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Cast of Characters

Women:

MARIANNE

ELINOR

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD

MRS. JENNINGS

LUCY STEELE

LADY MIDDLETON

MRS. FERRARS

MS. GREY

Men:

JOHN DASHWOOD

EDWARD FERRARS

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON

COLONEL BRANDON

WILLOUGHBY

ROBERT FERRARS

GARDENER

DOCTOR

Casting Note

Lady Middleton may double Mrs. Ferrars, and Robert Ferrars may double the servant, John Dashwood the Gardener and Sir John Middleton the Doctor.

The play is thus performed by six men and seven women.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

adapted by Jon Jory

FROM THE NOVEL BY JANE AUSTEN

ACT I

(A blue sky. In front of it three rolling doors of Jane Austen's period. Cast members do all the scene changes in-sight, which concerns only furniture and the replacement of doors. Sometimes scene changes begin before the current scene is over, admitting the theatricality and providing fluidity. As the play opens, furniture is set up for two simultaneous scenes. In one, JOHN DASHWOOD, a distinguished man in his mid-thirties, stands while his wife, MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD, sits. In the other, his stepmother, MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD, packs a trunk. Her daughter, ELINOR, watches. Elinor's sister, MARIANNE, stands at a window.)

MARIANNE. *(Looking out over the audience and through a window:)* I cannot bear to think of leaving dear Norland Park...the gardens in bloom. And I think it quite unfair we must.

ELINOR. Please dear, we need not go over it again.

(Focus shifts to the other scene.)

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. Your father marrying again after your mother's death and having three daughters should not, I think, make them your responsibility.

JOHN DASHWOOD. But you see, Fanny, they are a responsibility, they are my sisters.

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. Half sisters, Mr. Dashwood, and provided for.

JOHN DASHWOOD. One thousand pounds apiece is not provided for, it leaves them a very strict life indeed.

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. I cannot, John, agree with you. Certainly your thought of adding another thousand for each from your estate can only be seen as excessive.

JOHN DASHWOOD. It was my father's last request that I should assist his widow and daughters.

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. Then it is my belief he was light headed at the time, otherwise he would not have imposed on you the idea of taking money from our own dear child.

JOHN DASHWOOD. He did not stipulate a sum, dear Fanny, but something must be done.

(The scene switches.)

ELINOR. We are really before ourselves in packing before the Dashwoods arrive to take up residence, mother.

MARIANNE. They have a perfectly good home in London, I don't see why they must have ours? It is, mark my words, Elinor, all the idea of that terrible woman, his wife.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. It's John's home now, as stated in the will. Your father thought it quite important that the estate be kept together, as the Dashwoods have been settled in Sussex for generations.

MARIANNE. Mother, well, where will we go, tell me that?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. I am making inquiries, Marianne. We will settle well, you may depend on it.

ELINOR. At a price we can afford.

MARIANNE. Afford, afford, afford.

ELINOR. We have not, since Father's death, limitless means. Now Marianne, there is no reason both families cannot live quite comfortably here at Norland Park until a suitable situation can be found.

MARIANNE. There are many reasons.

ELINOR. There is not, sister, a reason we cannot all be civil.

(The scene switches back.)

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. Well, John, let something be done...

JOHN DASHWOOD. Indeed.

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. But it need not be 3,000 pounds. Your sisters...

JOHN DASHWOOD. My sisters.

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. I'm sure will marry well and that money will be gone forever from our poor little boy.

JOHN DASHWOOD. Well, I suppose he might regret the sum should he have a numerous family.

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. Indeed.

JOHN DASHWOOD. Five hundred pounds would still be a prodigious increase to their fortunes.

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. Oh, beyond anything great. But John, five hundred pounds?

JOHN DASHWOOD. I should not want to do anything mean. You know, it occurs to me, that it might be best to do something for the mother while she lives rather than the daughters. A hundred a year would greatly increase their comfort.

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. Perhaps John, but then if Mrs. Dashwood should live fifteen years, we shall be completely taken in.

JOHN DASHWOOD. Fifteen years, I should think not.

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. If you observe, people always live forever when there is an annuity to be paid them. I would not bind myself to anything yearly.

JOHN DASHWOOD. Yes, well...perhaps you are right my love... they might only enlarge their style of living. A present of fifty pounds now and then, when needed, might sensibly and amply discharge my promise to my father.

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. What a splendid idea, John!

(The focus changes.)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Marianne, have you seen Margaret?

MARIANNE. She is in her tree house Mother.

ELINOR. Poor girl. Leaving Norland Park is, most of all, difficult for her.

(At this point the furniture is re-set to indicate Norland Park only. It is now the arrival of JOHN DASHWOOD and MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD to take up the residence.)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Well, we shall all find a comfortable arrangement I am sure.

JOHN DASHWOOD. Undoubtedly. I wished also to introduce Fanny's brother, Edward Ferrars, who has kindly agreed to assist our settling in.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Mr. Ferrars, a great pleasure.

EDWARD. The pleasure is mine.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. My daughter Margaret...

ELINOR. In the tree house, Mother.

EDWARD. A tree house? Well. Indeed. I should like to see that.

ELINOR. She is wonderfully intrigued with it.

EDWARD. As would I be.

ELINOR. Had you such a thing when young, Mr. Ferrars?

EDWARD. No. No I didn't.

(A slightly awkward pause.)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Elinor, perhaps you would show Mr. Ferrars?

ELINOR. *(Suppressing a smile:)* It is not mandatory, sir.

EDWARD. I should like it above all things.

(ELINOR and EDWARD exit.)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Would you care to see the house, Mrs. Dashwood?

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. I would, yes. *(Surveying the room they stand in:)* I think our things will be seen to advantage in this room, John.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. If you will accompany me.

(She and MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD exit. JOHN DASHWOOD is left alone with MARIANNE.)

JOHN DASHWOOD. Well. I hope you will be a friend to Fanny, Marianne. We shall do well together, I am sure.

MARIANNE. *(An awkward pause.)* Of course. If you will excuse me, I must fetch something from my room.

(She goes. JOHN DASHWOOD stands for a moment alone as furniture is cleared.)

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. *(Voiceover:)* John, would you come and discuss our arrangements please.

(He goes. ELINOR and EDWARD enter.)

ELINOR. I owe you many thanks for your kindness to Margaret during your stay.

EDWARD. A pleasure really. I sometimes think myself best with very young people.

ELINOR. You do well with all Edward. In your weeks here you have quite charmed our family, young and not so.

(A pause.)

EDWARD. I am ordinarily praised as unobtrusive. The word 'diffident' I have heard applied. My mother longs to see me distinguished, to send me to Parliament: I believe I would prefer the tree house.

ELINOR. (*Laughing:*) And if not the tree house?

EDWARD. I have always preferred the church, but that was never smart enough for my mother.

ELINOR. Your wishes, I think, are moderate.

EDWARD. I wish, much as everyone else to be perfectly happy. Greatness will not make me so. Fortunately for my mother, my younger brother Robert is more promising. I have not a turn for a great man.

(*A pause. Changing the subject:*)

The gardens here, I think, are well arranged.

ELINOR. Yes.

(*A pause.*)

EDWARD. Both the North and South.

ELINOR. Well arranged, yes.

EDWARD. Good drainage, I think.

ELINOR. Drainage would be of great importance.

EDWARD. My conversation is quite disastrous, is it not?

ELINOR. (*Smiling:*) I enjoy our conversations, Edward.

