

First Impressions

a one act comedy

by Alex Acuff

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First Impressions

Cast of Characters

ELIZABETH. *Forties.*
DARCY. *Forties.*
DRIVER. *Any age.*

Scene:

About twenty minutes away from Meryton.

Time:

1825.

- * A (/) indicates where the next speech begins.
- * The “carriage business” might be pantomimed.

ACT IScene One“The Carriage Ride”

AT RISE: (*ELIZABETH and DARCY ride along in a carriage. It is bumpy. DARCY loses his hat. He picks it up. The ride smoothes out. It gets bumpy again and DARCY’s hat falls off. He picks it up. ELIZABETH slides to the window and looks out. She moves back.*)

DARCY.

Can you give a little more leg room, please?

ELIZABETH.

More?

DARCY.

Yes.

ELIZABETH,

You would like a little more leg room?

DARCY.

I would.

ELIZABETH.

(doesn’t move.)

There.

DARCY.

Do we have a problem?

ELIZABETH.

No.

DARCY.

I have long legs.

ELIZABETH.

Your hat is on backwards.

DARCY.

(turning it around quickly.)

What?

ELIZABETH.

Can I say something?

DARCY.

Go right ahead. You go right ahead and say something.

ELIZABETH.

This weekend has been—

DARCY.

Are you—

ELIZABETH.

(with a sweetness.)

You have made this visit a nightmare.

DARCY.

I have?

ELIZABETH.

Yes.

DARCY.

I simply asked for more leg space. I fail to understand why / that is an issue.

ELIZABETH.

You are compensating.

DARCY.

Do not psychoanalyze me. Do not do that.

ELIZABETH.

What?

DARCY.

Do not psychoanalyze me. I do not like it.
I have told you not to do that. I am not insecure.
I have long legs.

ELIZABETH.

You are insecure. I know you. I have
been married to you for how long?
How long has it been?

The ride gets bumpy again. DARCY's hat comes off. He picks it up. A long silence. ELIZABETH moves to the window.

DARCY.

Did you grab my socks?

ELIZABETH.

They are yours. Why would I grab them?

DARCY.

I asked—

ELIZABETH.

You did?

DARCY.

Yes.

ELIZABETH.

I do not think that I heard you.

DARCY.

You said “alright.”

ELIZABETH.

Did I?

DARCY.

You did.

ELIZABETH.

Maybe I forgot.

DARCY.

Those were...those were a nice pair of socks.

ELIZABETH.

Why am I responsible for them?

DARCY.

You said—

ELIZABETH.

Why did you leave them on the bed?

DARCY.

Why would you say you would, then not follow through? Why agree to an obligation, then fail to oblige the agreement?

ELIZABETH.

Let it go, dear.

DARCY.

They—

ELIZABETH.

Do you listen to yourself?

DARCY.

(didn't hear.)

What did you say?

ELIZABETH.

It is difficult to explain. You are a rare breed.

DARCY.

Thank you?

ELIZABETH.

Insufferable.

DARCY.

I am tired of hearing your opinions.

ELIZABETH.

Not surprising. You would have to subtract time from announcing your own.

DARCY.

I never—

ELIZABETH.

Oh please.

DARCY.

I never share any of my—

ELIZABETH.

That is all you do.

DARCY.

I do not!

ELIZABETH.

(mocking him in a grandiose fashion.)

Hm, let us see. What should I start with? You talk of the upcoming industrial age; or the Missouri Compromise in America, and you say they will never end slavery. What else? Oh, yes, then you converse about the benefits of European Colonialism, and in that area, I think you are *completely* wrong.

DARCY.

Please, I am not in the mood for debate.

ELIZABETH.

You are not in the mood to lose a debate.

DARCY.

I do not lose.

ELIZABETH.

Then why run from the conversation?

DARCY.

I would prefer—

ELIZABETH.

Point proven.

DARCY.

You have not made any point. What point have you—

ELIZABETH.

We should buy a new carriage. You have a bit of something hanging from your nose.

DARCY.

(checks his nose.)

I do not!

ELIZABETH.

I am done participating in this tête-à-tête. How much longer?

DARCY.

What?

ELIZABETH.

I am bored.

DARCY.

Who was it that said, “boredom is the downfall of great minds?”

ELIZABETH.

A moron.

DARCY.

I was going to say my father...

ELIZABETH.

Oh, the father of a moron?

DARCY.

No...

ELIZABETH.

The roads are so bumpy. Were you saying something?

DARCY.

No.

ELIZABETH.

Do you have enough space?

DARCY.

Yes.

ELIZABETH.

The roads are bumpy.

DARCY.

Now, you are—

ELIZABETH.

