

Sense and Sensibility

Perusal
Only

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based on Jane Austen's
Sense and Sensibility

Great Stage Publishing
11702-B Grant Rd., #602
Cypress, TX 77429
www.greatstagepublishing.com
greatstage@comcast.net

Cast in order of appearance:

ELINOR Dashwood– 19

MARIANNE Dashwood– 17

MOTHER (Mrs. Henry Dashwood, Mary)– “hardly 40”

John DASHWOOD (Henry’s son, half-brother to Elinor, Marianne & Margaret)

FATHER (Mr. Henry Dashwood)

FANNY (Mrs. John Dashwood, Edward & Robert’s sister, Mrs. Ferrars’s daughter)

MARGARET Dashwood– 13

SERVANT (at Norland)

EDWARD Ferrars (brother to Fanny and Robert) – 24

SIR JOHN Middleton (owner of Barton Park)– 40

LADY MIDDLETON (Mrs. Jennings’ older daughter)– 29

MRS. JENNINGS (Lady Middleton & Charlotte Palmer’s mother)– 55

Colonel BRANDON– 35

MAID (in Barton Cottage)

John WILLOUGHBY– 23

GENTLEMAN

THOMAS (the Dashwood’s man of all work)

CHARLOTTE Palmer (Mrs. Jennings’ younger daughter)– 24

MR. PALMER– 26

NANCY Steele– 24

LUCY Steele– 21

MARTHA (Mrs. Jennings’ housekeeper)

FOOTMAN (in Mrs. Jennings’ house)

MISS GREY– “of age”

MOLLY (Mrs. Jennings maid)

MRS. FERRARS (Fanny, Edward, and Robert’s mother)

FOOTMAN (in the Dashwood’s London residence)

ROBERT Ferrars (Edward’s younger brother)– 23

Using servants for scene changes, and adding guests to the party and pre-excursion meeting can expand the cast size, while double casting can reduce it. For specific doubling suggestions, see the end of the script. The Middleton children are voice-only and not included on the cast list. The above list has 15 female and 13 male roles, but the servant only have a few lines each.

Scenes:

ACT ONE		ACT TWO	
1. A Change in Circumstance	1-9	8. Old Friends	63-68
2. Elinor & Edward	9-16	9. Revelations	68-77
3. A New Circle	16-23	10. Endless Tea	77-88
4. Marianne & Willoughby	23-33	11. A Party	88-93
5. Departures	33-47	12. An Engagement	93-100
6. A Flurry of Visitors	47-58	13. Courting Destruction	100-109
7. An Offer	58-61	14. Sense & Sensibility	110-117

Settings:

Norland, Sussex
 Barton Cottage and Barton Park, Devon
 Allenhurst Manor, Devon
 London
 Cleveland, Devon

The events of the play occur from 1809-1811.

Music:

See end of script for lyrics and music to *Polwart on the Green*. Possible piano duets for scene 14 include Schubert's *Fantasie in G Minor* (the second section), Haydn's *Il maestro e lo scolare* or *Partite in 2 movements*, and the Rondo of Beethoven's *Sonata in D Major, Op. 6*. If you are interested in trying another piano duet or 4-hands piece, please make sure it is both romantic and would be available in southern England in 1811.

Language:

The oldest unmarried daughter in the family is Miss Surname, while all younger unmarried daughters are Miss First Name. For example, Elinor is Miss Dashwood and Marianne and Margaret are Miss Marianne and Miss Margaret. There were different rules for sons.

SCENE ONE – A Change In Circumstance

(ELINOR and MARIANNE greet the entering audience with comments such as “Good evening,” “We’re so pleased you came,” “I trust you had a pleasant ride here,” “The weather is so delightful/frightful/changeable tonight,” “The view from those seats is quite good,” etc. MARIANNE can be enthusiastic about some picturesque feature outside, such as the moon or a tree or a view, while any queries about duration or restrooms are referred to ELINOR. The play begins.)

MARIANNE

Oh good! Where shall we start?

ELINOR

At the beginning.

MARIANNE

That’s not how to tell a story at all.

ELINOR

Nowadays perhaps not, but that is still how to tell a story people understand.

MARIANNE

Go ahead, then, tell our story as if it is only a collection of dry facts. But it will be boring. *(To audience)* She’ll leave out the good parts.

ELINOR

Such as?

MARIANNE

Stories ought to arouse strong feelings in the hearer’s breast. Romance. Romance is always interesting, especially romance thwarted by difficulties. We should start with a romance, or a catastrophe. Or both!

ELINOR

Marianne, this is our story, it is about us. A catastrophe.

MARIANNE

Well then, how about a romance?

ELINOR

I think we should give a true account of the events of our lives.

MARIANNE

You make it sound so dull. And where does a “true account” begin? At birth?

MOTHER

(entering, calling to DASHWOOD who enters opposite) He would see you now, John.

MOTHER (*cont*)
He's very ill. Please, don't tire him.

DASHWOOD
Of course not. (*MOTHER guides DASHWOOD to bed and dying FATHER. MOTHER exits.*) I am here, father.

ELINOR
With father?

FATHER
Come closer.

MARIANNE
With mother's soul in agony and father, as always, thinking of something else?

ELINOR
He's thinking of his inheritance. He's trying to provide for us, Marianne.

MARIANNE
He's called for John, Elinor.

FATHER
John—

DASHWOOD
Yes, father. I'm here. I'm sorry Fanny couldn't come.

FATHER
John—

DASHWOOD
She has to stay home with Harry because—

FATHER
John—

DASHWOOD
He has a slight congestion and Fanny is so tender-hearted that she—

FATHER
John!

DASHWOOD
Yes?

FATHER

Take care of my wife and your sisters.

DASHWOOD

Yes, father.

FATHER

(failing) You must...take care of them...

DASHWOOD

Of course, father.

FATHER

...financially.

DASHWOOD

Financially?

FATHER

(fading) Promise me.

DASHWOOD

I will. I will look out for them. But I expect you'll be up and about in no time and—

MOTHER

(entering) John? He's tired now.

DASHWOOD

(exiting) You rest easy, father, and leave everything in my hands.

(The bedroom and FATHER disappear. DASHWOOD is with FANNY who is unpacking boxes as they move into Norland.)

FANNY

Yes, but what did you promise him, exactly?

DASHWOOD

With father's death, I'm gaining four thousand pounds a year, Fanny, plus the remaining half of my mother's fortune. I'll give my sisters one thousand pounds each, as a present.

FANNY

Half-sisters.

DASHWOOD

Yes. One thousand pounds is enough to make them completely easy, I think. And of course I'll let them stay here at Norland as long as they need to.

(MOTHER, followed by ELINOR, MARIANNE and MARGARET, enters packing.)

MOTHER

I won't stay in this house one more day with that woman and her ungracious— No. It's her house now; we're here on her sufferance. We must all go at once, forever.

MARIANNE

Leave Norland?