EDWARD. Really?

ELINOR. Each one.

EDWARD. I have not knowledge in the picturesque and I shall offend you by my ignorance and want of taste if we come to particulars. I shall call hills steep, which ought to be bold; surfaces strange and uncouth, which ought to be rugged; and distant objects, out of sight, which ought only to be indistinct through the soft medium of a hazy atmosphere.

ELINOR. Your conversation is far better than picturesque, it is surprising, which I prefer.

(*They exit. MARIANNE and her mother enter.*)

MARIANNE. Is there no news at all of a situation for us, Mother?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Well I...

MARIANNE. Mrs. Fanny Dashwood is, at this moment, in the quarters replacing our plates with hers, having already done so with the linens. Really, it is unbearable.

ELINOR. (*Popping in from the side:*) Edward and I will be walking, Mother.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Will you be long?

ELINOR. That, pleasantly, I cannot say.

(Exits again.)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. There is, as I am sure you have noticed, Marianne, an excellent reason for some little delay.

MARIANNE. The growing attachment between Elinor and Edward Ferrars is what you mean.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. I comprehend his merits and feel quite assured of his worth. His heart is warm and his temper affectionate.

MARIANNE. And you can tell, beyond doubt, that Elinor is drawn to him?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. He is amiable, well mannered, and the eldest son of a man who died very rich.

MARIANNE. Must wealth always be mentioned? Is he not...uninteresting?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Think clearly, Marianne. Elinor cannot live on her 'interests.' In a few months she will, in all possibility, be settled for life.

MARIANNE. But how will we do without her?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. My love, it will scarcely be a separation. We shall live within a few miles of each other, and you will gain a brother, a real, affectionate brother.

MARIANNE. But there is something wanting. He wants all that spirit, that fire which at once announces virtue and intelligence. And besides all this, I am afraid Mamma, he has no real taste. Music seems scarcely to attract him; and though he admires Elinor's drawings very much, it is not the admiration of a person who can understand their worth. He admires as a lover and not as a connoisseur.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. To be a connoisseur is not necessary to a marriage.

MARIANNE. Elinor has not my feelings, and, therefore, she may overlook it and be happy with him but it would break my heart. Mamma, the more I know of the world the more convinced I am that I shall never see a man whom I can really love. I require so much!

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. You are not yet nineteen, Marianne. It is yet too early in life to despair of such a happiness.

(She exits and ELINOR enters. She and MARIANNE sit on the ground as on a lawn. ELINOR draws on a tablet.)

MARIANNE. You have been with Edward?

ELINOR. Yes.

MARIANNE. You have picked a bouquet.

ELINOR. I have.

MARIANNE. What a pity it is Elinor, that Edward should have no taste for drawing.

ELINOR. He does not draw himself but he has great pleasure in seeing the performance of other people. I hope you do not consider him deficient in taste.

MARIANNE. Do not be offended, Elinor, if my praise of him is not in everything equal to your sense of his merits. I have the highest opinion in the world of his goodness and sense.

ELINOR. The excellence of his understanding and his principles can be only concealed by that shyness which so often keeps him silent. We have been thrown, in these weeks, a good deal together and I venture to pronounce that his mind is well-informed, his enjoyment of books exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure.

MARIANNE. His taste?

ELINOR. His abilities in every respect improve upon acquaintance.

MARIANNE. But...

ELINOR. True, at first sight his person can hardly be called handsome 'til the general sweetness of his countenance is perceived. At present, I know him so well that I think him really handsome; or at least, almost so. What say you Marianne?

MARIANNE. I shall very soon think him handsome, Elinor, when you tell me to love him like a brother.

ELINOR. A brother? Marianne I...I do not deny that I...think very highly of him...that I like him. Esteem him.

MARIANNE. Esteem him! Like him! Cold hearted Elinor! Use those words again and I will leave you on the moment!

ELINOR. (*Laughing*;) Excuse me for speaking in such a quiet way about my feelings. Believe them to be stronger than I have declared; believe them, in short, to be such as his merit, and the suspicion—the hope of his affection for me may warrant, without imprudence or folly. But further than that you must not believe. I am, by no means,

assured of his regard for me. There are moments when the extent of it seems doubtful; and 'til his sentiments are fully known, you cannot wonder at my wishing to avoid any encouragement of my own partiality. By believing or calling it more than it is.

MARIANNE. But in your heart...

ELINOR. In my heart I feel little—scarcely any doubt of his preference.

MARIANNE. Then, sister, follow your inclination.

ELINOR. There are other points to be considered beside his inclination.

MARIANNE. (*Stifled scream.*)

ELINOR. He is very far from being independent. From Fanny's recitation of his mother's conduct, I am not disposed to think her amiable. She may not wish him to marry a woman who had not fortune or rank.

MARIANNE. Are you really, Elinor, not engaged to him?

ELINOR. Sister, would I stay silent of such a thing?

MARIANNE. Would you not?

(*ELINOR and MARIANNE's mother arrives in great spirits.*)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Wonderful, delightful news! A relation of mine, Sir John Middleton has offered us a small house in Devonshire on very easy terms. A cottage indeed but he offers that everything shall be done to it we wish.

(*Passes the letter to ELINOR.*)

ELINOR. He writes in quite a friendly style.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Truly, I cannot stand the misery of being my daughter-in-law's guest another minute. To be removed from this beloved place is less painful than to inhabit it with such a mistress.

ELINOR. Indeed, the rent is uncommonly moderate.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Would our removal, Elinor, unsettle any plans, or indeed, might I say, hopes you might harbor?

ELINOR. None Mother.

MARIANNE. But what of Edward?

ELINOR. That Marianne, only Edward can answer.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. But...

(*She and MARIANNE exit while simultaneously JOHN DASHWOOD, MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD, and EDWARD enter.*)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. (*Picks up the next scene in the middle of her explanation:*) Thus, I think it far better as we are provided with a house, to inconvenience you no longer than it takes for everything to be ready for us to inhabit it.

EDWARD. Devonshire! Are you indeed going there? So far from us. And to what part of it?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. I believe it to be within four miles northward of Exeter.

JOHN DASHWOOD. But is this decision thought through? You are currently well situated here. Is this not undue haste?

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. John...

JOHN DASHWOOD. Is it not too small?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. It is but a cottage, but I hope to see many of my friends in it.

(A glance at EDWARD.)

If my friends find no difficulty in traveling so far to see me, I am sure I will find none in accommodating them.

JOHN DASHWOOD. Well, but this is very vexing, to go such a distance as to prevent my being of any service in removing your furniture.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. You need not be concerned there, it will all be sent round by water.

JOHN DASHWOOD. But...

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD. I believe it's settled, John.

(There is a moment's pause and then all exit. MARIANNE appears. She is alone on stage.)

MARIANNE. Dear, dear Norland! When shall I cease to regret you...when leaving to feel a home elsewhere. And you, trees that shaded my childhood, you will continue the same; unconscious of the pleasure or regret you occasion, and insensible of any changes in those who walk under your shade. Goodbye. Goodbye!

(MARIANNE, MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD, and ELINOR gather and look out over the audience at their new home.)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Barton Cottage.

ELINOR. (*Saying something nice:*) It is...nicely situated.

MARIANNE. But small. Smaller than I thought.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. I am well satisfied with the size and to add and improve is always a delight. We will make ourselves tolerably comfortable for the present.