You still have something under your nose.

DARCY.

(checking.)

I do...not.

ELIZABETH.

(looking out the window.)

What is that tree?

DARCY.

What?

ELIZABETH.

I swear, you are losing your hearing. Stop the carriage!

The DRIVER enters and opens the door to the carriage. ELIZABETH exits the carriage. She walks around.

ELIZABETH.

Hello lover. Will you get out and take a walk?

DARCY.

No.

ELIZABETH.

Why not?

DARCY.

You do not see those clouds? Up there?

ELIZABETH.

Why do you do that?

DARCY.

What?

ELIZABETH.

It does not matter what I say, but you will find a way to disagree.

DARCY.

I will not.

ELIZABETH.

See?

DARCY.

What?

ELIZABETH.

There...

DARCY.

What?

ELIZABETH.

If I said today was dreary, you would have said the opposite.

DARCY.

Today is dreary.

ELIZABETH.

No, it is not.

DARCY.

Yes—

ELIZABETH.

There again.

DARCY.

(trying to close the window curtain.)

I can disagree if I desire. I am closing this stupid little curtain thing.

ELIZABETH.

Where are we?

DARCY.

It is stuck.

ELIZABETH.

Are we—

DARCY.

What are you on about? Can we get going?

ELIZABETH.

Wait...

DARCY.

We have got to buy a new curtain rod now.

ELIZABETH.

This is—

I am going to see...Charles.

DARCY.

Really?

ELIZABETH.

(puppy dog.)
You can see your sister.

DARCY.

You did not—

ELIZABETH.

But—

DARCY.

You lied.

ELIZABETH.

I did not / lie.

DARCY.

You did not tell me.

ELIZABETH.

Exactly.

DARCY.

Exactly.

ELIZABETH.

I did not / lie.

DARCY.

You basically lied.

ELIZABETH.

I did not.

DARCY.

ELIZABETH.

The entire visit, you complained. I remember vividly, your complaints; there were several thousands of them, at least. You said you were tired; apparently too tired to visit with my parents, but not to see your friend?

DARCY.

I knew this—

ELIZABETH.

Will you not get out of the carriage?

DARCY.

I will not.

ELIZABETH.

Why?

DARCY.

I do not want to get my boots dirty.

ELIZABETH.

Why did you not tell me about this side trip?

DARCY.

Because I knew this would be the outcome.

ELIZABETH.

I disagree.

DARCY.

I disagree with your disagreeing.

ELIZABETH.

I agree with my original disagreeal.

DARCY.

And I disagree with...whatever you just said. You can see your sister!

ELIZABETH.

Do not try to spin this. Are you getting out?

DARCY.

No.

ELIZABETH.

Then I will stay.

DARCY.

Sweetheart...

ELIZABETH.

What?

DARCY.

Please get back in the carriage.

ELIZABETH.

I do not wish to get back in the carriage.

DARCY.

Please get back in the carriage.

ELIZABETH.

I do not wish to get back in the—

DARCY.

Please get back in the carriage.

ELIZABETH.

I do not wish to get—

DARCY.

Please get back in the carriage, sweetheart.

ELIZABETH.

No, no, no, no, no. No carriage for me, thank you.

DARCY.

(hardly understandable.)

PLEASE GET BACK IN THE CARRIAGE.

ELIZABETH.

I do not wish to—

DARCY.

(getting out.)

Alright. Is this what you wanted?

ELIZABETH.

Oh, here he comes.

DARCY.

(cleaning his boots.)

Mud...

ELIZABETH.

You will be fine.

DARCY.

Everywhere...

ELIZABETH.

It is good to roll around in the elements.

DARCY.

Let us get back in the carriage. There is the chance for precipitation.

ELIZABETH.

Rain?

DARCY.

Pardon?

ELIZABETH.

The horses left you a present.

DARCY.

What?

(wiping his boot.)

Oh!

DRIVER.

We have a slight problem, sir.

DARCY.

What?

DRIVER.

Well, um...the wheels...are stuck in the mud.

DARCY.

Fantastic.

ELIZABETH.

Oh no. What will we do?

DARCY.

What do we do?

DRIVER.

We might have to, um, push the carriage, sir.

DARCY.

We?

DRIVER.

Yes.

DARCY.

Is there no other way?

DRIVER.

I am afraid not.

DARCY.

(rolling up sleeves.)

Alright.

ELIZABETH.

Please do not hurt your back again.

DARCY.

I will be fine.

ELIZABETH.

You are going to hurt your back again.

DARCY.

I will be—

ELIZABETH.

From your knees, remember?

DARCY.

Alright!

ELIZABETH.

Gentle reminder.

DARCY.