MOTHER

It's our home no longer. She's poisoned it.

ELINOR

(trying to send MARGARET out) Please see if Cook has finished the tarts, Margaret.

MARGARET

(to MOTHER) But I want to stay.

MARIANNE

Our hearts are here, Mother, we can't leave! Even Margaret thinks so.

MARGARET

I want to stay to hear the conversation.

ELINOR

The tarts, Margaret. Tell Cook I said you could have one.

(MARGARET exits.)

ELINOR *(con't)*

Mother, we must be sensible about this. If we leave Norland, where will we go?

FANNY

(continuing her conversation with DASHWOOD) It is only one thousand pounds each girl, true, but that is three thousand pounds total from our Harry. I can't believe your father asked you to give away all your money to your half sisters and ruin our poor little Harry's expectations.

DASHWOOD

No, not ruin but— It was my father's last request.

FANNY

Ten to one he was light-headed at the time, begging you to give away half your fortune from your own child to people not even full relations.

DASHWOOD

But my dear Fanny, I can't neglect them. Something must be done for them.

FANNY

But that something need not be three thousand pounds. What would they do with such extravagance? After all, they will be living quietly.

DASHWOOD

Then five hundred pounds each will be adequate and will fulfill my obligations?

MOTHER

(continuing conversation with ELINOR and MARIANNE) There are properties in the area—smaller properties than Norland, but suitable.

MARIANNE

I don't think I can bear to leave Norland's trees behind us. Who will enjoy them as they should be enjoyed once we are gone?

MOTHER

As John is your brother, I'm sure he will welcome your visiting the trees. I can leave all of it behind now that she is here.

ELINOR

But where will we move to?

MOTHER

There is the vacant estate at Suffields.

ELINOR

It is too large for our income, much too large.

FANNY

(to DASHWOOD) Five hundred pounds each? That is beyond generous. They will each receive three thousand pounds on their mother's death, will they not?

DASHWOOD

Yes.

FANNY

And they may marry....

DASHWOOD

That is so. Marianne is quite handsome.

FANNY

Then it strikes me that they'll be living very well on the interest of that three thousand

FANNY (*con't*)
pounds alone and don't require any additional money at all.

DASHWOOD
Hmm, then, since their income is adequate, it would probably be better to give an annuity to their mother while she lives, to help my sisters with their little needs, fancy clothes or, or music or books, or the like.

FANNY
Half sisters.

DASHWOOD
Yes. One hundred a year should do it.

MOTHER
(*to ELINOR and MARIANNE*) There is a moderately sized house next to the vicarage.

MARIANNE
The one with the goats behind it?

MARGARET
(*returning with a tart*) Oh, I love those goats!

MARIANNE
When have you been near those goats?

MARGARET
I'm not telling you.

ELINOR
That house requires at least six servants to run. It is beyond our means. Please, you have to be practical, dear.

FANNY
(*to DASHWOOD*) An annuity can be a difficult thing. Imagine what is necessary to dole out that money every rent day. You must first find them wherever they move to, then secure the funds, and then deliver the money. And they'll come to expect it as their right, so will be neither grateful nor frugal. And what if their mother lives fifteen more years?

DASHWOOD
She can't!

FANNY
She is hardly forty. People with annuities become stout and healthy and live forever. And then you can never call your money your own.

DASHWOOD

Yes, yes, I see, I see how it is. Then it will have to be that I fulfill my promise with an occasional present. Fifty pounds once or twice a year; nothing they could become dependent on.

MOTHER

(to daughters) Of course I realize we must reduce our expenditures, but six servants—

ELINOR

Are beyond our means.

MARGARET

I like goats.

ELINOR

Margaret, please go clean your face.

MARIANNE

You look like a goat.

(MARGARET exits.)

MOTHER

Your father told me, just before he left us forever...

MARIANNE

Don't cry, please, or I will begin, too.

MOTHER

(to MARIANNE) I will be brave. *(to both)* Your father told me on his deathbed that he asked John to care for us.

MARIANNE

Then is our income problem solved?

ELINOR

Has John mentioned this to you?

MOTHER

Not yet. There's been so little time.

ELINOR

Has he offered you any money?

MARIANNE

He always talks about how expensive housekeeping is, now that he has inherited.

MOTHER

It's all that woman, buying things left and right to cram the house with. Her taste in furnishings is—and she's eyeing my china.

MARIANNE

And my pianoforte, and Fanny doesn't even play pianoforte.

ELINOR

I think we mustn't depend on money from John.

MOTHER

But I can't stay here. I can't.

FANNY

(to DASHWOOD) I am convinced your father never meant for you to give them any money at all, but to help them look for a small house and assist them to move their things. In a small house, you see, they'll have so few needs—no carriage or horses, hardly any servants at all. I expect they'll do no entertaining so there will be no need for “fancy clothes.” Well, just think how comfortable they'll be living on their combined interest. Five hundred pounds a year! I don't know how they'll spend even half of it.

DASHWOOD

Yes, you are perfectly right. Some little gifts of furniture and to help them move is what father meant, I'm sure of it.

FANNY

Certainly, although they will be moving to a small house and their mother has all that plate and linen already. And that pianoforte. Too much for a small house. But all we can do is mention the appropriateness of leaving the grander items here, those that won't fit into their new circumstances, and trust to her conscience to do what is right.

MOTHER

(to ELINOR and MARIANNE) We must leave. I will send inquiries to all my relations no matter how distant, to see if they know of a suitable house for us.

MARIANNE

What if we must move far away and leave our friends behind?

MOTHER

If we cannot afford somewhere in the neighborhood then we must go elsewhere. Our true friends will always visit us.

MARIANNE

Elinor!

ELINOR

I will make inquiries too, mother. There is no need for you to upset yourself over this.

MOTHER

It is that woman that is upsetting me. Norland is uninhabitable with her here!

SCENE TWO – Elinor & Edward

(SERVANT leads on EDWARD, then exits.)

FANNY

Edward! At last.

DASHWOOD

Ah, Edward. *(to MOTHER)* May I present Mr. Edward Ferrars, Fanny's eldest brother.

FANNY

(to EDWARD) You must see our new home and estate, and tell me the news from town. I will introduce you to the worthy neighbors; there are a few people worth knowing, even out here in the country, and you can report to mother on how we are settling in here.

EDWARD

(indicating the Dashwoods) Fanny.

DASHWOOD

Allow me to do the honors, Fanny. *(to EDWARD)* Mrs. John Dashwood, my step-mother, you know, Miss Elinor Dashwood, Miss Marianne Dashwood, and Miss Margaret Dashwood.

MARIANNE

She's around here somewhere. *(calling)* Margaret?

DASHWOOD

Mr. Edward Ferrars.

ELINOR

I'm pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. Ferrars.

FANNY

How long will your obligations in town allow you to stay with us this time, Edward?

EDWARD

Obligations?

FANNY

He has such a broad acquaintance and so many possibilities open to him. Mother—

DASHWOOD
That's Mrs. Ferrars.