MARIANNE. But small.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. In the spring, if I have a bit of money, we shall think about building.

ELINOR. If.

(SIR JOHN MIDDLETON *enters. His manner is expansive.*)

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. Ah, there we are. Had to see the horses. Barton Cottage, eh? Neat as a pin. Comfortable as an old well-loved chair by the fire. Tiled roof. Sitting rooms sixteen feet on each side of the entrance. Kitchen and pantry to the back. All in the best of repair! Four bedrooms and two garrets. And...and...wonderful views, eh? Village of Barton over there in the valley. All nicely situated.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Quite to our taste, Sir John. We are in your debt for your offer.

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. All possible of alteration, eh? Think of it, once your things are about you, nicely arranged to your satisfaction what pleasure it will be! As to the day in hand, Lady Middleton... (*To the girls:*) who you will greatly admire, insists on you dining with us this evening at Barton Park, not a half mile distant. (*To MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD:*) She will put you quite straight about arranging the cottage.

ELINOR. Perhaps, this evening...

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. (*His jolly, energetic self:*) You shall join us without another word! Come along, come along, I have kept the carriages at the bottom of the path.

(*The characters start out, and regroup. Chairs are brought. LADY MIDDLETON and her mother, MRS. JENNINGS, join the group. We are now at Barton Park, the Middletons' residence.*)

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. Welcome all to Barton Park! Let me see, let me see. You have met Lady Middleton at the steps. Here is the honorable Mrs. Jennings, her mother.

MRS. JENNINGS. Delighted. A fine thing indeed! Dear, dear, dear, you have three daughters?

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. Missing the littlest one.

(COLONEL BRANDON *enters.*)

MRS. JENNINGS. Well, I hope you have not left your heart in Sussex, for I shall have you all married by Michaelmas.

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. Colonel Brandon...

(COLONEL BRANDON *bows.*)

My particular friend and the best shot in Devonshire. Colonel, you see before you the family Dashwood.

COLONEL BRANDON. Delighted.

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. (*Teasing:*) Take note of the daughters, Colonel. (*Looks about.*) Where has your youngest got to, Mrs. Dashwood?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Viewing of your horses if you don't mind Sir John.

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. Not at all dear lady. I have often preferred horses to their masters. Now then, now then, we are all met and our evening before us.

LADY MIDDLETON. (*Formally:*) I believe you will find the air excellent to the complexion.

(*Silence falls.*)

MRS. JENNINGS. The air! Yes... Oh, I am very pleased to meet you indeed. You provide the neighborhood with new life and interest. I have lived to see two daughters respectably married and therefore I've nothing to do but marry the rest of the world. I'll begin with you Colonel Brandon, as you have situated yourself with great care near Miss Marianne, I believe it is your responsibility to show her the gardens. Go on, go on, we can spare you.

COLONEL BRANDON. If it would give you any pleasure?

MARIANNE. (*Feeling a little forced:*) As long as it is not too damp.

MRS. JENNINGS. A fine evening. Dry as toast.

MARIANNE. (*As they exit:*) You are a good shot then?

COLONEL BRANDON. Middling only, but devoted to improvement.

(*They are gone.*)

MRS. JENNINGS. There, you see, well begun.

LADY MIDDLETON. What is well begun?

MRS. JENNINGS. It would be an excellent match, for he is rich and she is handsome.

LADY MIDDLETON. Is she?

MRS. JENNINGS. Oh you! Come Sir John, until we are called to table let us play a round of cards.

(The scene dissolves. Furniture is removed. ELINOR, MARIANNE, and their mother are now all outdoors.)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. I cannot see why you think him so exceedingly ancient?

MARIANNE. But at least, Mamma, you cannot deny the absurdity of Mrs. Jennings's so clearly promoting a match.

ELINOR. It would be my wish to cease all contention and enjoy this glorious sunlight.

MARIANNE. *(Paying no attention:)* Colonel Brandon is old enough to be my father; and if he were ever animated enough to be in love, must have long ago outlived every sensation of the kind. It is too ridiculous. When is a man to be safe from such wit, if age and infirmity will not protect him?

ELINOR. Infirmity! Do you call Colonel Brandon infirm? I can easily suppose that his age may appear much greater to you than to my mother; but you can hardly deceive yourself as to his having the use of his limbs.

MARIANNE. Did you not hear him complain of the rheumatism? And is that not the commonest infirmity of a declining life?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. *(Laughing:)* It must seem to you a miracle that my life has been extended to the advanced age of forty.

MARIANNE. Mamma, you are not doing me justice. Colonel Brandon, of course, is not old enough that his friends need be apprehensive of losing him, but thirty-five has nothing to do with matrimony!

ELINOR. Perhaps thirty-five and seventeen had better not have anything to do with matrimony together. But should there happen to be a woman of twenty-seven and single, there can be no objection to Colonel Brandon marrying her.

MARIANNE. A woman of seven and twenty can never hope to feel or inspire affection again.

ELINOR. Marianne!

MARIANNE. In his marrying such a woman therefore, there would be nothing unsuitable. It would be a compact of convenience and no marriage at all. To me it would be a commercial exchange; in which each wished to be benefited at the expense of the other.

ELINOR. It would be impossible, I know, to convince you a woman of twenty-seven could feel love, but I must object to your dooming Colonel Brandon and his wife to the constant confinement of a sick

chamber because on a cold, damp day he chanced to complain of a slight rheumatic feel in one of his shoulders.

MARIANNE. But he talked of flannel waistcoats, and with me a flannel waistcoat is invariably connected with aches, cramps, rheumatisms, and every species of ailment that can afflict the old and feeble.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Girls...

ELINOR. (*Irritated, leaving:*) I have much to do Mamma with that which is not nonsense.

(And she is gone.)

MARIANNE. Mamma, on the subject of ailments. I am sure Edward Ferrars is not well. We have been here almost a fortnight and yet he does not come. What else but illness could detain him?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Does Elinor expect him?

MARIANNE. She must, surely, but the whole of their behaviors to each other has been unaccountable! How cold, how composed were their last adieus. And Elinor's self command is invariable. What sort of lovers are these?

(Her mother shakes her head and taps MARIANNE.)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. There are many sorts of lovers, Marianne, besides those of your imagination.

(She exits. ELINOR joins MARIANNE. They are walking the hills above the village of Barton.)

MARIANNE. I could walk such hills and see such vistas forever.

ELINOR. Be careful sister, you will fall.

MARIANNE. Can you believe our mother saying this weather was not 'tempting' enough. I love tumbling clouds and a showery sky. I could not stand the confinement of the house another moment. I rejoice sister, I do.

(Thunder.)

ELINOR. We had best turn for home, Marianne.

MARIANNE. Truly, sister, there is no felicity in the world superior to this. Promise me we shall walk here at least two hours.

(Thunder close, rain.)

ELINOR. Your felicity, sister, will become a deluge.

MARIANNE. (*Spinning in place:*) A fine one! Glorious.

(Grabbing at ELINOR's hand:)

We'll run back. Chase me!

(MARIANNE sets off and falls, twisting her ankle.)

ELINOR. Marianne! Marianne, have you hurt yourself?

MARIANNE. My ankle, I think. Help me to stand.

ELINOR. Can you put your arm around my shoulder? There, yes.

(MARIANNE cries out as she puts weight on her leg. A gentleman appears upstage carrying a hunting knife and sees them.)

You cannot walk then?

(MARIANNE shakes her head.)

It is at least a mile or so home. Hello! Hello!

