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PERSUASION

by Jane Austen

Adapted by Jeff James, with James Yeatman

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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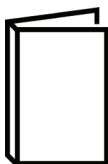
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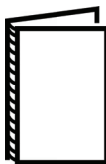


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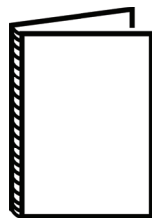
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JEFF JAMES

Jeff James' work as a director includes *La Musica* at the Young Vic; *Stink Foot* at The Yard, which he adapted from Sophocles' *Philoctetes*; *One For the Road* and *Victoria Station* at the Young Vic and Print Room.

JAMES YEATMAN

As writer/director: *Still Ill*, *Dog Show* (New Diorama) *Limehouse Nights* (Limehouse Town Hall)

Director: *Radio* (Soho Studio/59e59 Theatres New York)

James is an associate artist with Complicite for whom he was the co-adapter/director on *The Kid Stays In The Picture* (Royal Court) and *Beware of Pity* (Schaubuhne), the co-director on *Lionboy* (Tricycle and international) and the associate director on *The Master and Margarita* (Barbican and European Tour).

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Some people don't like Jane Austen. They might worry that Austen believed that marriage was the only thing that made a woman's life meaningful. Some of her characters do believe this some of the time, but the idea is interrogated and discredited in all of her novels.

Jane Austen's central question is how you should organise your life – how to balance competing demands like sex, money and family. It's obvious that we still grapple with these tensions today: we're still trying to find good ways of living with a partner or on our own, good ways of dealing with our parents, of finding a home, of having children or not having children.

Austen wouldn't recognise many of the ways we live now, but the intelligence with which she analyses these choices felt strikingly contemporary to me when I first read *Persuasion*. Austen insists that the choices in our private lives are important: not only is it possible to ruin your life if you choose poorly, but these choices are fundamental in shaping your character and identity.

Persuasion is a rom-com: there is a pleasure in following Anne and Wentworth's misadventures, wondering if they will find a way back to each other. But there's a deeper pleasure as Austen uses courtship and romance to examine integrity and selfhood. Anne learns the hard way that our deepest feelings are to be trusted, and that ignoring one's desires creates contradictions that are ultimately unsustainable. The joy of the novel is that Anne is given a second chance to choose what kind of life she wants.

Jeff James
May 2017

First commissioned by and received its world premiere at Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, on 1 June 2017, with previews from 25 May 2017. The cast was as follows:

LADY RUSSELL/MRS CROFT	Geraldine Alexander
SIR WALTER/ADMIRAL CROFT	Antony Bunsee
MARY	Helen Cripps
CAPTAIN WENTWORTH	Samuel Edward-Cook
ELIZABETH/LOUISA	Cassie Layton
MRS CLAY/HENRIETTA	Caroline Moroney
ANNE	Lara Rossi
CHARLES	Dorian Simpson
EDMUND/CAPTAIN BENWICK/MR ELLIOT	Arthur Wilson

Director – Jeff James

Designer – Alex Lowde

Lighting Design – Lucy Carter

Music and Sound Design – Ben and Max Ringham

Movement – Morgann Runacre-Temple

Dramaturg – James Yeatman

Assistant Director – Helen Abbott

CHARACTERS

ANNE

MRS CLAY / HENRIETTA

SIR WALTER / ADMIRAL CROFT

ELIZABETH / LOUISA

LADY RUSSELL / MRS CROFT

MARY

CHARLES

WENTWORTH

EDMUND HAYTER / CAPTAIN BENWICK / MR ELLIOT

SAMUEL, a little boy

Part One: Kellynch

Part Two: Uppercross

Part Three: Lyme Regis

Part Four: Bath

For Joan and Frank James, and Colin and Betty Jacobs.
True models of constancy.