FANNY
—is positive she will see him in Parliament before much longer.

EDWARD
Fanny. Please.

MARGARET
(entering, to MARIANNE) What?

MARIANNE
Make your curtsy. This is Mr. Edward Ferrars. He's Fanny's brother. He's come for a visit.

EDWARD
Yes.

ELINOR
Yes.

(Separately, MOTHER embroiders, MARIANNE plays piano, FANNY writes letters, DASHWOOD lounges/sleeps, and MARGARET plays games from one person to the next, all while ELINOR and EDWARD are getting to know one another—walking, talking, drawing—EDWARD becoming less shy all the time.)

EDWARD
(to ELINOR) My mother and Fanny expect greatness of me though Fanny, I suspect, would be happy if only I drove a barouche.

ELINOR
And what do you expect of yourself?

EDWARD
What I want isn't important.

ELINOR
Then you will be happy as a great man of the day, a public orator or—

EDWARD
No! No. My wants are simple—domestic comfort, a quiet private life.... I've always thought I'd like to be in the clergy, in a cozy village.

ELINOR
That sounds lovely.

EDWARD

Because I only have a small inheritance, it is impossible. I am entirely dependent on my mother, and she is determined that both my brother, Robert, and I marry women of great fortune and high rank. She won't hear of the clergy.

ELINOR

Mothers often...I'm not quite sure how to say this.

EDWARD

Please feel free to— However you say it, I am convinced I will understand you.

ELINOR

Mothers have their own ideas about what will make us happy, but in the end our true happiness is their greatest concern.

EDWARD

I believe that is so in your case. Will you show me your drawings, Miss Dashwood?

(ELINOR shows EDWARD her drawings while she talks to MOTHER. These scenes, simultaneously on stage, are at different times in "real" life.)

MOTHER

I know it's too soon to expect replies to our letters, but...that woman!

ELINOR

Have you noticed how unlike Edward and Fanny are to each other? I can scarcely believe they are closely related, they are so different.

MOTHER

I haven't been paying attention, but he is quiet. It is enough to say he is unlike Fanny for me to love him already.

ELINOR

I think you will like him when you know more of him.

MOTHER

Like him! I can feel no approbation inferior to love. I will love him.

ELINOR

You may esteem him.

MOTHER

I cannot separate esteem from love, so do not try to dissuade me.

ELINOR

I would never alter you in any way, mama, even if I could.

(MOTHER watches ELINOR and EDWARD. MARIANNE finishes playing.)

MARIANNE

It is your turn to read, Edward. No, not that. Read the Cowper (*pronounced "Cooper"*), page forty-three, "Survivor sole, and hardly such, of all/That once lived here."

EDWARD

(*badly, volume fading while still "reading"*) "Survivor sole, and hardly such, of all That once lived here, thy brethren, at my birth (since which I number threescore winters past), A shatter'd veteran, hollow-trunk'd perhaps, As now, and with excoriate forks deform, Relics of ages! Could a mind, imbued With truth from heaven, created thing adore, I might with reverence kneel, and worship thee.

It seems idolatry with some excuse, When our forefather druids in their oaks Imagined sanctity. The conscience, yet Unpurified by an authentic act Of amnesty, the meed of blood divine, Loved not the light, but, gloomy, into gloom Of thickest shades, like Adam after taste Of fruit proscribed, as to a refuge, fled."

(MARIANNE and MOTHER talk together from EDWARD's "Relics of ages!")

MARIANNE

Ugh! To hear those beautiful lines which have almost driven me wild pronounced with such dreadful indifference and calmness!

MOTHER

But you *would* give him Cowper.

MARIANNE

If he cannot be animated by Cowper!

MOTHER

He can still be an affectionate brother to you and Margaret.

MARIANNE

Brother? Elinor? Elinor and Edward?

MOTHER

In a few months, Elinor will be settled for life. We shall miss her, but she will be happy.

MARIANNE

With Edward? Is it possible?

(ELINOR sketches EDWARD, fixing his pose as he gently flirts with her, while she talks to MARIANNE. Again, the two scenes are simultaneous.)

MARIANNE *(con't)*

What a pity that Edward has no taste for drawing.

ELINOR

Because he does not draw himself does not mean he has no taste for it. He has a fine natural taste. If you thought he had no taste you could never be civil to him. No one who knows him could doubt his goodness or his sense. His sentiments, opinions, knowledge, taste in literature, imagination and observations are superior, and expressed with a sweetness of countenance rare in men. Only his shyness conceals this and—

MARIANNE

I shall very soon think him handsome at this rate. You do love him!

ELINOR

I like him. I greatly esteem him.

MARIANNE

Esteem him! Cold-hearted, worse than cold-hearted, ashamed to feel! Use those words again and I will leave.

ELINOR

(laughing) Then believe my feelings are deeper than I can express.

MARIANNE

That is what I thought. And when may I call him “brother?”

ELINOR

Marianne, I know he prefers me but no more. He isn't independent and his mother, who controls his fortune, does not sound amiable.

MARIANNE

You are not engaged? Really? You truly are not engaged? Oh, he is slow. Then you will be soon. He loves you, anyone can see that.

(MARGARET and EDWARD play near ELINOR while FANNY and MOTHER watch.)

FANNY

(to MOTHER) I see you've packed the china.

MOTHER

I trust you've enough room for your plate and other new purchases now?

FANNY

I have room elsewhere, and the china fits so nicely into the design of Norland it seems to belong here.

MOTHER

Many things that seem to belong here don't actually.

FANNY

Yes. Such as Edward. He is destined for great things. Our mother, Mrs. Ferrars, is resolute that both Edward and Robert marry well, and our mother is a formidable force. I know great danger attends on any young woman who attempts to draw Edward in. He is not to be snared by a female of no name or a fortune-hunter, for instance; our mother would never tolerate such a misalliance.

MOTHER

I am afraid what your mother does and does not tolerate little concerns me.

(While ELINOR and EDWARD walk together, pointing out sights, clearly in love, SERVANT delivers a letter to DASHWOOD, waking him.)

DASHWOOD

Hmmm, what?

SERVANT

The post, sir.

DASHWOOD

Thank you. *(SERVANT exits. DASHWOOD examines the letter sleepily.)* This is for Mrs. Henry Dashwood.

FANNY

What is it?

DASHWOOD

I don't know. A letter from a relative, I think.

FANNY

(calling) Elinor.

ELINOR

(turning to her) Yes?

FANNY

John has a letter for your mother. Would you please take it to her?

ELINOR

Certainly.

(ELINOR takes letter from DASHWOOD to MOTHER, and stays for the reading.)

MARGARET

(to EDWARD) You like Elinor, don't you.

EDWARD

I like all of you, all the Dashwood ladies.

MARGARET

But you especially like Elinor.

EDWARD

You shouldn't go around saying things like that.

MARGARET

She likes you.

EDWARD

(to self) She does. She does.