MARIANNE. You must leave me I think, and seek help.

ELINOR. Of course, I cannot.

WILLOUGHBY. *(Approaching:)* May I be of assistance?

(The women are taken aback.)

WILLOUGHBY. I have startled you. Forgive me. I could not help but see your distress. My name is Willoughby. I am visiting a relative at Allenham Court nearby.

ELINOR. Elinor and Marianne Dashwood... *(Pointing:)* We were walking for pleasure from our cottage, we...

WILLOUGHBY. *(Looking up:)* The storm I think will worsen. I must not leave you to be drenched. The young lady has sprained her ankle, I think. I can deliver her safely home if you will allow me.

MARIANNE. *(Liking his looks:)* I would be much indebted, sir.

WILLOUGHBY. May I?

ELINOR. Yes, please.

ELINOR. You have a horse or conveyance?

WILLOUGHBY. I have not, but the matter is a simple one.

(In one motion he picks MARIANNE up in his arms.)

ELINOR. Marianne!

MARIANNE. Oh!

ELINOR. But...

WILLOUGHBY. I will break a trail for you Miss Elinor.

ELINOR. But mister...

(And off he goes with MARIANNE. The scene is shifted as he goes and two chairs are brought on. We are at the cottage. Present are MRS. DASHWOOD, SIR JOHN, and ELINOR. MARIANNE returns shortly and joins them.)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Fortunately the gentleman was out shooting and carried Marianne nearly a mile to our door.

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. And the gentleman's name?

ELINOR. A Mr. Willoughby residing at Allenham.

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. Willoughby! What, is he in the country? That is fine news. I shall ride over and ask him to dinner on Thursday.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. What sort of young man is he?

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. As good a kind of fellow as ever lived. Very decent shot and there is not a bolder rider in England.

MARIANNE. And?

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. What?

MARIANNE. And is that all you can say for him? But what are his manners, his pursuits, his talents...

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. Well...

MARIANNE. ...and his genius?

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. Upon my soul, as to all that he's a pleasant, good-humored fellow, and he's got the nicest little black bitch of a pointer I ever saw.

ELINOR. But who is he? Where does he come from?

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. Well, he has no property here but resides at Allenham Court when he visits the old lady...

LADY MIDDLETON. Mrs. Smith?

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. ...to whom he is related, and whose possessions he will inherit.

MARIANNE. Single?

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. And very worthwhile catching Miss Dashwood, but Brandon will be jealous if you do not take care.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. *(Smiling:)* I do not believe Mr. Willoughby will be discommoded by the attempt either of my daughters, toward what you call 'catching him.' It is not the employment to which they have been brought up.

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. Saw the man dance the long evening last Christmas and never sat down a moment.

MARIANNE. Did he, indeed?

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. And up at eight to ride to the hunt.

MARIANNE. Just what a young man ought to be. His pursuits should know no moderation, and leave him no fatigue.

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. Ay, ay, I see how it will be. You'll be setting your cap at him now. Poor Brandon. Ay, ay, you will make conquests enough. All this tumbling about and spraining of ankles.

(The scene is changed. MARIANNE lies on a chaise. There is one other chair. WILLOUGHBY stands behind it.)

WILLOUGHBY. I took the liberty of riding by to see if you were improved Miss Dashwood.

MARIANNE. I am Sir, but above all we owe you thanks.

WILLOUGHBY. You will not, I think, be seen dancing for at least a fortnight.

MARIANNE. *(Laughing:)* I would dance on one foot if I could.

WILLOUGHBY. I enjoy dancing almost above all things. Ah, are you reading *The Mysteries of Udolpho*?

MARIANNE. For the third time. You read novels? Most gentlemen think them a waste of a man's time.

WILLOUGHBY. Most gentlemen spend far too much time with their hounds. Though I admit to running fine ones.

(They smile.)

May I sit for a moment?

MARIANNE. Please do.

(Time passes; WILLOUGHBY picks up a book and begins to read.)

WILLOUGHBY.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,

MARIANNE. Or bends...

WILLOUGHBY.

Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no! It is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;

MARIANNE.

It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come:
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

MARIANNE & WILLOUGHBY.

But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

(She and WILLOUGHBY converse in dumb show. ELINOR, elsewhere on the stage, speaks straight forward.)

ELINOR. Well, Marianne, I think you have done pretty well for one morning. You have already ascertained Mr. Willoughby's opinion on every conceivable matter.

(WILLOUGHBY still in dumb show, says his goodbyes, bows and exits. ELINOR, still speaking moves into the room with MARIANNE.)

You have shared all you know of gardens, literature, travel, and the dance, and spoken at some length about composers for the pianoforte.

MARIANNE. Yes sister.

ELINOR. But how is your acquaintance to be long supported under such extraordinary dispatch of every subject of discourse? Another meeting will examine his sentiments on the picaresque and second marriages, and then you can have nothing further to ask.

MARIANNE. Elinor! Is this fair? Is this just? Are my ideas so scanty? But I see what you mean. I have been too much at my ease, too happy, too frank. I have erred against every commonplace notion of decorum. I have been open and sincere where I ought to have been reserved, spiritless, dull and deceitful: had I talked only of the weather and roads, this reproach would have been spared.

(She turns away. ELINOR softens.)

ELINOR. Sister, forgive me, it was in jest. I should never wish to check the delight of your conversation with our new friend.

(MARIANNE turns and embraces her. ELINOR moves down to her mother. WILLOUGHBY enters again to MARIANNE, and again they speak in dumb show.)

ELINOR. But every day?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Indeed he does come every day, but I believe it assists Marianne's perfect recovery.

ELINOR. Well, never has confinement been less irksome.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. (*Speaking more intimately to ELINOR:*) I believe him to be exactly formed to engage Marianne's heart, as he has that natural ardor of mind, which she so admires. They read, they talk, they sing together. It is perfectly innocent and her taste exactly.

ELINOR. I see nothing to censure in him, though it could be wished he was better known to us.

(*ELINOR and her mother join WILLOUGHBY and MARIANNE.*)

WILLOUGHBY. (*We catch him mid-conversation:*) Brandon, you see, is that kind of man whom everybody speaks well of and nobody cares about; whom all are delighted to see, and nobody remembers to talk to.

MARIANNE. That is exactly what I think of him!

ELINOR. Do not boast of it sister, for it is injustice in both of you.

WILLOUGHBY. That he is patronized by you is certainly in his favor, but I would think it your kindness more than interest. Being approved by Lady Middleton and Mrs. Jennings? That would be censure to anyone else.

ELINOR. If their praise be censure, your censure may be praise, for they are not more undiscerning, than you are prejudiced and unjust.

MARIANNE. Dear Elinor, in defense of your protégé you can even be saucy!

ELINOR. My protégé as you call him, is a sensible man; and sense will always have attractions for me. Yes, Marianne, even in a man between thirty and forty. He has seen a great deal of the world, has read and has a thinking mind. He has always answered my enquiries with the readiness of good breeding and good nature.

MARIANNE. That is to say, he has told you, that in the East Indies the climate is hot, and the mosquitoes troublesome.

WILLOUGHBY. Perhaps his observations may have extended to the existence of nabobs, watchamacallits, and palanquins.

ELINOR. I venture to say *his* observations have stretched much further than your candor. But why should you dislike him?

WILLOUGHBY. I do not dislike him. I consider him, on the contrary, as a very respectable man, who has everybody's good word, more money than he can spend, more time than he knows how to employ, and two new coats every year.