“Well life has some risks. Love is one. Terrible risks.”
Anne Carson, *The Beauty of the Husband*

With thanks to these readers of early drafts for their
generosity and intelligence: Suzanne Bell, Amy Clewes,
Tracey Elliston, Matthew Evans, Sarah Frankcom,
Joe Hill-Gibbins, Lillith Glimcher, Phoebe James,
David Lan, Rachel Lincoln and Nina Segal.

This script went to press during rehearsals, and may differ
from the text in performance.

PART ONE: KELLYNCH

1

ANNE is lying face down on the floor, as if she has fallen out of the sky. As the other characters play the scene around her she slowly comes to. ANNE is always on stage. Everything happens to her.

Enter SIR WALTER and MRS CLAY.

SIR WALTER If one visits her in daylight, she lowers the blind. One sits in darkness. A lady of that age suffers dreadfully, of course. One pities her.

MRS CLAY Lady Russell should use more rouge. I do not know how I would live without it.

SIR WALTER You are kind to Lady Russell, but this is far too modest. A young lady needs no artificial aid to her radiance.

MRS CLAY You flatter me, Sir Walter. I am a widow, not a young girl.

SIR WALTER Nature alone flatters you, Mrs Clay. You are a very pretty, very young widow. Time will see you courting again soon. What can cosmetics do for youthful perfection?

MRS CLAY Sir Walter!

SIR WALTER Although you're never too young to start using Gowland's. I do recommend the daily application of Gowland's lotion, expensive though it is. You would be surprised to learn, I think, that Lady Russell and I are almost of an age.

MRS CLAY Sir Walter, that cannot be possible.

SIR WALTER Gowland's.

Enter ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH Father, I have had a letter from Mr Assingham.

MRS CLAY Finally!

SIR WALTER Is he coming to visit?

ELIZABETH Mr Assingham is not going to visit Kellynch Hall. The letter does not even mention his promise of a visit. All the promises he made in London are forgotten, or ignored.

SIR WALTER How could he have forgotten you?

MRS CLAY What is the subject of his letter?

ELIZABETH It is an invitation. An invitation to the wedding of Mr Frank Assingham and Miss Lucy Pulford.

MRS CLAY Oh, Elizabeth, I'm so sorry.

SIR WALTER But he seemed madly in love with you.

MRS CLAY Who is Lucy Pulford?

ELIZABETH She is the daughter of Sir Edward Pulford. His eighteen-year-old daughter.

SIR WALTER Oh God. I was sure he would propose. This is a blow.

MRS CLAY Yes, but it is one we shall overcome. Countless eligible men would seek the hand of Elizabeth Elliot of Kellynch Hall.

ELIZABETH Where are they, Penelope? Father is the only man I have seen in the past six weeks. Mr Assingham is hardly the first gentleman to disappoint me in this way. There have been twenty. Thirty! You remember Mr Elliot?

SIR WALTER I do not wish to discuss that gentleman.

MRS CLAY Who is Mr Elliot?

ELIZABETH Our cousin. And Father's heir presumptive.

SIR WALTER He hasn't spoken to us in ten years. Mr Elliot has shown no respect to me.

ELIZABETH Mr Elliot courted me for months and months, and then he met some horribly vulgar woman and married her instead.

MRS CLAY Wouldn't that have been a bit peculiar though, to marry your cousin?

ELIZABETH Not in the slightest. What do you mean by that, Penelope? It would be a very proper match. Without a son, Father's estate will pass entire to Mr Elliot. Had he married me, Kellynch Hall would have remained in our part of the family.

SIR WALTER This is all best forgotten, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH No Father – Mr Elliot's wife is now dead. Mr Elliot has become a widower and I am still a maid. An old maid.

SIR WALTER You are not old, Elizabeth. You are as blooming as ever. Think of your sisters. Anne is quite haggard at twenty-seven. Even Mary is grown coarse.

ELIZABETH No doubt Mr Elliot will be engaged to some girl of eighteen before the year is out.

