

Hou

Excerpts from Pride and Prejudice and Prom

Excerpt #1

Early Monday morning, raining.

Forest Lawn, in front of a grave

Chorus

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a high school student with fabulous grades and glorious appearance must have a content life, and therefore should be interested in going to prom.

[Darcy stands at center-stage in a full-front position]

Bingley

(enters, holding a black umbrella)

Your mother was a charitable person. But, if she were still here, she would not be pleased to see the two rivers coming down from your eyes, even though I am the one who is crying heavily now. Tissues?

Darcy

(shakes his head)

Bingley

Fine. (blows his nose) The rain can fall all day long, but you cannot. How about we go watch a movie? I am sure that a Jim Carrey comedy will bring you back from the trough of depression.

Darcy

(shakes his head)

Bingley

Or we can go shopping. It is your senior year, and you want to wear something splendid to impress all the attendants, don't you?

Darcy

(steps forward into the rain, raises his head, and stares at the clouds)

Bingley

Alright, you win. I got inspired by Camus's *The Stranger*. Anyway, tell you the truth: I had a meeting with the principal last week, and he granted the permission of your transfer based on your unfortunate circumstances. First period will start at 8:05, my men will pick you up in five minutes, and Caroline will show you the way once you are there. This is the life you prefer, don't you, Darcy?

Darcy

(turns around, still with no facial expressions whatsoever. He puts his left hand on Bingley's left shoulder, wants to say something but stops; instead, he nods while making eye contact, and pats Bingley's shoulder twice before he leaves)

[Exit center stage left]

Bingley

Oh you idiot. Emotion is a gift for human beings, and you try not to appreciate it when you need it the most. You can get away from your family's mafia business, go to a prestigious four-year university, stay clean and be whatever you want, but at the end you still have to deal

with people, with humanity. (pulls out his phone and starts typing) That's the final level of this game, isn't it?

[Exit center stage left]

Excerpt #2

In Mrs. Bennet's physics class

[cross downstage right, stands in $\frac{1}{4}$ right position]

Mrs. Bennet

What's the matter, Darcy? Why are you working on the lab by yourself?

[downstage right, stands full-front position, turns his head]

Darcy

All the smart people already have a group (looks at Jane). Thus, I conclude that there is nobody else in this room who can match up my understanding of thermodynamics and is competent enough to be my assistant.

Mrs. Bennet

Are you sure? Elizabeth is as intelligent as Jane.

And I guarantee you that she would love to have you on her team if you ask.

Darcy

(pauses) Which do you mean? (glances around the room until meets Elizabeth's eyes) She is tolerable, but she can't even light up a bunsen burner. I assume that is the reason why she is taking this college prep class. Regarding this, I would infinitely prefer working on my own.

[downstage left, full-front position]

Elizabeth

(overhears it but does not turn her head) Who does he think he is? A genius? (writes so hard that she breaks her pencil)

Charlotte

Relax, Liz. I can see the fire on your head. Darcy just got transferred here yesterday. Supposedly, our school would not accept any transfer students after the deadline, which

is a month ago. However, the school office has made an exception for Darcy because of his high achievement.

Elizabeth

Seriously? What kind of achievement allows the administrators to bend the rules? Like a super high GPA? I don't think anyone can break Bingley's record of graduating with a 4.7.

Charlotte

4.9. My friend on Twitter says Darcy has a GPA of 4.9. How remarkable he must be!

Elizabeth

(rolls her eyes) If he is SO remarkable, why doesn't he take all AP classes? Reasonably, those courses are way more impressive and elite to look at on a transcript than regular college-prep classes.

Charlotte

I heard that he tried, but all the classes were already filled. Nevertheless, when your counselor, Mr. Bennet, told Mrs. Bennet about Darcy's hardship, she jumped with joy and

begged him for putting Darcy in her class. She believes that Darcy himself is capable of raising the class average because of his outstanding academic record.

Elizabeth

(peaks to the right) Why would Darcy want to do that? But more importantly, how? I don't see a person can be so powerful to elevate other people's test scores.

Charlotte

Well, these are personal questions that you'd better ask him by yourself. Keep in touch with him and maybe he will ask you to prom. You can't say he is not handsome, can you?

Elizabeth

Puff, I can hardly imagine someone as nerdy as him would ever want to go to prom. Also, he might think I am not smart enough to dance, so why bother, (looks down on her paper and whispers) although I fail to deny the fact that he is cute.

[downstage center, runs around]

Lydia

OMG! My hair's on fire. Help!

Elizabeth

(aside) Oh, Freshman.

(grasps a fire blanket and dashes towards Lydia) Stop,
drop, and roll!

Darcy

(observes the drama and says nothing)

...

Excerpt #3

Lunch break

Wickham and Elizabeth are walking towards the cafeteria, but Elizabeth's face turns green when she sees Collins holding a poster and some flowers at the intersection.

[upstage right, stands in $\frac{1}{4}$ left position and cross centerstage with Wickham]

Elizabeth

(spots Collins) Oh please. Not that again.

Wickham

What's wrong?