MARIANNE. But neither genius, taste, or spirit. His understanding has no brilliancy, his feelings no ardor, and his voice no passion.

ELINOR. You decide on his imperfections in the mass but not specifically. I can only pronounce him a sensible man.

WILLOUGHBY. Miss Dashwood! You endeavor to disarm me by reason, but it will not do. I have three unanswerable reasons for disliking Colonel Brandon.

MARIANNE. One?

WILLOUGHBY. He has threatened me with rain when I wished good weather.

MARIANNE. Two?

WILLOUGHBY. He finds fault with my carriage.

MARIANNE. And the last?

WILLOUGHBY. And I cannot persuade him to buy my brown mare. Though indeed in other respects his character is irreproachable you cannot deny me the privilege of disliking him as much as ever!

(MARIANNE laughs and applauds. The other women smile and ELINOR bows her head. WILLOUGHBY walks off with MARIANNE and are watched by COLONEL BRANDON, who has entered to the side. The furniture is cleared and MRS. DASHWOOD goes with it. ELINOR turns to see COLONEL BRANDON see MARIANNE.)

ELINOR. You are thoughtful Colonel Brandon.

COLONEL BRANDON. Your sister, I understand, does not approve of second attachments.

ELINOR. *(Who has come to enjoy and empathize with the Colonel:)* No, her opinions are all romantic.

COLONEL BRANDON. Thus she believes such attachments impossible to exist.

ELINOR. I believe she does. But how she contrives it without reflecting on the character of her own father who had two wives, I know not. A few years will settle her opinions on the reasonable basis of common sense and observations.

COLONEL BRANDON. Most probably, and yet there is something so amiable in the prejudices of a young mind.

ELINOR. I cannot agree with you there. There are inconveniences attending such feelings as Marianne's, which all the charms of

enthusiasm and ignorance of the world cannot atone for. Her systems have all the unfortunate tendency of setting propriety at naught.

COLONEL BRANDON. Are those who have been disappointed in their first choice, whether from the inconstancy of its object or the perverseness of circumstances, to remain indifferent the rest of their lives?

ELINOR. Her principles in such matters, can only be defined and justified by herself.

COLONEL BRANDON. You will, I hope, be frank with me Miss Dashwood.

ELINOR. (*Looking directly at him:*) I have never yet heard her admit any instance of a second attachment being pardonable.

COLONEL BRANDON. (*A pause.*) Such ideas cannot hold, and yet when the romantic refinements of a young mind are obliged to give way, how frequently are they succeeded by such opinions as are too dangerous! I speak from experience. I once knew a young woman who thought and judged like her, but who from an enforced change—from a series of unfortunate circumstances...

(*A pause.*)

I see it is late. I have overstayed my welcome. Good night Miss Dashwood.

ELINOR. Good night.

(*He exits and ELINOR looks after him and then turns. MARIANNE enters to her. It is day.*)

ELINOR. Marianne! Your carriage ride with Willoughby has extended through the afternoon and worried us all beyond speaking.

MARIANNE. The day was so lovely, the air so fresh, I could not allow Willoughby to turn back.

ELINOR. And where did you go?

MARIANNE. Is that question yours to ask, sister?

ELINOR. Did you drive with Willoughby to his home at Allenham, Marianne?

MARIANNE. And what if we did?

ELINOR. (*Upset with her:*) Marianne.

MARIANNE. Is it not what you have often wished to do yourself?

ELINOR. I would not have gone alone with Willoughby.

MARIANNE. Mr. Willoughby, however, is the only person who can have a right to show the house; and as we went in an open carriage,

it was impossible to have any other companion. I never spent a pleasanter morning in my life.

ELINOR. I am afraid that the pleasantness of an employment does not always evince its propriety.

MARIANNE. I am not sensible, Elinor, of having done anything wrong in walking over Mrs. Smith's grounds or in seeing her house. They will one day be Mr. Willoughby's and...

ELINOR. If they were one day to be your own, Marianne, you would not be justified in what you have done.

MARIANNE. (*Furious:*) If, Elinor, there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at the time for we always know when we are acting wrong, and with such a conviction I could have had no pleasure.

(She starts to go and then turns back. Triumphantly:)

And if you care to know, he has given me a horse.

ELINOR. Marianne, you know that is out of the question! Such a present from a man so little, or at least so lately, known to you? This is too much.

MARIANNE. You are mistaken, Elinor, in supposing I know so very little of Willoughby. It is not time or opportunity that determines intimacy; it is disposition alone. Seven years would be sufficient to make some people acquainted with each other and seven days are more than enough for others!

(She rushes out. ELINOR turns downstage worried and upset. MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD enters to her.)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Oh, Elinor! I have heard such news from Margaret.

ELINOR. Where is Margaret?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Outside making a garden for her doll. She says she is sure Marianne will be married to Willoughby very soon.

ELINOR. You have said so, Mother, almost every day since they first met on highchurch down.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. But this is quite another thing, for Margaret says he has got a lock of Marianne's hair.

ELINOR. Margaret says.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. She saw him cut it off. Last night, after tea, when we left the room, Margaret says they were whispering

together and he seemed to be begging something of her, and presently he took up her scissors, cut off a long lock, kissed it, folded it up in a piece of white paper, and put it in his pocket-book.

ELINOR. Margaret, mother reads nothing but fairy tales.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. They will be married, I know it, and before the year is out.

(She exits. A table and chairs are brought as the scene begins. We are at Sir John and Lady Middleton's home. At attendance are the MIDDLETONS, COLONEL BRANDON, MRS. JENNINGS, WILLOUGHBY, ELINOR, MARIANNE, and MRS. DASHWOOD.)

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. Well this is a fine thing...

(Furniture is being set.)

A fine thing indeed, is it not Lady Middleton?

(She smiles coolly.)

An excellent gathering, a plentiful breakfast, if I do say so and the morning rather favorable. Those assembled are in high spirits, or should be. And I will only take this opportunity to say...

LADY MIDDLETON. John.

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. Nothing at all.

(Laughter from those assembled.)

I shall say nothing at all, and that at some length.

LADY MIDDLETON. I always think the difficulty with jest is that some of the party may take it for value.

(A servant delivers a letter.)

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. *(Still pleasant:)* Which might be the truth of the matter. *(Glancing at the letter:)* Something for you here Colonel Brandon.

(COLONEL BRANDON takes the letter, sees the address, and shaken, moves away from the others to read it.)

Pity really the ladies don't shoot. First rate shooting today.

(To LADY MIDDLETON:)

What is the matter with Brandon, eh?

LADY MIDDLETON. It must be something quite extraordinary to allow the Colonel to leave my table in such a way.

MRS. JENNINGS. (*Rising and going to him:*) No bad news, Colonel, I hope?

COLONEL BRANDON. No ma'am. It came from town, and it is merely a letter of business.

MRS. JENNINGS. But how came the hand to discompose? Come, come, this won't do, Colonel, so let us hear the truth of it.

LADY MIDDLETON. My dear Madam, recollect what you are saying.

COLONEL BRANDON. (*To LADY MIDDLETON:*) I am sorry to receive this letter ma'am on the day of our outing, for it requires my immediate attendance in town.

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. But the day's plans are well made, Brandon. You cannot go to town till tomorrow. Surely you will lose nothing.

COLONEL BRANDON. It is not in my power to delay my journey for one day.