MRS CLAY It is a shame that we cannot spend more time in London.

ELIZABETH Father, Penelope is quite right: we must go to London.

SIR WALTER We will be there in the winter.

ELIZABETH By the time winter comes, I will be thirty. I am approaching the years of danger, and every week my hopes narrow. London is full of eligible men who would be glad to make my acquaintance.

SIR WALTER It is too great an expense to stay in London for months on end.

ELIZABETH Such an expense should be nothing to the master of Kellynch Hall. We will go to London next week and remain there until the end of the season.

SIR WALTER Elizabeth, it is impossible.

ELIZABETH Nonsense!

SIR WALTER Our situation is far more precarious than you imagine. We cannot afford it. Every day another tradesman leaves a bill. We must find a way to retrench.

ELIZABETH We have already made economies.

SIR WALTER And we fall still further into debt. We will be ruined if we continue in this way.

ELIZABETH I must be married, Father, and there are no men here.

SIR WALTER I will consult Lady Russell: she will find a clever way for us to recover our position.

2

Enter **LADY RUSSELL.**

LADY RUSSELL These debts must be paid, Sir Walter. A simpler way of living will release you from financial embarrassment.

SIR WALTER Elizabeth has gone over the accounts and can find nothing. We live a very simple life.

ELIZABETH We have cut off all unnecessary charities.

SIR WALTER We didn't bring any presents back from London for you, or for Anne.

ELIZABETH I thought we could delay new-furnishing the drawing room.

SIR WALTER That's a capital idea. Well done Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH The essential object is that we spend more time in London: at present we are there for only a few weeks of the season. That is no time to meet anyone at all.

LADY RUSSELL Any stay in London is out of the question until you have found economies at home. Anne and I have marked out a scheme of retrenchment.

ELIZABETH Anne?

SIR WALTER Anne?

ELIZABETH What do you have to do with this? You know nothing of the accounts.

LADY RUSSELL Anne has looked into it closely and has many excellent proposals. If you adopt these regulations, in seven years you will be clear.

SIR WALTER We will have to retrench for seven years?

LADY RUSSELL Yes, unless you can find even greater economies.

ELIZABETH We can't wait seven years to return to London.

SIR WALTER I had thought it would take a few months.

ELIZABETH In seven years I will be thirty-six years of age.

LADY RUSSELL Sir Walter, these debts must be cleared with all possible speed or you will be ruined. That is your choice and to my mind it is an easy one.

SIR WALTER Tell me what we must do.

LADY RUSSELL Anne, would you like to begin?

ANNE does not speak.

A great deal could be saved by reducing the staff of Kellynch Hall.

SIR WALTER Right. We could probably manage with fourteen, or even twelve.

LADY RUSSELL We would reduce them to six.

ELIZABETH Kellynch Hall is far too large to have only six servants.

LADY RUSSELL Six would be plenty if you were to close the north wing and live only in the main part of the house.

ELIZABETH The north wing is my favourite wing.

SIR WALTER Do you have other proposals?

LADY RUSSELL You cannot hope to keep more than two horses.

SIR WALTER With two I would be unable to run the carriage.

LADY RUSSELL We propose you sell the carriage.

ELIZABETH Lady Russell, our dignity will not survive such measures. Anne is welcome to spend her time reading books and pottering about in the garden. Father is the master of Kellynch Hall, he is obliged to live in a certain style.

SIR WALTER I would rather quit Kellynch Hall than remain in it on such disgraceful terms.

LADY RUSSELL What did you say Sir Walter?

SIR WALTER I said I would rather quit Kellynch Hall.

LADY RUSSELL I did not have the wit to consider it, but that may be where your salvation lies.

ANNE Lady Russell?

SIR WALTER Where?

LADY RUSSELL In leaving Kellynch Hall.

ANNE Lady Russell?

LADY RUSSELL You could establish yourselves very happily in a smaller property, without the gross expenditure of running this house.