Elizabeth

Hold my hand. Don't question anything. Just do it, NOW!

Wickham

(giggles) Are we dating publicly? We just met last period.

If that is the pace, we can go across the threshold by tomorrow, which is totally fine and enjoyable for me.

Elizabeth

Zip it.

As Wickham and Elizabeth walk closer, Collins becomes more nervous. He uses his shoulder to wipe the sweats from his face.

[centerstage, stands in $\frac{1}{4}$ right]

Collins

Hi...Eliz..Elizabeth. Would you do me...do me the favor of going to pro... (gets stuck when his eyes are fixed on Elizabeth and Wickham's hand)

Elizabeth

Hi Collins, thank you for your flowers and your poster. It is very sweet of you. But, as I have mentioned seventy-two times before, I will not go to prom with you. Sorry that I let you down again.

Collins

(stares at Elizabeth and Wickham's hand and swallows some saliva)

Elizabeth

(gets out a bottle of water from her bag and places it next to Collins's left foot) Stay hydrated. I will text you back when I am free.

[They quickly cross downstage left and exit]

[cross downstage center]

Collins

Jesus Christ! What is wrong with me? How can I be so speechless when I try to start a conversation with Elizabeth? Maybe she IS Aphrodite, whose true beauty the poets from centuries have failed to illustrate. I also sympathize with Sisyphus because we share a common struggle: for him, it is about the stupid rock; for me, it is about asking Liz to prom. Every week her refusal rolls over me and kills my self-esteem. Interestingly, I have a competition now. But you know what? Only those birds that are not afraid of burning can rebirth to phoenixes. This motivation is what keeps me going since seventh grade. Believe me, Elizabeth will be touched by my effort and eventually accept my invitation with jubilant tears.

(jumps out from a nearby bush, downstage right)

Charlotte

What if you are not the right kind of bird? A chicken, for say. Then, you would become a fried chicken.

Collins

GOSH you scared me!

[cross downstage center]

Charlotte

(opens the water bottle and hands over to Collins) If you couldn't get Elizabeth's heart before when she was single, how can you do it now when she is with the hottest guy in our high school's tennis team? Wickham has the quality to be a Hollywood star whenever he wants. No wonder she refuses you.

Collins

But I have done so much for her. (sits down on the curb) My parents and her parents were neighbors before we were born. I remember the first time when Liz and I visit our neighbor, Ms. Catherine de Bourgh, she said that we would be a great match---we both liked chocolate ice cream. When we hang out together, I offered to buy her drinks, food, movie tickets, gifts, and CD records, but she declined most of them. When I traveled, I wrote an email to her every week, asking how her life was and if she wanted any postcards, even though she replied to only ten percent of them. I made accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, and Snapchat just so I could follow her and learn more about her life. I liked everything she has posted and

left comments such as, "you look swell", "the flowers look swell", "the paintings look swell." I thought she would say yes and be my girlfriend if I had good grades in high school, which I do as planned, but things just keep on going south. I still don't understand why she likes Wickham, what, a 2.0?

Charlotte

I feel for you, Collins. You are such a nice person, and you really should move on with your life. Elizabeth might be great, but she is not the one. You would never see the forest if you keep on staring at the same tree. Good times will come for nice people like you.

Collins

(cries on Charlotte's shoulder) Thank you for supporting me, Charlotte. Every week you save me from the edge of the mental cliff. How should I pay you back for your hospitality?

Charlotte

(pats his head) It's okay, I just want to be with you when you needed the most. Let's go get lunch before they close

the line, shall we?

[Both exit downstage left]

Excerpt #4

In guidance counselor's office

[centerstage right, sit in a $\frac{1}{4}$ left position]

Mr. Bennet

Are you sure you want to go to prom with him? It can be quite painful to survive four hours with someone you are not interested in. If I am not mistaken, I recall last time when we were discussing him you were still complaining about his arrogance, and how his pride had made you nauseous. Will you be happy to have him as your partner?

[center stage, stands in full-front]

Elizabeth

If Darcy were a book, then we all read him wrong. We glance at his cover and rapidly make assumptions that are opposite to his true benevolent nature. When I dropped by Mr.

Gardiner's AVID class three weeks ago, I saw Darcy patiently helping other students solve geometry questions. If he WERE pompous, he would not answer anything that was below the level of calculus. I also inquired Mr. Gardiner and several students after school, and they told me that Darcy is the most amicable person they had ever met. He even brought chili cheese fries and dumplings to the banquet at the end of last semester. I would certainly be joyful with him.

Mr. Bennet

Interesting. I see how Darcy's kindness has influenced you. But I want you to be smart and think about the situation you are in. Darcy's inner world is much larger than we can imagine: he has concealed secrets, his good grades and avid extra curriculums are just camouflage of what he is, and his poker-face is a refined wall to hide his emotions. Unless you can build a confessional, unless you can understand his tricks, unless you can break the wall, you would never find true love with him.

