thought she'd finished, the agent flipped to another tab. "Okay, WHAT is this about! Why are you derailing my post doc work? What could you possibly need from me?" She burst as she practically threw the pen back at him (she'd considered keeping it, but that would have been petty).

"Well first Miss Bennet, what you have just signed means that nothing spoken of today will leave this room. The consequences of doing so include but are not limited to imprisonment, charges of treason, and immediate disposal."

"It's Doctor Bennet, I've earned two PhDs thank you very much. And like I had time to read that?" Elizabeth began, incredulous. "You know you g-man types-"

"Secondly," Darcy continued as though she hadn't interrupted, "I am here to inform you that your expertise and relative anonymity in the field of cephalopods have marked you as the obvious choice for a position in our facility, the Nautilus, which deals with the study of classified aquatic organisms. We expect you to report for duty in three weeks, when the next transport leaves for the facility."

"Come again?" Elizabeth was generally considered a well spoken individual but this guy was throwing her for a loop. Not because he was armed, she wasn't scared of guns, hell she was currently carrying much more subtly (bless the soul who designed conceal carry leggings). No, this guy was standing there, speaking nonsense, behaving as though she was doing something offensive; though from her view it was quite the opposite.

"Please keep up Doctor Bennet. You are being recruited to a position in a classified government research facility." He pulled a second, larger stack of papers from his briefcase, and somehow managed to look even more annoyed at her in the process. "We lost our resident cephalopod
expert in an unfortunate incident a year ago, and have been getting by with researchers from other fields who've read up on the subject. That being said we've recently acquired a specimen that requires someone with your training. Doctor Gardiner here would have been a preferred choice if he weren’t so well known. You, as his post doctorate fellow, have all the qualifications without the notoriety, making you the next best choice."

"What classified specimen would I be working on? Why would it be classified in the first place?" Elizabeth demanded.

"Well Doctor Bennet," The way Agent Darcy was saying her name now made her want to punch him more than ‘Miss Bennet’ had. "As it is relevant to your upcoming employment by my agency, I am not in violation of the Unearthly Forces Disclosure Act in informing you that monsters do in fact exist. I am not at liberty to explicitly state the existence of any unearthly being outside the purview of what you will be working on, however for the sake of avoid pestering questions the answer is yes, whatever creature from a B horror movie you are currently thinking of most likely does exist."

The room was silent for a full minute. Doctor Gardiner did not look surprised, though he did appear concerned for Elizabeth as she processed the information. Agent Darcy look annoyed at the wait, but did not say anything.

Eventually She spoke, weighing each word carefully, "So monsters exist? And you want me to study them? Did I get that right?"

"Yes, while generally referred to as 'unearthly', many monsters have similar physiologies to their natural world analogs. We recruit experts in the field to learn more about them as they don't have to learn the earthly aspects of the creatures first before studying the differences. This is not the case for all monsters, but those need not concern you." Darcy replied briskly.

"So what would I be working on? A Kraken? Mermaid? Luska? Can I draw the line at living and/or sentient monsters, because that's like experimenting on chimps, which was recently banned in the US, so you know most people don’t consider that kosher now a days." She said, choosing to focus on ethics because at the moment she really couldn’t think too much about monsters truly existing.

"You know about the specimen?" The agent asked, looking alarmed. He turned to Gardiner, "I thought you said she wasn't aware of them and that you understood that confidentiality was an absolute in our correspondences?"

"Agent Darcy, of course I didn't breach-" Doctor Gardiner began, then Elizabeth cut over him "Chill out Agent Glock head! I've been reading a lot of sci fi in my free time lately. Seriously, I was just spittingballing."

He shrugged slightly in his shoulder holster, looking vaguely uncomfortable. Clearly she'd gotten him, which gave Elizabeth pause, "Wait, is it a kraken, mermaid, or luska?" She couldn't help smirking, it didn’t hurt to even the playing field a bit by getting the upperhand for a moment.

"Luska" he admitted sourly, "Private contractors were hire to deal with it and managed to not shoot it to hell for once, so the MCB took custody of the remains for research purposes when the PUFF application was submitted. That will be your first task in our employ."

