

2018

Elizabeth Bennet Whispering *Hush*

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Recommended Citation

Fales, Jessie (2018) "Elizabeth Bennet Whispering *Hush*," *The Laureate*: Vol. 17 , Article 45.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/laureate/vol17/iss1/45>

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Elizabeth Bennet Whispering *Hush*

Jessie Fales

At first, no one showed up for Alice after she was raped. Alice hadn't told anyone, but half expected someone to show up after a few days. When someone did show up, it was Elizabeth Bennet wearing jeans and a t-shirt. Elizabeth smiled warmly at Alice, crawled into bed beside her, and pushed her hair out of her face in a tender gesture.

"There are few people whom I really love, and still fewer of whom I think well," Lizzy said. "The more I see of the world, the more am I dissatisfied with it; and every day confirms my belief of the inconsistency of all human characters, and of the little dependence that can be placed on the appearance of merit or sense."

"Right," said Alice. She couldn't say anything more. She wished someone loved her. Or maybe she wished she loved someone else. It was impossible to imagine a world in which anyone could love another person, and trust that person to be everything he seemed to be. The appearance of merit or sense meant very little to Alice in that moment, but it had cost her a great deal. Everything hurt. Every part of her body and mind ached in some way. And there was Lizzy Bennet, stroking her hair, and saying what Alice could not say.

"Alice," Lizzy said, "I think there is a stubbornness about you that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others. Your courage always rises at every attempt to intimidate you." She helped Alice out of the fetal position and onto her pillows. The movement disrupted the knot in her gut, and made Alice's eyes burn with tears that would not surface, because she refused to face that side of things. Perhaps courage was that thing that rose instead of tears, but Alice did not feel brave. She felt wounded.

Lizzy seemed to know all of this. Perhaps that is why she had come, and no one else had. Alice moved her toes against her

sweaty sheets, and hugged her teddy as she had her whole life. Her teddy had been there through everything—her first Christmas, her first lost tooth, and her first night at college. Lizzy patted the bear and said, “You must learn some of my philosophy. Think only of the past as its remembrance gives you pleasure.”

Alice hugged her teddy tighter. That had been a stupid thing to say, because there were some things that no one could forget. Lizzy should have known that. Alice didn't know what Lizzy wanted of her. People always wanted something from her, but as Lizzy sat there with her arms around Alice's shoulders, Alice felt okay. Not good. She would never feel good again. But Alice felt okay. She didn't move, though. She sat there with her head buried in Lizzy's shoulder, hugging her childhood bear, and felt Lizzy's philosophy against her skin. She pushed her hands together, felt her pulse between her thumbs, recollected the past, and felt her memories from the inside out. Starting in the pit in her stomach, she felt every good thing she ever saw someone do, and the warmth pulsed through her veins. She listed them off to Lizzy. One: the father who pushed his young daughter on the new swing set he had built in the back yard. Two: the old woman in the polar bear sweater who always said hello to strangers in the produce section of the grocery store. Three: Oprah. Four: everyone who ever adopted a puppy at the ASPCA. Five: the way a dog loved someone. Six: The students who gave their teacher two kittens after her cat died. Seven: the barista who gave out secret free drinks. Eight: hugs. Nine: the farmer who rescued a baby alpaca from a badger hole. Ten: People who weren't rapists.