MOTHER

It's a letter from Sir John Middleton of Barton Park, in Devonshire. He is offering us a cottage. Elinor, look.

ELINOR

(scanning letter) Yes, we can afford this.

MOTHER

Then we will leave right away. *(to FANNY and DASHWOOD)* Fanny and John, we have obtained a cottage and will be leaving as soon as possible.

JOHN

I hope you will be close to Norland so you may visit often.

MOTHER

No, we will be in Devonshire, four miles north of Exeter. Even though it is but a cottage I hope to see many of my friends in it. Edward, we expect you there for a long visit shortly after we are settled. John and Fanny, you may visit us if you are ever in the area.

(There is a scurry of packing and getting ready to leave.)

DASHWOOD

(to FANNY) Their furnishings will have to be sent round by water. I won't be able to help them with moving at all.

FANNY

(to DASHWOOD) It is hard that such handsome china is leaving Norland when our income is so much more suited to it. *(They exit.)*

ELINOR

(to MOTHER) Three servants: two maids and a man. We should be able to manage that.

MARIANNE

(to MARGARET) When will we ever see our home again? Must we leave Norland forever? The noble trees, the picturesque views? *(She wanders off.)*

MARGARET

Fanny said she's going to cut all the trees down to make a lawn and a folly or a hermitage or something. Marianne! *(She exits after MARIANNE.)*

MOTHER

It will be a positive blessing to quit Norland and the misery of living here while that woman is mistress of this place. *(She exits to pack.)*

ELINOR

(to EDWARD) We are leaving now. You will come to visit us, won't you?

EDWARD

Yes. Of course.

(He takes her hand, drops it, takes it again and presses it, then leaves.)

SCENE THREE – A New Circle

(MARIANNE returns to ELINOR.)

ELINOR

(to audience) Even though it isn't easy to move house, with a great will to leave, we are soon on our way.

MARIANNE

(to audience) And with no help at all from John.

(MOTHER and ELINOR face MARIANNE and MARGARET as they circle the stage, traveling by carriage to Barton Park.)

MOTHER

A new neighborhood, a new life, new acquaintance....

MARGARET

(to ELINOR) Are you falling asleep?

MARIANNE

She was fussing over the packing until late last night.

ELINOR

(yawns, to MOTHER) Excuse me.

MOTHER

Not at all, dear. Why don't you sleep for a bit.

(ELINOR does. MARGARET plays with the wind out the window.)

MARIANNE

When did Edward say he will visit?

MOTHER

I'm sure he'll come to us soon.

MARIANNE

He didn't tell you then? Nor me, even though I pressed him, nor Elinor, I suspect. Oh, he is amiable but there is something lacking. There is no fire or spirit in his eyes. He lacks taste, he's not a real connoisseur. I could not be happy with a man unless his taste in every point matched my own, unless he loved the same books that I love and the same music and felt it all as deeply as I do— Oh, mama, I require so much! Where shall I ever find such a man?

MOTHER

You are only seventeen; wait a few more years before giving up all hope. There are so many opportunities in London, I wish I could take you there.

MARIANNE

I am not interested in London, but in a true sympathy of souls. Is there no man anywhere for me?

MOTHER

We haven't searched Barton Park yet.

MARIANNE

Mama!

MARGARET

What? Are we almost there?

(Time passes, the carriage draws to a halt, they look at the cottage, stiffly get out, enter and explore, MARGARET more energetically but less thoroughly.)

MARGARET

It's so small.

MARIANNE

Look at the hills! Look at how well it is situated! It's magnificent.

MOTHER

It's cozy. I can build on to it nicely.

ELINOR

It will not be too expensive to heat. This will do.

MARGARET

I want the small room. May I have the small room, Mama?

(MOTHER and MARGARET exit to unpack. ELINOR and MARIANNE stay to talk with the audience.)

ELINOR

Barton Cottage, in Barton Park. Our new address.

MARIANNE

And our new neighbors: first impressions are invariably the most useful introduction.

ELINOR

That is untrue. What if, when you first meet someone, they have the toothache? Or they are shy?

MARIANNE

I hardly think that the case here. May I introduce our landlord, Sir John Middleton.

ELINOR

(to audience) Our cousin and landlord.

(A knock and SIR JOHN enters.)

SIR JOHN

Hello! I saw your carriage and I couldn't wait to welcome you to Barton Cottage. Welcome, welcome cousins! You must dine with us tonight, I won't hear any excuse. We'll be informal, only family and a particular friend who's a neighbor, too. None of the

SIR JOHN (*con't*)

local families can come round tonight—it's a full moon so they all have prior engagements—but they will come later this week because everyone wants to meet you. And the house is a few short steps up that path, a walk of minutes at most. I wish I had some smart young men for you tonight, but my wife's mother is with us and she is very cheerful and agreeable so it won't be so very dull for the young ladies. I know, I'll send my carriage to fetch you all so you don't even need to walk up to us this evening!

MARIANNE

Well? Is not his first impression true to his character? Then there is his wife, Lady Middleton.

(*LADY MIDDLETON enters and sits and the sisters sit with her. Pause.*)

ELINOR

The weather is particularly pleasant for this time of year. Is it usually so here?

LADY MIDDLETON

(*pause*) I don't know. You should ask Sir John. (*pause*)

ELINOR

We are discovering many pleasant walks in the area, with lovely prospects. Do you have a favorite walk, Lady Middleton?

LADY MIDDLETON

No. No. I don't go walking.

MARIANNE

(*pause*) I saw little William outside, pulling the cat's tail.

LADY MIDDLETON

He is such a clever child, so clever. The Darley's son is William's age and he doesn't run yet, but our William is fast enough to catch the cat. So clever.

MARIANNE

(*to audience*) And then there's Mrs. Jennings.

ELINOR

I know you have no tolerance for Mrs. Jennings. (*to audience*) She is Lady Middleton's mother.

MARIANNE

(*to audience*) She lives at Barton Park half the year, meddling.

(A parlor at Barton Park as first MRS. JENNINGS, and then BRANDON enter. BRANDON can't help but watch MARIANNE. MOTHER and MARGARET enter.)

MRS. JENNINGS

I'm sure you left your heart behind you in Sussex, Miss Dashwood. I see that blush. Husbands and beaux, husbands and beaux, it's all young girls think about, ain't that so Sir John?

SIR JOHN

There's plenty of young men here to make into beaux. Devonshire is not lacking in that regards, I assure you.

MRS. JENNINGS

But maybe she's left a particular beau behind. Maybe her heart is already claimed, eh?

MARIANNE

(distressed, to ELINOR and audience) Mrs. Jennings is a very familiar, vulgar woman.

ELINOR

(to MARIANNE) You are being too harsh, Marianne. Mrs. Jennings is...excitable but her comments don't bother me so they shouldn't bother you.

MARIANNE

Excess politeness in the face of such a person is dishonest.

ELINOR

I'll never convince you otherwise, will I.