WILLOUGHBY. (*Laugh.*)

COLONEL BRANDON. Indeed, I cannot afford to lose one hour.

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. Well, then, when will you come back again?

COLONEL BRANDON. It is so uncertain when I may have it in my power to return that I dare not engage for it at all.

SIR JOHN MIDDLETON. You do not go to town on horseback do you?

COLONEL BRANDON. No. Only to Honiton. I shall then go post. Is there no chance of my seeing you and your sister in town this winter, Miss Dashwood?

ELINOR. I am afraid none at all.

COLONEL BRANDON. Then I must bid you farewell for a longer time than I should wish to.

(He turns to MARIANNE and bows and then hurriedly leaves the room.)

LADY MIDDLETON. Well, this is not quite the thing.

WILLOUGHBY. (*After a moment:*) There are some people who cannot bear a party of pleasure. Brandon is one of them. I would lay fifteen guineas the letter was of his own writing.

MARIANNE. I have no doubt of it.

MRS. JENNINGS. It is about Miss Williams, I am sure.

MARIANNE. And who is Miss Williams?

MRS. JENNINGS. Not to shock the young ladies, but she is Colonel Brandon's natural daughter.

LADY MIDDLETON. Indeed! Surely not.

MRS. JENNINGS. Oh yes, as like him as she can stare. I dare say he will leave her all his fortune. Something very melancholy must be the matter. Perhaps money matters, for land excepted, his estate was never reckoned at more than two thousand a year, or maybe she is ill in town.

(LADY MIDDLETON *clears her throat.*)

Well, I wish him out of all his trouble, with all my heart...

(*Glancing at the Miss Dashwoods:*)

And a good wife into the bargain.

(*A pause, taken up eventually by LADY MIDDLETON:*)

LADY MIDDLETON. Tell me, Mrs. Dashwood, do you plan improvements on the cottage come spring?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Well...

WILLOUGHBY. What! Improve the dear cottage! No! Not a stone must be added, nor an inch to its size.

LADY MIDDLETON. Dear me!

WILLOUGHBY. If my feelings are regarded. To me it is faultless.

ELINOR. With its dark narrow stairs and kitchen that smokes?

WILLOUGHBY. Indeed. Perfect in all, and everything belonging to it. (*To MARIANNE:*) The cottage will always have one claim on my affection, which no other can possibly share. Is it not so, Marianne? You must not rob it of its simplicity.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. I assure you that nothing will be altered so as to disappoint you, Mr. Willoughby.

WILLOUGHBY. You have assured my happiness.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. And now we must go. Your hospitality, Lady Middleton, has been both generous and delightful. (*Turning:*) Shall we see you tomorrow to dinner, Mr. Willoughby? I do not ask you to come in the morning as we must see the dressmaker. Would four o'clock suit you?

WILLOUGHBY. Four o'clock then, and not a moment later.

(The party breaks up and the furniture is cleared. One chair is placed to represent the cottage. Downstage MRS. DASHWOOD and ELINOR arrive from a visit to town.)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. I am unsettled, Elinor, concerning the lace we chose for Marianne, do you think it too heavy a style?

ELINOR. I think it well chosen and Marianne will treasure it, Mother.

(They enter what we will take to be the front door. ELINOR calls for her sister.)

Marianne!

(MARIANNE rushes in with her handkerchief to her eyes.)

Sister.

MARIANNE. *(Waving her away:)* No, no. Please, no.

(She runs off, supposedly toward the kitchen. WILLOUGHBY enters from whence MARIANNE has come.)

ELINOR. Marianne!

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Is there anything the matter? Is she ill?

WILLOUGHBY. Indeed, I hope not.

ELINOR. Marianne!

WILLOUGHBY. More likely it is I who may rather expect to be ill—

ELINOR. Mr. Willoughby.

WILLOUGHBY. For I suffer under a heavy disappointment.

ELINOR. Disappointment?

WILLOUGHBY. Mrs. Smith has this morning exercised the privilege of riches upon a poor dependent cousin, by sending me on pressing business to London.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. But I—

WILLOUGHBY. I am now come to take my farewell of you.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. But surely not this very afternoon?

WILLOUGHBY. Almost this moment.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. The business will not detain you long, I hope?

WILLOUGHBY. Your concern is most kind; but I have no idea of returning into Devonshire immediately. My visits to Mrs. Smith are never repeated within the twelvemonth.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. We have only just lost Colonel Brandon, your departure will be too heavy for our small society to bear. Say you will return in a week, a month. Mrs. Smith is not your only friend. Barton cottage is always open to you, to visit or stay.

WILLOUGHBY. (*Confusedly. Seemingly overcome.*) Yes...very kind, I...I am sorry, I cannot collect myself. My engagements at present are...well...they are of such a nature...indeed, I dare not flatter myself that...

(*An awkward pause.*)

It is folly to linger in this manner. I will not torment myself any longer by remaining among friends whose society it is impossible for me now to enjoy.

ELINOR. Mr. Willoughby you know this to be a serious blow to my sister, perhaps...

WILLOUGHBY. (*Tremendously upset.*) I cannot. I cannot. Pray excuse me.

ELINOR. Mr. Willoughby!

(*He bolts out of the house and offstage.*)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. What can have happened? Can they have quarreled? No. Rather I think Mrs. Smith suspects his regard for Marianne, disapproves of it and sends him off. He is aware of her disapproval and therefore dares not, at present, confess to her his engagement to Marianne.

(*To ELINOR, who stands quietly regarding her.*)

And now, Elinor, what have you to say?

ELINOR. I can hardly tell. But suspicion of something unpleasant is the inevitable consequence of such an alteration as we have just witnessed in him.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. What is it you suspect him of?

ELINOR. Willoughby may, undoubtedly, have very sufficient reasons for his conduct and I will hope he has and yet—secrecy may be advisable; but I still wonder at it being practiced by him.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. But do you admit the justice of what I have said in his defense?

ELINOR. Not entirely. It may be proper to conceal their engagement, if they are engaged, from Mrs. Smith, but that is no excuse for their concealing it from us.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Concealing it from us! This is strange indeed, when your eyes have been reproaching them every day for their incautiousness.

ELINOR. I want no proof of their affection, but of their engagement I do.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. I am perfectly satisfied in both.

ELINOR. Yet not one syllable has been said on the subject by either of them.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. I have not wanted syllables where actions have spoken so plainly. Has not his behavior to Marianne and to all of us, for at least the last fortnight, declared that he loved and considered her as his future wife, and that he felt for us the attachment of the nearest relation?

ELINOR. Their silence Mother, outweighs all circumstances.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. You think him indifferent?

ELINOR. No, I cannot think that. We must wait and watch. I have never considered this matter as certain. If we find they correspond, then every fear of mine will be removed.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Ungracious girl! Is he not a man of honor and feeling? Can he be deceitful?

ELINOR. I hope not. I believe not. But I cannot answer this question Mother. Knowing that by declining your invitation he should seem to act an ungenerous, even suspicious part by our family...why in such a case could he not take the honorable action of a frank and open avowal of his difficulties? Why Mother?

(They stand looking at each other for a moment. MRS. DASHWOOD is silent.)

ELINOR. Why do you not ask Marianne at once whether she is or is not engaged to Willoughby? From you, so indulgent and kind a mother, the question could not give offense.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. I would not ask such a question for the world. Supposing it possible that they are not engaged, what distress would not such an inquiry inflict! I should never deserve her confidence again.