Thank you, dear.

DARCY stretches and prepares. They push but achieve nothing. They push again.

DRIVER.

Move!

DARCY.

Is it going anywhere?

ELIZABETH.

Keep trying...

They push with everything they have. Still nothing. They push again, and one of the wheels falls off.

DARCY.

NO...

DRIVER.

What happened?

DARCY.

NO!

ELIZABETH.

(laughing very hard.)

Very good!

DARCY.

Do not laugh at this! This is not funny! Do not laugh at this!

ELIZABETH.

Sorry!

DARCY.

Do not!

ELIZABETH.

Now you will have to use that big brain of yours!

DARCY.

What do we do?

DRIVER.

I see the problem. Um, hold...hold that part up for a second.

Which part? DARCY.

That one, right there. DRIVER.

This? DARCY.

No, that. DRIVER.

This? DARCY.

No, the other part. DRIVER.

That? DARCY.

This thing, right here. DRIVER.

This? DARCY.

Yes, that. Lift that up, and I will try to get it back on. DRIVER.

You want me to lift *that*? DARCY.

(*guiding him.*)
Right there. DRIVER.

Remember to lift with your knees. ELIZABETH.

Darcy.
 We have this!
 Elizabeth.
 Are you certain?
 Darcy.
(ignoring.)
 So lift *this* part here?
 Driver.
 Yes.
 Darcy.
(lifts.)
 Oh!
 Driver.
 That was close, sir. I almost had it back on.
 Darcy.
 I do not think—
 Driver.
 You were almost there.
 Elizabeth.
 You were almost there, darling.
 Darcy.
(gathers himself.)
 Alright.
 Driver.
 Ready when you are, sir.
 Darcy.
(lifting.)
 OHHHHHHHHHHH!

DRIVER.

Alright, alright, you are there. Almost there.

DARCY.

Slipping!

DRIVER.

Hold on...

DARCY.

I am trying!

DRIVER.

Hold on!

DARCY.

Oh!

(falls over.)

That is new!

DRIVER.

(helping him.)

Are you alright, sir? Let me help you up, sir. I can help you up. My apologies, sir. Are you alright? I am very sorry, sir.

ELIZABETH.

Are you alright?

DARCY.

(slowly getting up.)

No.

A pause.

ELIZABETH.

Is it your back?

A long silence.

DARCY.

I am *alright*.

ELIZABETH.

Do you need help?

DARCY.

Yes.

ELIZABETH.

(helping him up.)

You have mud all over you.

DARCY.

(red in the face.)

This is only a minor pain.

DRIVER.

Is there anything—

ELIZABETH.

Give him air.

DRIVER.

Yes

DARCY.

Ow.

ELIZABETH.

Do not make it worse.

DARCY.

I am alright.

DRIVER.

I will, um, walk to Meryton to find help.

DARCY.

(steps forward.)

No, no, no, no.

ELIZABETH.

You should sit down.

DARCY.

Ow.

DRIVER.

She might be right on this occasion, sir.

DARCY sits. A long silence.

DRIVER.

Well, uh...when you feel a bit more...adequate...we will, uh, try again at the wheel. Or I can go into town to find help.

ELIZABETH.

(flirtatiously.)

Do you like to read books?

DRIVER.

Yes.

ELIZABETH.

What books do you like to read?

DRIVER.

Short ones.

ELIZABETH.

Good answer.

DRIVER.

Yes...

ELIZABETH.

Where do you take walks?

DRIVER.

Sorry?

ELIZABETH.

Where do you take walks?

DRIVER.

Oh, um, different...

ELIZABETH.

How does it feel to be young? Sorry. Was that too forward of me?

DARCY.

She is jealous of your good looks.

DRIVER.

Well—

ELIZABETH.

Not that, but I have forgotten what it feels like.

DRIVER.

It feels...

ELIZABETH.

Do you dance?

DRIVER.

I can walk to Meryton now.

ELIZABETH.

Nonsense. There is no reason to hurry. That is why people say the time moves fast; it is really they who are moving fast. Will you dance with me?

DRIVER.

I would not want to upset—

ELIZABETH.

Do you mind, dear?

DARCY.

No.

ELIZABETH.

You see?

DRIVER.

This is hardly an area to—

ELIZABETH.

We will move over here to the patches of grass. Am I not handsome enough for you, sir?

DRIVER.

No, you are very beautiful.

(Pause.)

You are the loveliest of couples.

DARCY.

Do not lie to us.

ELIZABETH.

What is your answer?

DRIVER.

(moving toward her slowly.)

Alright.

ELIZABETH.

So bashful.

DRIVER.

What do you, uh...how does one usually initiate the activity?