MARIANNE

(affectionately) No, you won't.

ELINOR

Then I will introduce Colonel Brandon. *(to audience)* He is the particular friend Sir John mentioned earlier. He too is "excessively polite" and he is also one of our new neighbors.

(BRANDON has noticed MARIANNE's distress on ELINOR's behalf.)

BRANDON

(to ELINOR) How do you find your cottage, Miss Dashwood?

ELINOR

It admirably meets all our requirements. It already feels like home.

BRANDON

And does our countryside suit you as well?

ELINOR

Yes. Marianne has been exploring and has discovered some lovely walks in the vicinity.

MARIANNE

(to *ELINOR*) He is wearing a flannel waistcoat.

ELINOR

(to *MARIANNE*) Perhaps he has a cold.

MRS. JENNINGS

I know there's an admirer there somewhere, some beau who's caught your fancy, Miss Dashwood. What's his name? Come now, you cannot hide him from us forever, can she Miss Margaret.

MARGARET

I'm not supposed to tell, am I Elinor?

MARIANNE

There is nothing to tell. (to *MARGARET*) You have no right to repeat conjectures.

MARGARET

It's only what you told me yourself.

MRS. JENNINGS

And what was that? Oh, he's the curate of the parish near to Norland, am I right?

MARGARET

No, he has no profession at all.

MARIANNE

Margaret, you know this is all your own invention and that no such person exists.

MARGARET

Then he is very lately dead for such a man does exist and his name begins with an F.

BRANDON

(to *SIR JOHN*) Will the hard rain last night spoil your hunting?

SIR JOHN

No, no, flush the birds out more easily, I dare say.

MRS. JENNINGS

An F? An F?

BRANDON

(including MRS. JENNINGS) I understand you are organizing a dance to welcome the Dashwoods to the district. That must keep you busy.

MRS. JENNINGS

Not at all.

SIR JOHN

I do all the planning.

MRS. JENNINGS

I set the couples dancing as I know who has set their cap for whom. An F, you say?

BRANDON

The cold and damp give me a slight ache in the shoulder. Do you ever suffer similar effects? I have a flannel waistcoat for such times. I find it very helpful.

MOTHER

What a good idea. I wonder if a flannel shawl would work as well.

MRS. JENNINGS

(privately to ELINOR) It's good you have your Mister F because it's clear who Brandon has his eye on. Well, he is rich and Marianne handsome. *(to the company in general)* Isn't that so, Colonel Brandon?

BRANDON

Isn't what so?

MRS. JENNINGS

I see you developing a new interest in the neighborhood. And it would be a very good thing for a particular young lady. I can see her blushing.

MARIANNE

(to ELINOR) What is she talking about?

ELINOR

She imagines a match between you and Colonel Brandon.

MARIANNE

She does? *(pause)* What an unfeeling comment on his advanced years.

ELINOR

He is thirty-five, not an ancient.

MARIANNE

He wears flannel waistcoats.

(MARIANNE goes to MOTHER and MARGARET to arrange their exit.)

BRANDON

(to ELINOR) I'm afraid your sister finds the company less than congenial.

ELINOR

Marianne's opinions are all romantic.

BRANDON

I knew a lady who, in manner, greatly resembled your sister.

ELINOR

And did this lady outgrow her romanticism?

BRANDON

A series of unfortunate circumstances led to...an enforced change for her. Do not desire that for Miss Marianne.

SCENE FOUR – Marianne & Willoughby

(Servants clear the furniture. All exit but MARIANNE, MARGARET and ELINOR, who hands a shawl to MARIANNE and bundles MARGARET in another. It is afternoon, Barton Cottage.)

ELINOR

(to audience) Marianne is impatient to find romantic vistas near our new home.

MARIANNE

It's a lovely day for a walk.

ELINOR

He is not as you suppose him, Colonel Brandon. He—

MARIANNE

Oh, I don't want to talk about him anymore. Are you sure you won't come with us?

ELINOR

The clouds look threatening.

MARIANNE

There you're mistaken. The day will be lastingly fair and every threatening cloud will be drawn away from our ramble. And I won't wear a flannel waistcoat and neither will Margaret. *(Gives the shawls back to ELINOR.)* Come, Margaret. We will walk for at least two hours and stay warm through our own exertions.

(ELINOR exits as MARIANNE and MARGARET run, hike and climb the hills.)

MARIANNE *(con't)*

Two days of rain but then this. Is any felicity superior to this? Listen to the wind blow!

(Wind picks up and then a loud driving rain begins.)

MARGARET

Ahh! What do we do?

MARIANNE

There's nowhere closer than home. Let's run for it!

(They run. MARIANNE stumbles after MARGARET is already past, tries to get up, can't, calls for MARGARET but can't be heard. WILLOUGHBY enters with gun and game bag, drops them, and rushes to her aid.)

WILLOUGHBY

Do you need assistance? We have to get you out of the rain. Can you walk?

MARIANNE

No.

(WILLOUGHBY extends his hand to MARIANNE who puts her hand in his. He scoops her up. MARGARET enters.)

MARGARET

I couldn't stop! I'm sorry, Marianne, I couldn't stop.

WILLOUGHBY

(to MARGARET) Carry my things, I'll carry your sister. Lead the way. Quickly.

(MARGARET picks up his things and they exit. The rain stops.)

ELINOR

(entering, to audience, while setting up parlor for an invalid) Marianne sprains her ankle, and Mister Willoughby enters our lives.

MOTHER *(off)*

Is the parlor ready?

ELINOR

Yes mother.

SIR JOHN

(entering) So Willoughby's in the country again? Oh, that is good news. We'll have him at our dance!

(MOTHER and MARGARET enter, leading a limping MARIANNE.)

MOTHER

Do you know Mister Willoughby?

SIR JOHN

I've known him for years. He's to inherit Allenham Court—the old lady's a distant relation of his—so he visits every summer. Willoughby is a good shot, a bold rider, and he has the cleverest little black pointer, he's quite a dancer—

MARGARET

The pointer?

MARIANNE

He dances?

SIR JOHN

When your ankle mends, you'll see.

MARIANNE

He can't love dancing more than I do.

MARGARET

His dog dances?

SIR JOHN

I've seen Willoughby dance till four then he's up at eight to ride with the hounds.

MARGARET

Oh.

MARIANNE

Oh, that is how a man should be—eager, without moderation or fatigue, and given to—

SIR JOHN

I see how it goes. You've set your cap at Willoughby, and will never think of poor old Brandon again.

MARIANNE

I abhor every common phrase intended for wit and “setting one's cap” at a man is the most odious of all.

SIR JOHN

(laughing) Poor Brandon. Balls and beaux!

(SIR JOHN leaves, but then, from the entryway:)

SIR JOHN (*con't, off*)

There you are! We're having a dance in a fortnight and I expect you then. But you better come to the house before, or will I have to come here to see you?

WILLOUGHBY (*off*)

Sir John, I was planning to visit you, and the house, this very afternoon.