"A luska, according to legend, is half shark, half squid… Now this is not a usual situation for me, but Darcy, I'm afraid I'm only half the woman you need." She could have sworn she saw him smirk at that, but a moment later his face was impassive, so she continued, "Particularly because you didn't ask nicely, and because I don't take demands I don't think I'll be taking this job.
Bummer really, we would have had a ball working together."

Elizabeth walked towards the door, obviously eager to get out of the situation. She was surprised to find two more men in suits, not quite as sharp as Agent Grumpy pants, and printing even worse, blocking her exit. "Annnnd you have friends, what the hell?" Instinctively she reached for the small Smith and Wesson M&P concealed at the small of her back.

"Lizzie, not a good idea!" Doctor Gardiner warned, sounding rather panicked. He knew she carried and most likely did not want a fire fight in his office.

"I agree with the good Doctor, Miss Bennet, while you are licensed to carry, attacking a federal office is a twenty year prison sentence, and you would no longer be eligible to own that firearm." Came the smug voice of Agent Darcy as the agents in front of her moved to draw their own weapons.

She slowly pulled her hands away and held them up as she walked towards the open chair, a grim expression on her face. "Fine, fine, fine, I'm done, won't shoot you in the face... or ass..."

"Much appreciated Doctor Bennet. Now, I assure you, the other half of the luska is well in hand, and as for you refusal of the position: this is not 'participation optional', your country requires your services." Agent Darcy told Elizabeth in a gloating voice as she sat down. The two other agents walked into the office and shut the door behind them. As the lock clicked Darcy looked at her and smirked, "Welcome to the Monster Control Bureau."
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 has been edited a little bit, nothing plot-wise, more flow and wording issues being sorted. As I said before, this universe is from Larry Correia's Monster Hunter International (MHI). Don't worry if you aren't familiar with this universe, (I assume most of you aren't, though if you are pm me and we can nerd out) I'll be explaining a lot of the universe as Elizabeth herself learns more about the world she didn't know she was living in. I've also enlisted a friend for beta-ing so future chapters won't be so sloppy :) Thanks for the feedback!

Elizabeth spent three hours locked in Doctor Gardiner's office with Agent Darcy and company. She almost drew her gun again, twice, before Doctor Gardiner confiscated it like a grade school teacher taking away a toy during class. For some reason the Monster Control Agents had not been overly concerned about it. During that time she had been fully briefed on her surprise new job. The facility she'd be working at was named the "Nautilus" and was in fact so secret it was built underwater… as part of the continental shelf, just off the coast of Alaska. "Was the Marianas trench already taken?" Elizabeth had joked awkwardly.

"We have an agreement with the current inhabitants to stay out." was the brusk reply from Agent Darcy. Everything about the man seemed brusk and sharp and sarcastic. If this was any indication if his usual demeanor, it was no wonder the man had been assigned to a facility super removed from normal people.

The Nautilus had been commissioned by the Monster Control Bureau approximately ten years previous to provide a site for studying monsters where security wouldn't be an issue. A secret underwater compound that could only be accessed via submarine through restricted waters, after you traveled to the northernmost point of Alaska seemed to do the trick. Part of Elizabeth's introductory file "Gray literature" from her predecessor at the facility. The researcher had written up as much as possible about luska from the testing and analysis of a handful of burnt and battle torn samples previously collected as PUFF evidence. Apparently PUFF stood for Perpetual Unearthly Forces Fund, and was a bounty system to encourage people to kill monsters by paying them huge wads of cash to do so, provided they didn't tell anyone else about it.

They had spent a looong time discussing or, more accurately, arguing about the confidentiality issue. Elizabeth found it offensive that the government was keeping the existence of monsters a secret. "People deserve to know some blood sucking bastard might show up and rip their throat out. Or that on the full moon they might get mauled by a werewolf. Do you realize that if everyone knew monsters existed you wouldn't currently be hijacking my life and forcing me to live not even in Alaska, but off the northern coast of Alaska? UNDERWATER? And your organization wouldn't have to be secret." She argued.

In response Darcy kept repeating that it was a complex issue that she did not understand, and if she did fully understand the implications she would agree that people are better off not knowing, or some various thereof. Doctor Gardiner eventually demanded a subject change because the tension was raising his blood pressure.