ELIZABETH You can't ask Father to live in a cottage in the village.

LADY RUSSELL It needn't be in this neighbourhood. You could move to town and enjoy a far wider society.

ANNE I want to stay here!

ELIZABETH Do you mean that we could live in London?

ANNE London is far too expensive for Father.

LADY RUSSELL Not London, but it would be possible for you to live at Bath.

ELIZABETH Bath?

ANNE Bath?

SIR WALTER I do like Bath.

LADY RUSSELL In Bath, your father will be important even after the necessary reduction in his means.

SIR WALTER The society in Bath is very fine. Beautiful women. Very fine eligible men.

ANNE Lady Russell!

LADY RUSSELL The concerts and dances are equal to anything in London. I am certain that both Elizabeth and Anne will enjoy themselves there.

ANNE I don't like Bath!

MRS CLAY I like Bath. There are such fine gentlemen there. If you can't find a husband in Bath, you won't find one anywhere.

ANNE gets rid of MRS CLAY.

ANNE And what will happen to Kellynch Hall?

LADY RUSSELL We would find a tenant. They would pay rent and that would allow you to live comfortably in Bath.

ANNE I don't want to go to Bath.

SIR WALTER There will be many exceptional applicants who would pay handsomely to rent Kellynch Hall.

ANNE gets rid of SIR WALTER.

ELIZABETH I will need some new dresses as soon as we get to Bath.

ANNE gets rid of ELIZABETH.

3

ANNE Bath? You want us to move to Bath?

LADY RUSSELL I'm sorry Anne.

ANNE We never talked about Bath.

LADY RUSSELL It became clear that there was no other way for your father to lessen his expenses.

ANNE Bath is a very unpleasant town. It is busy and noisy and dirty.

LADY RUSSELL Your mother loved Bath.

ANNE Kellynch Hall is my home – I want to stay here.

LADY RUSSELL You can't live with your father's tenants.

ANNE But I could stay with you.

LADY RUSSELL I won't be here. I am spending the rest of the year in Yorkshire.

ANNE I could come with you to Yorkshire.

LADY RUSSELL Anne. You can't live with me forever.

Enter ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH Anne, have you been using Father's Gowland's lotion?

ANNE No, I haven't seen it.

ELIZABETH He is grown quite distracted. We cannot leave without it.

ANNE It must be in his dressing room.

ELIZABETH No, I've looked there.

ELIZABETH exits.

LADY RUSSELL You'd rather stay here?

ANNE If they all go to Bath, Kellynch Hall will be a paradise.

LADY RUSSELL (*as SIR WALTER*) My Gowland's, my Gowland's. Elizabeth, I cannot for the life of me put my hand on my Gowland's lotion.

ANNE (*as ELIZABETH*) Father, when did you see it last?

LADY RUSSELL (*as SIR WALTER*) I had it in my hand but three minutes ago. All I have done in the interim is pull out the grey hairs from my nose.

ANNE (*as ELIZABETH*) But there is another one grown there already.

LADY RUSSELL (*as SIR WALTER*) Oh how the years betray me!

ANNE (*as ELIZABETH*) Even Mrs Clay won't love you now!

LADY RUSSELL (*as SIR WALTER*) O time! O mortality!

ANNE (*as ELIZABETH*) I must be married, Father! I want to go to all the dances and have all the fashionable dresses and meet every man in the world just in case one of them will be foolish enough to marry me.

LADY RUSSELL (*as herself*) Elizabeth is right that she should be more in society. The same is true for you.

You need to be more in the world Anne. You are twenty-seven years old. It is high time that both you and Elizabeth were married. Bath has many diversions for a clever and beautiful young woman. You will soon forget Kellynch Hall. Just don't forget me.

ANNE How could I?

LADY RUSSELL I will expect you to teach me all the new dances when I join you in the spring.

ANNE Goodbye, Lady Russell.