ELINOR. Mother, oh Mother forgive me, but your generosity is overstrained. Common sense, common care, common prudence are all sunk in your romantic delicacy. Forgive me.

(MRS. DASHWOOD, hurt, leaves the room. ELINOR, still angry, stands, fists clenched at her sides.)

(ELINOR sits in a chair reading. MARIANNE enters and moves downstage looking out the window. The bright sunshine pours in on her. ELINOR looks up, taken by her fresh beauty.)

ELINOR. The weather is very bright, will you walk with me sister?

MARIANNE. No. Thanks. Has the mail come?

ELINOR. It has.

MARIANNE. And?

(ELINOR shakes her head. MRS. DASHWOOD enters with a book.)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. We have never finished *Hamlet*, Marianne; our dear Willoughby went away before we could get through it. Shall we read it together?

MARIANNE. (*Wryly:*) To hear Ophelia's drowning you mean?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Well, we will put it by, that when he comes again; but it may be months before that happens.

MARIANNE. Months! No—nor many weeks.

(*There is a knock. MARIANNE is looking out the window.*)

Good heavens. Elinor, it is Edward Ferrars!

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Here at the cottage.

(*Looks at ELINOR.*)

How very wonderful indeed!

(*She goes to the door—offstage.*)

MARIANNE. (*To ELINOR:*) He is the only person in the world who can at this moment be forgiven for not being Willoughby.

(ELINOR, *embarrassed, smiles.*)

Your smile is happiness for me, sister.

(EDWARD enters.)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Just see whom I have brought.

(MARIANNE flies into his surprised arms.)

MARIANNE. Dearest Edward. Our surprise and happiness are both complete. How did you find the cottage? Have you come direct from London?

EDWARD. From London, no, I have been in Devonshire a fortnight.

(*Bows a little stiffly to ELINOR.*)

Miss Dashwood.

ELINOR. Mr. Ferrars.

MARIANNE. A fortnight! And not been to see us?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. (*A low warning*;) Marianne.

EDWARD. I have stayed with some friends near Plymouth.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Marianne.

ELINOR. Have you been lately in Sussex?

EDWARD. I was at Norland a month ago.

MARIANNE. And how does dear, dear Norland look?

ELINOR. Dear, dear Norland probably looks much as it always does at this time of year. Woods and walks thickly covered with dead leaves.

MARIANNE. How I love them, driven in showers about me by the wind!

ELINOR. It is not everyone who has your passion for dead leaves.

MARIANNE. There is one who does.

EDWARD. You have grown a little more grave than you were.

MARIANNE. Nay, Edward, you need not reproach me. You are not yourself in spirits.

EDWARD. Gaiety was never part of my character.

ELINOR. I have often fancied people to be so much more gay or grave or ingenious or stupid than they really are, without giving myself time to deliberate or judge.

MARIANNE. But Elinor, I thought our judgments were given to us merely to be subservient to those of our neighbors?

EDWARD. You have not been able, then, to bring your sister over to your plan of general civility?

ELINOR. Quite to the contrary.

EDWARD. (*To ELINOR*;) My judgment is with you, but my practice is more as your sister sees it. I never wish to offend but I am so foolishly shy, that I often seem negligent.

ELINOR. Marianne has not shyness to excuse her inattentions.

EDWARD. She knows her worth too well for false shame. Shyness is only the effect of a sense of inferiority in some way or other. Were it not true, I would not be shy.

MARIANNE. But you would still be reserved of feelings, and that is worse.

EDWARD. Are my feelings not known, Marianne?

MARIANNE. Not at all.

EDWARD. (*Coloring:*) I do not understand you...my feelings reserved? I have feelings I assure you.

ELINOR. Marianne calls everyone reserved who does not speak as quickly and admire what she admires as rapturously as herself.

(*A pause.*)

EDWARD. It is my great pleasure to reacquaint myself with all your family. You must pardon me, I think, I must go to the village to see to my horses.

ELINOR. Must you?

EDWARD. I shall be back again if I am allowed.

MARIANNE. Not simply allowed, but commanded.

ELINOR. Marianne.

EDWARD. Good afternoon.

(*Takes MARIANNE's hand.*)

MARIANNE. I never saw you wear a ring before, Edward. Is that Fanny's hair displayed in it? But I should have thought her hair had been darker? (*ELINOR and EDWARD's eyes meet briefly.*)

EDWARD. Yes, it is my sister's hair. The setting casts it differently in the light.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. I will show you out.

MARIANNE. (*Softly so as not to be heard as they go:*) Or was it yours Elinor?

(*The scene finishes. The chair is struck. EDWARD and MRS. DASHWOOD exit. MARIANNE and ELINOR are handed parasols and begin to walk. The light brightens.*)

ELINOR. You are sure your ankle feels strong enough for the walk back from town?

MARIANNE. It is well completely. (*Mischievously:*) And perhaps we may see Edward.

MRS. JENNINGS. (*She is trailed by a young lady, prettily dressed.*) Yoo hoo! Yoo hoo, dear Miss Dashwoods!

(*ELINOR and MARIANNE halt.*)

A treat! A treat, I promise you, for all concerned! Allow me, Miss Elinor Dashwood, Miss Marianne Dashwood, to introduce Miss Lucy

Steele. She is a relative of mine come down for a visit. I hope and believe you will like each other enormously.

LUCY. It is a very great pleasure.

(*ELINOR and MARIANNE curtsy.*)

MRS. JENNINGS. Oh, you are very agreeable girls indeed, the sweetest girls in the world. You will find Lucy, I am sure to be particularly civil. Marianne, my dear, will you give me one moment...

MARIANNE. But...but...

MRS. JENNINGS. ...to advise me on a bonnet requiring my attention? I shall re-deliver you in an instant.

(*MARIANNE and MRS. JENNINGS exit.*)

LUCY. What a sweet woman Mrs. Jennings is.

ELINOR. She has been more than kind to our family.

LUCY. And how do you like Devonshire, Miss Dashwood? I am told you were very sorry to leave Sussex.

ELINOR. Indeed my family had been established there some time.

LUCY. And had you a great many smart beaux there? There are not, I suppose, too many in this part of the world. I only mention of it as I hope you will not find it dull in Barton.

ELINOR. I am sure there are genteel young men in Devonshire.

LUCY. I hope I do not offend?

ELINOR. On the contrary, you are very pleasant and conversable.

LUCY. You are very kind and I like you enormously. You will think my question now an odd one, I dare say, but pray, are you personally acquainted with your sister-in-law's mother, Mrs. Ferrars?

ELINOR. (*Greatly surprised:*) I have never seen Mrs. Ferrars.

LUCY. I am sure you think me very strange to be inquiring about her in such a way, but perhaps...there might be reasons. I should be very glad of your advice how to manage in such an uncomfortable situation as I am in.

ELINOR. And I am sorry I cannot assist. But really I never understood that you were at all connected with that family.

LUCY. (*After a moment:*) I am sure I need not have the smallest fear in trusting you even on slight acquaintance, I am, dear Miss Dashwood, so without a confidante. Mrs. Ferrars is certainly nothing to me at present but the time may come...when we will be very intimately connected.

ELINOR. Do you mean you are acquainted with Mr. Robert Ferrars, the brother? Can you be?

LUCY. No, not Mr. Robert Ferrars, I never saw him in my life; but to his elder brother Edward.

ELINOR. I am...surprised.