SIR JOHN (*off*)

Mrs. Jennings is anxious, sir, but this afternoon will suit her fine. I know where you'd rather be this morning.

(*WILLOUGHBY enters.*)

WILLOUGHBY

Good morning, ladies. May I more formally introduce myself? I am John Willoughby. I've come to ascertain if Miss Dashwood—

ELINOR

Marianne, sir.

MARIANNE

My sister, Elinor, is Miss Dashwood.

WILLOUGHBY

My apologies, Miss Dashwood. (*He bows to ELINOR.*)

ELINOR

Mister Willoughby. (*She curtsies to WILLOUGHBY.*)

WILLOUGHBY

I've come to reassure myself that Miss Marianne suffers no ill effect from yesterday's adventure.

MARIANNE

Except for a wrenched ankle, I am very well, sir.

MOTHER

Mister Willoughby, I don't know how to thank you enough.

WILLOUGHBY

Mrs. Dashwood (*Bows. She curtsies quickly.*) It was my pleasure to be of assistance. (*to MARGARET*) John Willoughby, at your service. (*He bows low to her.*)

MARGARET

Margaret Dashwood. (*She curtsies.*) You are Marianne's preserver.

MOTHER

Would you like to be seated? Would you care for some tea? Where is the tea?

MARIANNE

Sir John said you enjoy dancing?

WILLOUGHBY

I do above all things, except music and poetry, of course.

ELINOR

Would you like some tea, Mister Willoughby?

WILLOUGHBY

Thank you. Yes.

(He settles himself next to MARIANNE. In the following scenes, the set moves around WILLOUGHBY as he becomes integral to the family. He is finishing reading, with true feeling, a poem MARIANNE has selected.)

WILLOUGHBY

“Not then this world's wild joys had been
To me one savage hunting scene,
My sole delight the headlong race
And frantic hurry of the chase;
To start, pursue, and bring to bay,
Rush in, drag down, and rend my prey,
Then - from the carcass turn away!
Mine ireful mood had sweetness tamed,
And soothed each wound which pride inflamed: -
Yes, God and man might now approve me
If thou hadst lived and lived to love me!”

MARIANNE

(to WILLOUGHBY) Have you ever before read such a striking poem? Elinor, have you ever heard a more perfect reading?

WILLOUGHBY

The poet transmutes emotions into language. This is my favorite of all Scott's poems.

ELINOR

I thought you'd never read it before.

WILLOUGHBY

But now I have, and I am captivated. Poetry must be caught like a fever, Miss Dashwood, not studied.

MARIANNE

Like an exotic fever.

ELINOR

Like a fever from the East Indies?

MARIANNE

No, there's no romance there. Colonel Brandon has been there, and now all the romance is ironed out of it. Now the East Indies are merely hot, and swarming with mosquitoes.

WILLOUGHBY

I know he is spoken well of but Brandon is just the kind of man whom everybody speaks well of and nobody cares about.

MARIANNE

Yes, those are my exact sentiments.

ELINOR

It does neither of you credit to boast of it.

MARIANNE

How can you defend him? He has neither genius, taste nor spirit, his feelings have no ardor, his voice no expression—

ELINOR

You imagine imperfections for him. I can only comment on what I observe in him. He is a kind man, of good breeding and possessed of a good nature.

WILLOUGHBY

Miss Dashwood, you disarm us with reason. But I have three points for disliking him you cannot refute: he threatened rain when I wanted it fine, he found fault with my curricule, and he won't buy my brown mare. I am firm on these and won't be swayed.

ELINOR

Then your dislike must extend to me for I threatened rain when Marianne wanted it fine, and was proven correct by a storm.

MARIANNE

The very storm when we met.

WILLOUGHBY

And therein lies the difference.

ELINOR

(to MARIANNE, as WILLOUGHBY and MARGARET set up a card game) At this rate, what will you have left to talk about? You have already dispatched authors, music,

ELINOR (*con't*)
dancing, our neighbors, picturesque beauty—

MARIANNE
I see what you mean. I have been too much at my ease, too happy, too frank. I have been open and sincere where I ought to have been like Lady Middleton. There is my example of proper decorum! If I had only talked about the weather and the roads, and only spoken once in ten minutes, then you would not reproach me.

ELINOR
Then I would not recognize you as my dear, enthusiastic sister.

(WILLOUGHBY, MARIANNE and MARGARET play cards while ELINOR does bills and MOTHER sorts yarns.)

MARGARET
Willoughby, you're cheating.

WILLOUGHBY
Am I?

MARGARET
Yes.

WILLOUGHBY
How can you tell?

MARGARET
Because Marianne is winning every hand.

WILLOUGHBY
Then Marianne must be cheating.

MARIANNE
Sir, you dare question my honor? I shall call you out for this. You cannot offer such an insult to a lady and expect to get away with it.

WILLOUGHBY
Would you really call me out on your own behalf?

MARGARET
There! You did it again.

WILLOUGHBY
Did what?

MARGARET

This is not fair. She is winning every time and she's not even playing well.

MOTHER

(to herself) To have gained two such sons-in-law as Edward and Willoughby.

ELINOR

What did you say, mama?

MOTHER

I will never get these yarns untwisted. Margaret, you come do this please.

(MARGARET comes to ELINOR as MOTHER goes to the card game.)

MARGARET

Gladly. *(to ELINOR)* They are so silly.

ELINOR

You might be silly like them in a few more years.

MARGARET

Marianne will be married to Mr. Willoughby very soon, won't she? He has got a lock of her hair.

ELINOR

If he has a lock of hair, it probably belongs to some great-uncle of his.

MARGARET

No. Last night after tea when you and mama left the room, they didn't think I could see them. They were whispering, then he took her scissors and cut off a lock of her hair and kissed it and folded it up into his pocketbook. That means they're engaged, doesn't it?

ELINOR

Margaret, it's wrong to spy on people.

MARGARET

I didn't. They just didn't see me there.

ELINOR

We don't know whatever is between them, so say nothing, especially to Mrs. Jennings or Sir John.

(MARIANNE and WILLOUGHBY sing "Polwart on the Green" while MAID brings in tea and ELINOR pours.)

MOTHER

That was very lively but I wish I understood half of what is said in those Scottish songs. I plan on improving the cottage come spring. I will add a guest room and expand the parlor here.

WILLOUGHBY

What! No—I will never consent to it. You mustn't change one stone of this dear place.

ELINOR

Do not be alarmed; my mother will never have money enough to attempt it.

WILLOUGHBY

Do not even wish it. To me this cottage is faultless.

ELINOR

The dark narrow stairs, the kitchen that smokes?

WILLOUGHBY

Yes. This place will always have one claim on my affection which no other place can possibly share.

MOTHER

Willoughby, you may be assured I would not sacrifice one sentiment of yours, or anyone whom I love, for all the improvements in the world. The cottage will remain as it is.