LADY RUSSELL Try and enjoy yourself.

Exit LADY RUSSELL.

Enter ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH Anne, have you finished packing?

ANNE I have some small errands to run first. It won't take me long to pack.

ELIZABETH What errands? We must leave for Bath this afternoon.

ANNE I thought I would visit the different houses in the parish to say goodbye. If we are to be away from Kellynch for a year or more, I would not have them think us careless of our duty.

ELIZABETH This is overly-dutiful.

ANNE I must also set out which of your flowers are to be taken by Lady Russell and which to remain. I will also pay a visit to Mary: she wrote this morning and is not in good health.

ELIZABETH Mary is always ill. If you visit her this afternoon, she will demand that you stay there until Christmas. We need to leave.

ANNE We may not see her for many months. I think we could at least visit our sister on the way.

ELIZABETH I don't want to visit Mary. I don't want to visit every parishioner in Kellynch. I don't want to rearrange the garden. Any delay in our arrival at Bath may lose me the chance of a husband.

Enter SIR WALTER and MRS CLAY.

SIR WALTER The carriage is loaded up.

ELIZABETH Anne is not at all ready. She would have us call at Mary's.

ANNE Mary is not well.

SIR WALTER If we call on every sick acquaintance between Kellynch and Bath, we will never arrive.

ANNE Mary is your daughter.

ELIZABETH If you want to see Mary, it is no concern of mine. But you will have to find your own way to Bath. We cannot delay.

ANNE Perhaps I could stay at Uppercross until the spring and then travel to Bath with Lady Russell when Mary is better.

ELIZABETH It is entirely as you wish. Penelope will be with me. You are not needed in Bath, Anne.

ANNE Father, would you object to my staying at Uppercross?

SIR WALTER Why should I object? I suppose Mary may object.

ELIZABETH Mary has asked for Anne.

SIR WALTER Then it is settled: Anne should go where she is wanted.

ANNE I'm certain that Mary will be glad to have me with her.

SIR WALTER You will be only three miles from Kellynch – you will enjoy the society of our new tenants.

ANNE You have found someone to rent the house?

MRS CLAY Yes! An admiral!

ANNE An admiral?

SIR WALTER It will sound good to tell people “I have let my house to admiral” whoever it is.

Much better than saying “I have let my house to Mr –” whatever it may be. A Mr always needs a note of explanation.

ELIZABETH Who is this admiral?

MRS CLAY Admiral Croft.

ANNE Admiral Croft.

MRS CLAY He is a married man, but without children.

ANNE Yes.

SIR WALTER The name of Kellynch Hall was very well known to Mrs Croft. Her brother lived near here some years ago. I've forgotten the name of the brother.

ANNE Eight years ago.

MRS CLAY Exactly. The brother is much younger, but also naval, a captain.

SIR WALTER What was his name?

ELIZABETH Oh you mean Captain Wentworth?

SIR WALTER That's right. Captain Wentworth.

MRS CLAY Yes Captain Wentworth.

ANNE *gets rid of* MRS CLAY.

SIR WALTER Oh yes. Frederick Wentworth!

ANNE *gets rid of* SIR WALTER.

ELIZABETH Didn't you know him, Anne? Captain Frederick Wentworth.

ANNE *gets rid of* ELIZABETH.

PART TWO: UPPERCROSS

5

There is a lot of mess. SAMUEL, a little boy, is running around and playing.

MARY Anne, you're much earlier than you said you'd be. I haven't even started cleaning the house.

ANNE Mary, it's fine.

MARY I've been on my own since seven o'clock this morning. I can barely stand. I can't eat anything. My head hurts. I can hardly speak. Samuel! Samuel! SAMUEL! Come here. Say "Hello Auntie Anne".

SAMUEL Hello Auntie Anne.

He immediately runs off again.

ANNE Hello Samuel. Where's Charles?