(cross centerstage right)

Elizabeth

Thank you for your kind words, Mr. Bennet. But I insist that Darcy is my choice for prom. The Great Wall was not built in one day, neither is Darcy's affection towards me. I spotted his gradual change after he confessed he loves me.

(cross downstage right)

He greets me in the morning every day, introduces me to his friends, and cannot be happier to hang out with me and my besties. Instead of directly going back home studying, he waits for me after my soccer practice. The flavor of the powerade he gives me varies day to day, and sometimes he gives me random kinds of flowers too.

(cross downstage center)

Whenever we chat, either in person or through phones, I can always feel his affability and geniality, and I believe not he has any secrets that he would hide from me. He apprised me that his early deeds were nothing other than the reflections of his melancholy from the loss of his mother. He even saves me from failing physics and statistics, and my grades have improved significantly with his face-time tutoring.

Mr. Bennet

Then, I have nothing to say other than my blessing for you two, my dear. If Darcy is the one that you describe, he deserves you. I am delighted for you to eventually find someone who matches your kindness.

(cross centerstage right)

Elizabeth

You would not easily believe me this, but Darcy is the key to solve the drama between Lydia and Wickham.

Mr. Bennet

You mean that freshman who almost got expelled because she chose to ditch school with a senior? Please elaborate.

Elizabeth

Well, after he has broken up with me and Kinsley, Wickham turned his claws to Lydia, who happened to be the best and only goalie in our soccer team. In no time, Lydia fell in love with him, and they started ditching school to "enjoy the moment and explore the world."

Mr. Bennet

Quite a common story between a naive freshman and a restless senior.

Elizabeth

What's worse, the soccer season started, and we had not a hair of clue where Lydia was. I burst into tears when I told Darcy about it in the library, and he consoled me by saying he would handle it. Surprisingly, two days after, both Lydia and Wickham returned.

Mr. Bennet

You suggest that it was Darcy who managed the situation, but how? It took me and the other counselors weeks to locate their whereabouts. My theory was that Mr. Gardiner called their legal guardians.

Elizabeth

I thought so as well until Mr. Gardiner informed me that Darcy had arranged a couple of meetings with Wickham and Lydia at a local coffee shop, and Wickham agreed to return with Lydia if Darcy would pay for his first-year college tuition. Darcy not only promised to do so, but also offered to pay all Wickham's high school debt at the student store

if the later could graduate with a 2.5. That's how the deal was made.

...

Excerpt #5

In Ms. Catherine de Bourgh (a.k.a Lady Catherine)'s red McLaren car

...

(downstage center, sits in $\frac{1}{4}$ left)

Lady Catherine

Even though I am Darcy's step-mother, I still have the obligation to create a better future for both Darcy and the family.

(downstage center, sits in $\frac{1}{4}$ left)

Elizabeth

It is his decision of inviting me to prom, and it is my choice whether to go with him or not. Your ladyship's concern over him is absolutely not necessary.

Lady Catherine

Him, him, him, shut your mouth if you cannot even correctly use the pronoun. Darcy is, by God's design, a GIRL, and SHE will continue to act like a girl no matter what. I realize that she identifies herself as a "boy," a thought which is quite unorthodox and malicious, but nobody, under my supervision, is going to encourage her to be masculine. Her ridiculous deeds should be ceased at once, and you two shall pursue no further on the business of prom.

Elizabeth

But it is Darcy's choice to do whatever he wants to be happy. If he thinks being a boy will bring him joys, so be it. There is no boundary for free thoughts, nor should there be bounds for free love. If he really loves me, gender would be the last thing that he cares about.

Lady Catherine

Enough for the nonsense! If your argument makes a germ

of sense, then we would be living in an Utopian society where everyone lives freely without worries. Don't you have any virtue or conscience that fights against such a immoral act? Don't you have a religion that warns you about love between the same sex and what the consequences are if you go against God's will? Don't you know that your reckless action will forever ruin your family's reputation and bring ongoing shame for them? Even if you do not care about any of these results, I do. I certainly don't want Darcy to be lesbian and live under the shadow of other people's criticism. For all these reasons, I inquire of you again, dear Elizabeth: would you rather give up being Darcy's prom date, or be the enemy of society?

Elizabeth

For the first and very last time, I restate my position that I do not want, nor accept the invitation to prom from Darcy if he does not ardently articulate his love for me, and my judgement is solely based on the instantaneous feeling of pleasure, excluding any other factors. If your ladyship determines that your inference is valid, then you would not mind answering my question: would you rather open up your hidebound mind, or commit a crime against humanity?

Lady Catherine

Despicable ... treacherous ... chaotic ... you must be possessed by Satan, and your entire family is going to be condemned. Oh, merciful Lord, send me your light of chastity to guide such a lost soul...

Elizabeth

Please stop. Now that you have insulted me and my family, I demand instant return to my school.

Lady Catherine

You are not going anywhere. I will do anything to keep you and your malevolent influence away from my pure Darcy. Obviously, impartial judgment is out of my reach, but it is God's job. My duty is to bring you to him. (laughs creepily and steps on the gas pedal)

Elizabeth

(unlocks the door and jumps out)

...