WILLOUGHBY

Then I am satisfied.

MOTHER

(to ELINOR) Could anyone, hearing his declaration about our cottage doubt his feelings?

ELINOR

He has only declared himself regarding our stairs and kitchen.

MOTHER

Sometimes, Elinor, there is no need to speak. Their affections are clear to all.

(SERVANTS set up the dance at Barton Park around ELINOR and MARIANNE. WILLOUGHBY, MARGARET, and MOTHER exit. MOTHER reenters with shawls, gloves, and fans for ELINOR and MARIANNE.)

ELINOR

(to audience) Soon, as Sir John promised, we are dancing at Barton Park with the entire neighborhood.

MARIANNE

Why should that make you so glum?

ELINOR

I am not glum.

MARIANNE

But a dance! We must enjoy ourselves, Elinor. I shall.

WILLOUGHBY

(arriving, to MARIANNE) May I have this dance?

(As music starts, the dancers are WILLOUGHBY and MARIANNE, MOTHER and BRANDON, SIR JOHN and MRS. JENNINGS, and ELINOR with a GENTLEMAN. LADY MIDDLETON sits. The dance finishes.)

MRS. JENNINGS

Come, Miss Marianne, it's time to dance with someone else or everyone will be talking about you and your beau. Colonel Brandon, here's your new partner.

MARIANNE

Sir.

MRS. JENNINGS

(to ELINOR) That's good. Can't make it too easy for them.

WILLOUGHBY

(offering to dance with ELINOR) May I have this dance, Miss Dashwood? I promise not to trample your toes.

ELINOR

You are an excellent dancer, sir, and my toes and I will be delighted.

(They dance. WILLOUGHBY switches to be with MARIANNE, leaving ELINOR with BRANDON. MARIANNE and WILLOUGHBY dance out of sight.)

ELINOR *(con't)*

I apologize, Colonel.

BRANDON

Don't. There is no need.

ELINOR

I am looking forward to our excursion on Wednesday with great interest. I've never been to Whitwell. Mrs. Jennings tells us the grounds there are quite attractive.

BRANDON

The grounds are excellent and there is sailing on the small lake. I plan to bring a picnic lunch for us all.

ELINOR

Then I hope the weather continues fine.

BRANDON

Perhaps Miss Marianne would like to ride there in my curricle?

ELINOR

I believe she is already engaged to ride in Willoughby's.

BRANDON

Ah.

(The dance ends. They bow and curtsy and part.)

SCENE FIVE -- Departures

(The dance is cleared. ELINOR remains.)

ELINOR

(to audience) Excuse me. *(calling)* Marianne! *(to audience)* I must find—

MARIANNE

(entering) Have you explained about the outing yet?

ELINOR

An acquaintance of Colonel Brandon's owns a property near Barton Park called Whitwell.

MARIANNE

I'll explain. *(to audience)* The views are reportedly exquisite, with a still lake fed by a river cascading down distant crags and, on the other side, a sweeping panorama of the country for miles around. To have the opportunity to tour such a picturesque estate!

ELINOR

On the morning of the excursion, we are gathering at the parlor at Barton Park—

MARIANNE

Willoughby has arrived. Excuse me.

(In the parlor at Barton Park, a chatting crowd is gathering. A SERVANT enters with a letter and gives it to BRANDON, who is surprised. He opens and reads it.)

MRS. JENNINGS

What is it, Colonel Brandon? Not some bad news, I hope.

BRANDON

I must— *(He exits.)*

MRS. JENNINGS

Why, whatever has upset him so much? Something in that letter?

MARGARET

(at window) It was delivered by a rider. Colonel Brandon's outside talking to him.

ELINOR

Margaret, come away from the window.

MRS. JENNINGS

Delivered by a rider? Is it a local man? Oh, I wonder what this is all about.

(BRANDON enters and gains the crowd's attention.)

BRANDON

I am sorry. I have— I must leave for London at once.

SIR JOHN

Is it some business matter, Brandon?

BRANDON

Yes. I must go.

MRS. JENNINGS

But what about our picnic?

BRANDON

I'm sorry. I must cancel the outing.

(There is an audible disappointed reaction from the crowd.)

WILLOUGHBY

Then at least leave us a letter of introduction to the housekeeper at Whitwell so our enjoyment won't be cancelled.

BRANDON

I'm sorry, I must accompany you to gain access to the property.

MRS. JENNINGS

Then stay. There's nothing that six hours delay could hurt.

BRANDON

I cannot delay even one hour.

MARIANNE

(to WILLOUGHBY) He's canceling because he doesn't want to risk a cold.

WILLOUGHBY

(to MARIANNE) And he paid a messenger to deliver a letter he wrote to himself.

MRS. JENNINGS

Then tell us when you will return so we can reschedule.

BRANDON

I don't know when I will be able to return. I apologize for.... I must go. *(to ELINOR)*
Is there no chance of seeing you and your sister in London, Miss Dashwood?

ELINOR

I'm afraid none at all.

BRANDON

Then I must bid farewell for longer than I would wish. *(He exits. The sounds of a horse galloping away follow almost immediately.)*

LADY MIDDLETON

Well. Now what do we do?

WILLOUGHBY

The rest of us are still here, and we have provisions for a picnic. We may not go to Whitwell because of Brandon, but we can ride in the country.

MARIANNE

And picnic there!

MRS. JENNINGS

That is a grand idea.

SIR JOHN

Then that is what we'll do. Everyone—

(WILLOUGHBY and MARIANNE quickly exit together.)

SIR JOHN *(con't)*

Well, I see there is no need to delay any longer. Out to the carriages everyone!

MRS. JENNINGS

I wonder what was in that letter. Margaret, did you get a good look at the rider?

SIR JOHN

We'll toddle about for as long as the weather stays fine. *(calling)* Willoughby! Don't go so fast we can't keep up with you!

(All exit parlor. Horse and carriage sounds. SERVANTS cover the furniture with sheets; it is a sitting room at Allenham manor. They leave, and all is quiet.)

WILLOUGHBY *(off)*

You must see in here.

(WILLOUGHBY enters, followed by MARIANNE.)

WILLOUGHBY *(con't)*

This area of the house is shut off, but I will reopen it as soon as I inherit.

MARIANNE

It is so beautiful. There is so much in this house I should love if I lived at Allenham even for part of the year as you do.

WILLOUGHBY

I wanted to show you this room. It is a corner room. You see, there are views through there, across the bowling green to a hanging wood. And through this window to the church and village beyond.

MARIANNE

Such fine, bold hills. You can see so far. Such a pretty, comfortable room. All it needs is new furniture to be the finest sitting room in all of England.

WILLOUGHBY

And inhabitants to care for it. You see how my relative values it.

MARIANNE

But you care for it.

WILLOUGHBY

You do, too. *(pause)* It is growing late. I should return you to your home.

(WILLOUGHBY kisses MARIANNE's hand and exits. ELINOR enters. She and MARIANNE remove the sheets. MARIANNE folds sheets while ELINOR draws. They are in the parlor at Barton cottage.)