MARY He went shooting first thing. Charles expects me to look after Samuel and tidy the house even though my head is ringing with pain. He doesn't care at all.

ANNE Of course he cares.

MARY Where is he then? He'll do anything to get out of the house. He just wants to get away from me.

ANNE Perhaps we should go out too.

MARY We can't go to the big house.

ANNE Why not?

MARY Charles's sisters have to call on you here before we call on them. You are my guest and they should think what is due to you as my sister.

ANNE Mary, how can Henrietta and Louisa visit me when they don't even know that I'm here?

MARY Charles's family know everything else that happens in my house, I shouldn't expect your arrival has escaped their attention. No detail is too small for their criticism. I don't know why I ever agreed to live a quarter of a mile away from my in-laws.

ANNE gets rid of MARY.

Enter CHARLES.

CHARLES Hello Anne!

ANNE Hello Charles.

CHARLES How are you? I was so sorry to hear about Kellynch Hall. I know how you love that house.

ANNE There was nothing else to be done. I'm glad to have a reason to visit you and Mary here.

Enter MARY.

MARY Where have you been?

CHARLES I told you I was going shooting.

MARY Yes and you said you wouldn't be long.

CHARLES I lost track of time.

MARY You're lucky I'm not dead on the floor.

CHARLES You should get out of the house. Why don't you go and see my sisters?

MARY What is wrong with you both? They have to call on Anne first.

ANNE I would never think of standing on such ceremony with the Musgroves.

CHARLES It doesn't matter, Mary.

MARY Of course it matters. Your family ignore every aspect of decorum. Do you realise that last night I was served fourth at supper?

CHARLES It's their house, Mary. You can't make everyone follow your rules.

MARY They're not my rules, it's decorum. It's what everyone does except your family.

CHARLES It's not what everyone does. Half of it's invented by your father.

MARY Oh. I see. You're going to insult my father in front of Anne.

ANNE Don't be silly Mary.

MARY All I want is for people to behave with respect when they are in my house.

CHARLES Everyone respects you, Mary.

MARY I haven't forgotten your mother leaving the room before I'd even stood up.

CHARLES She didn't mean any harm Mary.

MARY In my house she should follow my rules.

CHARLES In a way it's her house.

MARY What do you mean by that?

CHARLES Nothing.

MARY No, what do you mean by that? "It's her house".

CHARLES All I mean is that, as a matter of fact, my parents very generously gave us this cottage to live in.

MARY Where else were we going to live?

CHARLES You might just remember, as a matter of observable fact, that they gave us the cottage and helped pay for its improvement.

MARY Oh thank you for reminding me, yet again, of the debt we owe to your parents.

CHARLES I just think you could show some gratitude.

ANNE gets rid of CHARLES.

MARY I think they could show some respect.

ANNE gets rid of MARY.

6

Enter LOUISA and HENRIETTA.

HENRIETTA and **LOUISA** Anne!

LOUISA How lovely to see you Anne!

HENRIETTA We're so excited to have you with us.

LOUISA It is so kind of you to come and see us instead of going straight to Bath.

HENRIETTA You're such a good person.

LOUISA Are you going to live in Rivers Street?

HENRIETTA Or in Gay Street?

LOUISA Or Camden Place?

ANNE I don't know.

HENRIETTA Laura Place is the very best address. You don't want to be in Queen's Square.

LOUISA We will be there before the end of the season.

HENRIETTA We love it there.

Enter MARY.

MARY You've only been there once.

LOUISA And we loved it.

HENRIETTA The people of Bath are unbelievably sophisticated.

LOUISA Every new dance is invented in Bath.

HENRIETTA You must ask Elizabeth to send us each dance she learns.

LOUISA Anne, would you like to learn our new dance?

MARY Anne doesn't want to dance.

LOUISA She may do. Would you like to dance, Anne?

Hungry for More?

THIS IS A SAMPLE OF THE SCRIPT

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