The single aspect of the forced job change that Elizabeth was not entirely opposed to was the fact
that she wasn't allowed to tell anyone where she worked, including her mother. "Really? Do you promise?" She asked gleefully, confusing Agent Darcy. "It will be considered treason to tell my mom where I'm going? Am I even allowed to communicate with her, or can that be banned too?"

"Well, er, email correspondences are allowed, though that will be monitored and any information deemed classified will be removed." Darcy replied confused at her look of glee.

"That's amazing!" Elizabeth beamed, "Can I request Big Brother take out parts of her letters? For example every time my mother asks why I'm not married? Because that almost makes this whole shitty situation worth it." All three MCB agents looked at her like she was insane while Gardiner just smiled, he'd met Mrs. Bennet.

They hadn't talked much more after that. Elizabeth was informed that a detail of agents would be shadowing her until her departure for the Nautilus, "So if you please, don't shoot them, or try to at least." was Darcy's snarky request. In three weeks she'd be escorted to the airport where they'd fly into Anchorage, Alaska, and then to a small town called Barrow, Alaska, which was apparently as north as you could get and remain on American soil. Then they would take the submarine to the Nautilus. "Excellent security," Elizabeth had rolled her eyes, "No one with sense will ever even bother, and every one else will most likely die of frostbite first."

When she did eventually leave Doctor Gardiner's office she had a thick file to apprise herself of which included her official government approved cover story, the itinerary of the trip to the facility, and a the "Life at the Nautilus Introductory Guide" which included pictures of the personal living areas, explanations of how life worked underwater, and suggestions for what to pack for long term residence. Interestingly enough the Nautilus did not seem to subscribe to the military-esque minimalism, or olive green drab. The pictures showed reasonably well appointed rooms that rather resembled those of a mid level hotel. Elizabeth assumed the more comfortable living quarters were to make up for forcing scientist to give up their research and live in the most ridiculous place ever.

After checking in on Arnold the Octopus, who she'd collected her last dive in the Puget Sound, Elizabeth gathered her things from her office and headed home. It may have been early, but after the day she'd had she deserved it. Responsible spending and a decent income had allowed Elizabeth to afford a cozy, one bedroom apartment to herself, which she gladly returned to, happy to not have a roommate to not be able to tell about her day.

Keeping busy, an hour later she had a bottle of wine cracked open, potato soup on the stove, and cookies in the oven. Peeking out the window she saw an unmarked van parked on her street, because that wasn't terribly obvious or anything. It was weird to think about… there were two government assigned agents whose job for the next three weeks was to stalk her. While a rather independent individual who wasn't particularly keen on Big Brother watching, Elizabeth couldn't deny finding it a bit comforting that, now knowing monsters were real, she'd at least have some backup if something terrible randomly happened before she left for the Nautilus. She brought the big packet of info from her bag and began reviewing her official cover story as she ate.

Apparently Elizabeth was given an opportunity to study a newly discovered species of squid found in the southern Indian ocean, where anything other than email would be impossible, and she was expected to be there for two years minimum as she observed populations in Australia, Malaysia, India, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, and Madagascar. Elizabeth had a sneaking suspicion she wouldn't officially be surviving this fictional research trip. Particularly near the end of her supposed travels she would be in some politically dicey areas, and what better way for someone to disappear. That or getting lost at sea. She was an experienced scuba diver, but accidents happen, particularly in the open ocean. It would be interesting to see how the Monster Control Bureau planned on playing with her life.
Elizabeth realized she should be much more upset about the whole situation, and wondered why her rage had subsided since her discussion with Agent Darcy. If she was being honest, it most likely had to do with the mysterious quality surrounding her future test subjects. Curious by nature, Elizabeth wanted to know more; what mythic monsters were out there? What were they capable of? Where did they come from, how closely related were they to their non monstrous counterparts? Were they intelligent?

Or perhaps it was all just easier to process without that stick-up-his-ass Darcy in the room. That was probably it.
How does one explain to their parents why they are packed up their entire life on three weeks notice? Elizabeth was trying to solve this conundrum as she moved boxes of her belongings into her parent’s house for storage in her childhood bedroom.

“You can’t wait another month or so?” Mrs Bennet pled, “It’s coming into wedding season and what better place for you to meet a nice eligible man than at a wedding! You know last summer your little sister met several nice, young men at your cousin’s wedding and she still gets together with them for a night out every now and then.”