LUCY. I dare say you are, for it was always meant to be a great secret kept so by me to this hour.

ELINOR. (*Cautiously:*) You are engaged then?

LUCY. Four years. Our acquaintance however is of many years date. He was four years with my uncle as a pupil. It was there our engagement was formed, though not 'til he had quitted as a student. I was very unwilling to enter into it without the approbation of his mother, but I loved him too well to be so prudent as I ought to have been.

ELINOR. Engaged to Mr. Edward Ferrars! I confess myself so totally surprised, that really...surely there must be some mistake of person or name. We cannot mean the same Edward Ferrars.

LUCY. The very same! Our first care has been to keep the matter secret.

ELINOR. (*A firm voice:*) Four years you have been engaged.

LUCY. Yes; and heaven knows how long we may have to wait. Poor Edward! It puts him quite out of heart. I have only...

(*Fishes out a small picture:*)

This dear miniature of his dear face.

(*She hands it to ELINOR.*)

I am sure of your faithfully keeping this secret for it must not reach his mother; she will oppose us, I fear, for I have no fortune.

ELINOR. Your situation is indeed a perilous one.

LUCY. We hardly meet above twice a year, Miss Dashwood. I am sure I wonder my heart is not quite broke. Sometimes I think to break the matter off entirely but I have not the resolution for it. What would you advise me to do in such a case?

ELINOR. Pardon me, but I can give you no advice under such circumstances. It is too much for an indifferent person.

LUCY. (*Piqued:*) 'Tis because you are an indifferent person that I ask you. (*Regarding her:*) If you could be biased in any respect by your own feelings, your opinions would not be worth having.

ELINOR. Your own judgment must direct you.

LUCY. (*Disappointed:*) To be sure.

(*Taking out a letter.*)

Poor fellow, he writes in such wretched spirits. I did give him a lock of my hair set in a ring when he was a Longstaple last. Perhaps you have noticed the ring when you saw him.

ELINOR. (*Concealing her distress:*) I did.

(*MARIANNE reappears. ELINOR sees her.*)

MRS. JENNINGS. Here we are, Elinor.

ELINOR. I must go.

(*LUCY touches her arm in what she hopes is a shared intimacy, and moves off, waving away goodbye to MARIANNE.*)

MARIANNE. Sister, will you come?

ELINOR. Yes. Yes, of course.

MARIANNE. With Mrs. Jennings, I have seen bonnets enough for a lifetime. Had Miss Steele thoughts or feelings?

ELINOR. (*After a moment:*) What?

MARIANNE. Miss. Steele?

ELINOR. Oh. Yes. She did, yes.

End of Act I

ACT II

(ELINOR and MARIANNE on the bare stage. They are joined by MRS. JENNINGS.)

MRS. JENNINGS. I believe there to be nothing so fine for a lady's complexion as an airing directly after a first snow. You are good girls to be out in the weather.

MARIANNE. It has the pleasure of beauty but it is, I think, a desolate beauty.

MRS. JENNINGS. It is January and my thoughts turn to London and my little house in Portman square. I shall go very soon indeed and...

(She surveys them.)

I shall take you both with me.

ELINOR. (After a moment's surprise:) We are grateful, Mrs. Jennings...

MARIANNE. We are!

ELINOR. ...for such a generous offer...

MARIANNE. Please.

ELINOR. ...but we cannot think of leaving our mother at that time of year.

MRS. JENNINGS. Oh, Lord! I am sure your mother will not object to it; for I have had such luck in getting my own children off my hands that I shall have both of you married before the snow melts.

(MRS. DASHWOOD enters.)

May I steal your daughters away and dispose of them in London?

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Yes, do. It is an offer of unexplained generosity.

ELINOR. Mother...

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. (Firmly.) I would find any objection quite nonsensical.

(MARIANNE claps her hands. ELINOR is impenetrable. MRS. DASHWOOD exits. MRS. JENNINGS takes the girls' hands as if showing them the house.)

MRS. JENNINGS. So, that brings us back to the entrance hall of my dear little house. You shall be as snug as mice here. Portman Square shall suit you perfectly.

MARIANNE. (Hugging her;) Dear Mrs. Jennings, it is quite perfection. But may I run up to the room you showed me? I must write a letter with no delay.

MRS. JENNINGS. Of course, dear.

(Patting her:)

The very thing.

ELINOR. Our mother will be glad to hear of our safe arrival.

MARIANNE. I am not going to write to my mother, Elinor.

(She goes.)

MRS. JENNINGS. *(Blandly:)* What ever can she mean?

(A knock. MRS. JENNINGS and ELINOR turn toward it. MARIANNE re-enters.)

MARIANNE. *(Eagerly:)* Who is it?

(COLONEL BRANDON enters.)

MRS. JENNINGS. Oh, Colonel, I am monstrous glad to see you, but how came you to know that I should be in town today?

COLONEL BRANDON. I had the pleasure of hearing it at Mr. Palmer's, where I have been dining.

MRS. JENNINGS. Well Colonel, I have brought two young ladies with me. Miss Elinor, of course, and your friend Miss Marianne, which you will not be sorry to hear. I do not know what you and Mr. Willoughby will do between you about her. Ay, it is a grand thing to be young and handsome.

(MARIANNE turns and flees.)

Well there's a fine thing! Young people cannot recognize the good.

(She exits after MARIANNE.)

Marianne, dear girl...

(She is gone.)

COLONEL BRANDON. Is you sister ill?

ELINOR. She is. Yes. In a way.

COLONEL BRANDON. I am sorry to hear it.

ELINOR. She is the victim of expectations only. Pray Colonel let me tell you of our journey.

(They walk off together. The lights change, allowing us to know time has passed. MARIANNE and ELINOR enter. MRS. JENNINGS is seated, sorting through her mail.)

MARIANNE. Oh Mrs. Jennings, we have hurried back.

MRS. JENNINGS. My dear girls.

MARIANNE. Do you approve my hat? I believe my sister to be doubtful.

MRS. JENNINGS. Suits you deliciously. But you look fine in all.

MARIANNE. (*Seeing the mail.*) Has a letter been left for me since we went out?

MRS. JENNINGS. There is no letter, but...

MARIANNE. Can we be quite sure of it? No servant, no porter has left any letter or note?

MRS. JENNINGS. A note, no...

MARIANNE. It is so very odd.

MRS. JENNINGS. However Mr. Willoughby, I found, had left his card on the table when I came in from my morning's drive.

MARIANNE. Good God! He has been here while we were out. What a perfect misfortune!

MRS. JENNINGS. (*Pats her, and exits.*) Depend on it, sweet child, he will call again tomorrow.

ELINOR. You correspond then?

MARIANNE. A little, not much.

ELINOR. You have no confidence in me, Marianne.

MARIANNE. Nay, Elinor, this reproach from you—you who have confidence in no one.

ELINOR. Me! (*In some confusion.*) Indeed Marianne, I have nothing to tell.

MARIANNE. (*With energy.*) Nor I, our situations then are alike. We neither of us have anything to tell; you because you never do, and I because I conceal nothing.

(*She exits. COLONEL BRANDON enters. He and ELINOR walk.*)

COLONEL BRANDON. It is kind of you to give me this time, Miss Elinor.

ELINOR. I believe kindness to have nothing to do with it.

COLONEL BRANDON. Your sister seemed out of spirits, I...

(*He stops himself.*)

ELINOR. (*Prompting him.*) You have something to communicate, Colonel Brandon.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!



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