

A Trip to Scarborough by Richard Brinsley Sheridan (adapted by Barry Syder)

A play in two acts.

Players: 8m / 6f

Set in 1781 in the Georgian spa town of Scarborough.

Characters in order of appearance (approx. playing ages in brackets):

Tom Worthy (m, 20-30)

Lory (m, any age) Tom's manservant

Coachman (m, minor part, 20s) possibly doubles Alfred (a walk on part later in the play)

Colonel Townly (m, 30-50) friend of Tom

Lord Foppington (m, 30-40) Tom's fey elder brother. Extreme fop/dandy. Fashion victim.

La Varole (m, any age) Lord F's cod-French manservant

Mrs Coupler (f, 40-50) society matchmaker, lustful, very fond of young men

Loveless (m, 30-40) foolish friend of Tom and Colonel Townly

Amanda (f, 30-40) Loveless' very attractive wife

Morris (f, minor part, any age) servant of Loveless/Amanda

Berinthia (f, 30-40) widow, lover of the Colonel

Miss Felicity Clumsy (f, 18-30) heiress, Sir Tunbelly's daughter

Norris (f, 40-50) Felicity's companion - formerly her nurse who brought her up from birth.

John (m, any age) servant of Sir Tunbelly

Sir Tunbelly Clumsy (m, 50-70) a wealthy widower

Early summer 1781 and Tom Worthy and his faithful servant Lory arrive in Scarborough. It is the beginning of "the season" in the popular spa town and northern fashionable society are descending in droves. However, things are not going well for Tom. He is on his uppers because his dreadful older brother Lord Foppington holds the family purse strings. His lordship's vanity and obsession with fashion know no bounds, but whereas he spends fortunes on his foppish appearance, he objects strongly to having to provide any support to his younger brother. Tom's inheritance is in trust until he marries, so Lord Foppington keeps him in poverty to ensure this never happens.

Tom learns from his friend Colonel Townly that his brother is betrothed to a young heiress who bizarrely he has never met. The lady in question is Felicity, only daughter of the frankly unhinged Sir Tunbelly Clumsy - a borderline psychopath. Their home is Muddymoat Hall, a stately pile on the edge of Scarborough. Sir Tunbelly, a widower, is very protective of his daughter - to the extent that she is never allowed to leave the house and is locked in the cellar whenever anybody is unwise enough to call. Felicity's only companion is Norris, the wet-nurse who brought her up from a baby after the death of her mother.

The planned marriage of Felicity to Lord Foppington has been arranged by Mrs Coupler, a society matchmaker. However, Tom discovers that Mrs Coupler has fallen out with his lordship because of his refusal to grant her "gratuity". As well as being paid to arrange marriages, Mrs Coupler insists on always road-testing the groom before the nuptials take place. Another source of annoyance for her is that Lord Foppington keeps delaying the wedding because he first wants to seduce Amanda, the wife of Loveless - a mutual friend of Tom and Colonel Townly. Townly is already having an affair with Amanda but doesn't realise that his lover Berinthia is also in town and being pursued by Loveless.

With the connivance of Mrs Coupler, Tom decides to impersonate his older brother and marry Felicity himself. This is possible because neither Sir Tunbelly nor Felicity has met Lord Foppington.