“Yes, Mom, she did meet many nice men who she still hangs out with. But you do realize that it is because Kitty works for a men's style magazine and cousin Brenda and her wife have lots of gay friends, right?” Elizabeth asked as she lugged a box of kitchenwares from the back of a rented truck down to the house. Her mother follow, carrying nothing, except perhaps regret that her daughter had turned out so much like her father.

“My dear wife, do you really think that an entire scientific expedition would be postponed because you want your daughter to meet men before she goes off on a grand adventure?” Can Mr Bennet’s voice following them down the stair as he carried yet another box of Elizabeth's possessions. “Do you realize that requesting that to a funding board would be undermining the progress made by women in science for the past fifty years?” he asked with a tone of mild amusement. His wife made a huffing noise and left the room as he turned to his daughter, ”Lizzie where were we stacking books?”

“Over by the closet,” she gestured to a substantial stack of boxes as she made sure the one she was adding to was stable. “But Dad, I told you to stick with the light boxes. You know you shouldn’t stress yourself, and if something happens to you while I'm gone I don't know if I’ll be able to come home and take care of you!” Elizabeth warned. Her father was approaching 60 and she couldn’t help but worry about his health. She knew her mother had the nagging covered, but sometimes she slipped and did a little of it herself.

“Don't fret Little-bit,” he smiled, childhood nickname, “I just had an appointment with the doctor last week, and I’m in fighting-fit health. Besides, do I look like a squid to you?”

“Noo,” she replied, smiling begrudgingly, knowing what was coming.

“Do I have tentacles?” He inquired further, looking at her over the rim of his glasses.

“No, you don’t.” Elizabeth rolled her eyes, as she rested against the nearest stack of boxes.

“And remind me, my sweet daughter, what sort of degrees do you have? Because last I checked, neither a PhD in Biochemistry, nor one in Cephalopods qualifies you to treat humans.” her father scolded.

“Hey, I'm not claiming to be an MD!” Elizabeth defended, “I’m just quoting one, your’s in fact!
Not to mention that while my first dissertation was on the chemical processes of bioluminescence in Whiplash squid, most of my PhD was spent in classes learning about the biochemical processes of humans.” She looked carefully at him, sighing slightly, “And I can’t help worrying Dad, I mean not that I don’t love them, but Mom and Kitty aren’t great at looking outside of their own worlds. What if they start a grapefruit diet? They’ve talked about it before, and they might forget and with your statins, I mean-”

“Elizabeth Marie Bennet,” He shook his head in good natured exasperation, leaning against his own stack of boxes and observing his firstborn. “I did take care of myself for thirty some odd years before we had you, and a few years after as well; while you were in diapers and eating crayons.”

“Yes, and in those years you played Doctor Indiana Jones, archaeologist. If memory and stories serve; you got kidnapped and nearly sold in Columbia, fell down a cave and spent two days alone with three fractured ribs and a broken leg while your expedition went to go get help in the Amazon, and I hate to bring this up, but I must, you had a mullet. Face it Pops, you need me.” She told him seriously, “The best thing that ever happened to your health was getting tenure and being forced to calm down.”

“Well, I think bringing up the mullet is a little harsh…” her father shrugged, before fixing her with his patented ‘Dad’ stare, the one that always managed to get her to spill her guts, despite her best efforts. “Now Lizzie, what’s gotten you all spun up about my health? Yes, you’ll being going away for a few years, but it’s hardly as if you’re leaving us forever to join some commune.” He paused and smiled to himself, “And if that is the plan, I highly suggest you rethink it. You’ll find many people of anti-vaccine persuasion in communes, and if last Thanksgiving with your Aunt Sally is any indication, that would not be a positive encounter for anyone.”

The stress of the past few weeks, and the ‘Dad’ stare were cracking her defenses. “I just want to make sure you’ll take care of yourself while I’m gone.” She answered lamely. He keep staring, and she crumbled, wanting to tell him as much as possible without telling him anything she shouldn’t. “What if I said that the agency funding this expedition I’m going on, well they’re US government, but they’re also kind of shady and secretive. And I might not be going exactly where they say I am, or studying what they say I will be…” She trailed off, looking at him, wishing she could just tell him everything. The room felt thick with all the things she couldn’t say.

“Are you in danger?” He asked gently.

“No,” she shook her head, “I mean as long as I don’t blab to anyone about it, otherwise I might end up in Gitmo… or maybe it was dead. They were kind of fuzzy about that, but in a threatening way.”

“I see.” He removed his glasses, taking a corner of his shirt to polish the lenses, “And I’m guessing this government agency did not give you much of a choice in accepting this research position?”

“It’s like you’ve met them!” Elizabeth sighed heavily, “No, I don’t have a choice. But if I’m being honest the subject matter I’d be studying is fascinating, and if it had been offered instead of demanded, I might have still taken the position, despite it’s massive level of weirdness.”

There was a very long pause, before her father replaced his glasses, pushing them back up the bridge of his nose. then he walked over to the door, shutting it firmly and locking it before turning back to her and asking quietly, “Elizabeth, are you going to study monsters?”

All she could do was blink, so her father continued. “Now I assume that the good agents from the Monster Control Bureau have not gained any charm over the decades, and made it very clear you
aren’t to tell anyone, but that doesn’t apply to someone who already knows that monsters exist.” He smiled, looking pleased with himself.

“You know?” was all she could manage at first. “Does Mom know too? She can’t have, it wouldn’t be a secret anymore if she did, the whole world would know. How do you know?”

“I’m an archeologist, I dug up history, found proof of ancient legends, monster and otherwise. And more than one dig I’ve been on has involved chupacabras attacking the site, finding skeletons that just weren’t natural, or waking up some long sleeping undead. If I learned nothing else from my fieldwork, I learned to always pay attention to the warnings written on tombs, nine times out of ten they’re right, and the tenth time you get to watch the newbies wet their pants.” He chuckled, before turning serious once more, “Now you know why I was adamant that you girls get some self defense and firearms training? Even if I couldn’t tell you what was out there, I certainly could do my best to make sure you stood a chance.”

“So you know the people I’m going to work for?” Elizabeth asked tentatively, “I didn’t just go crazy? I’m not selected for some secret mind control project or anything?”

“No, Elizabeth, you are not any more crazy than you were before,” He chuckled, “And everyone knows the government abducts prostitutes for mind control experiments. As your mother never convinced you to join that mother/daughter pole dancing class and you don’t dress like your sister, I believe you are safe.”

She laughed, “Thanks for the clarification.” They were quiet for a moment, “So I guess I can tell you I’m going to study luska in an underwater research facility.”

“A luska, eh?” Her father smiled, “Those are nasty things. Had a guide down in Chile who told us about a national park that had a luska picking off stray vacationers. Many other countries have significantly more lax policies in regards to who knows about monsters, often because too many people know about them. Governments don’t officially acknowledge their existence, but do provide contingency plans for monster attack. Actually this luska the guide told my expedition about, the Chilean government hired a group of monster hunters from the US to take it out because their people were dealing with a vampire next in the capitol. Monster Hunter International, I think it was, based out of Alabama, but they’ve got groups all over the US.”

He was cut off by the handle on the door jiggling, “What are you two doing in there?” Came Elizabeth’s mother’s voice. “I’ve made lunch!”

“Sorry Mom!” Elizabeth jumped up to open the door to her mother’s impatient face. “Dad was just giving me some professional advice, being stuck with the same group of people for long periods of time, like when we’re out to sea and all that, I didn’t realize the door was locked.”

Elizabeth didn’t get another chance to speak to her father alone before she left, but as they hugged goodbye in the driveway, he gave her an extra squeeze and whispered, “You’ll be just fine Little-bit. Go have an adventure!”

“Thanks Dad,” she squeezed back, before letting go and climbing into the truck.

“Don’t be afraid to pick up a nice man on your trip! No need to get me a curio if you get yourself a husband!” Elizabeth’s mother shouted as she pulled out of the driveway. Mr. Bennet just shook his head and waved until Elizabeth had driven out of sight.

“Well Liz,” she spoke to the otherwise empty cabin of the truck, “In twenty-four hours you’ll be on your way to the Nautilus. You are going to go study monsters. And you’re going to rock it.” The declaration hung in the air. She could do this. She was Elizabeth Freaking Bennet, and the
Monster Control Bureau won’t know what hit them.

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