ELINOR

We had a large number for our picnic. Did you as well?

MARIANNE

No.

ELINOR

Where did you and Willoughby go? You left so quickly we lost sight of his curricle.

MARIANNE

We went to Allenham. Willoughby wished to show me the house. I have never spent a pleasanter morning in my life.

ELINOR

The pleasantness of an act does not establish its propriety.

MARIANNE

Propriety? What has propriety to say to my visiting Allenham?

ELINOR

It wasn't discrete to go there with Willoughby.

MARIANNE

I am not sensible of having done anything wrong in walking the grounds or seeing the house in his company. They will one day be Willoughby's, and—

ELINOR

If they were one day to be yours, you would not be justified in what you have done. You were unchaperoned.

MARIANNE

We did nothing untoward.

ELINOR

Is that how it will appear to others? To mother?

MARIANNE

Perhaps it was a little ill-judged of us, but after Colonel Brandon's rudeness— And Allenham is delightful. It is admirably situated, with charming views all around and rooms that only want some modern furniture to be perfectly comfortable.

ELINOR

You discussed furnishings?

MARIANNE

There are splendid vistas from so many of the rooms.

ELINOR

Marianne, are you and Willoughby engage—

MOTHER (*off*)

Elinor?

MARIANNE

Now you must explain about the tea. *(begins to exit)*

ELINOR

Are you sure you won't come?

MARIANNE

I have a letter to finish. *(exits)*

ELINOR

(to audience) Mother, Margaret, and I have tea with Lady Middleton once a week.

Occasionally, Marianne joins us.

(Barton parlor with tea things, LADY MIDDLETON, MOTHER, and MARGARET coalesce around ELINOR. Pause.)

ELINOR *(con't)*

(to LADY MIDDLETON) Yesterday's picnic was quite pleasant.

LADY MIDDLETON

Yes, it was. The children enjoyed it.

MOTHER

Perhaps you have heard some news of the business that snatched the Colonel from us?

LADY MIDDLETON

No.

MARGARET

May I have another cake?

ELINOR

I believe it is time for us to be going, Margaret.

MARGARET

Then may I take one with me?

ELINOR

No.

MOTHER

(to LADY MIDDLETON) If you could remind Sir John I want to question him about the improvements he had done here....

LADY MIDDLETON

Yes.

(A SERVANT hands them their wraps, then LADY MIDDLETON and SERVANT exit as the Dashwoods walk back to the cottage.)

MARGARET

I don't see why Lady Middleton's children should get all the cake.

ELINOR

That is because you are not one of Lady Middleton's children.

MOTHER

I'm certain I can expand the parlor a bit by pushing one wall farther out—

ELINOR

And watching the floor above tumble down on us.

MOTHER

I am certain the workmen will not allow that.

ELINOR

Workmen? Workmen must be paid. And what of your promise to Willoughby not to change a thing about the cottage?

MOTHER

Look, that is Willoughby's horse. I shall put my ideas before him right away and see if he doesn't like them as well as I do. *(calling)* Willoughby! I have a problem for you—

(As they enter the house, MARIANNE runs past them crying. WILLOUGHBY walks in slowly, not seeing them at first, becoming grimly polite once he does.)

ELINOR

Willoughby?

WILLOUGHBY

Good morning.

MOTHER

Is Marianne ill?

WILLOUGHBY

I hope not. I rather expect to be ill. I am suffering under a heavy disappointment. I am sent to London, on business. I come to take my farewell of you.

MOTHER

London! When are you going?

WILLOUGHBY

Almost this moment.

MOTHER

But you will soon return?

WILLOUGHBY

I don't—my engagements at present are of such a nature— It is folly to linger in this way!

(WILLOUGHBY exits.)

ELINOR

(to MOTHER) Perhaps they've quarreled.

MOTHER

It is because his relative suspects his regard for Marianne. She disapproves our lack of wealth and so sends him off.

ELINOR

Perhaps they are not engaged after all.

MOTHER

Just because he left us less affectionately than usual?

ELINOR

Have they said anything to you about an engagement?

MOTHER

There is no need for them to say anything. The proof of it is in their affections.

ELINOR

But not a syllable has been said to you about it by either one?

MOTHER

Not a syllable is needed for my complete and utter understanding of the matter. I know Marianne's heart and that is enough.

(MARIANNE enters.)

MOTHER *(con't)*

(to ELINOR) Now don't say anything to upset your sister.

MARGARET

(to MARIANNE) Marianne, when is Willoughby coming back?

(The parlor forms around the family.)

ELINOR

(to audience) Marianne's disappointment is severe and oppresses us all, and we do not know what occurred to part her and Willoughby.

MARIANNE

Everyone is in London. Colonel Brandon, Edward. Margaret, come away from the window. There's nothing to see there, nothing at all.

MARGARET

(looking out window) But there's a man coming to the house.

MARIANNE

It's Willoughby!

MARGARET

No. I don't think it is.

MARIANNE

It is. It must be. I can't bear another minute of Sir John. *(She turns to leave.)*

MARGARET

It's Edward.

ELINOR

Edward Ferrars?

MARIANNE

He's the only other man I would stay for. Elinor!

MARGARET

It is! It's Edward!

(Knock. The sounds of EDWARD and THOMAS talking off. THOMAS enters, followed by EDWARD.)

THOMAS

Mister Edward Ferrars. *(He exits.)*

(EDWARD bows, the women all shun formality except ELINOR who curtsies.)

MOTHER

You've come to us at last, at last you are here. We have missed you greatly.

MARIANNE

Oh Edward, you have no idea how welcome you are. Sit down, sit down, your presence will cheer all of us.

EDWARD

Hello Mrs. Dashwood, Miss Dashwood, Miss Marianne—

MARIANNE

Oh don't be formal with us when we have missed you so much. It is wonderful to have you back again.

MARGARET

Hello Edward.

EDWARD

Hello Margaret.

ELINOR

Indeed, we are delighted to see you again, Mister Ferrars.

EDWARD

The delight is all mine, Miss Dashwood.

MARIANNE

(to audience, while ELINOR and EDWARD politely converse) But they are so cool with each other. He neither looks nor speaks as a lover should, as Willoughby....

ELINOR

Do you come here directly from London?

EDWARD

No. I've been in Devonshire a fortnight.

MARIANNE

(to EDWARD) A fortnight? You've been here a fortnight and didn't come visit us sooner?

ELINOR

Marianne.

EDWARD

I was staying with...friends. Near Plymouth. I'm sure you've found new acquaintances here. Are the Middletons pleasant company?

MARIANNE

No, not at all.

ELINOR

Marianne, you cannot be so unjust. (*to EDWARD*) They are a very respectable family, and have behaved in the friendliest manner towards us.

MARIANNE

But such behavior demands condemnation from those with any sensitivities at all.

ELINOR

Marianne, you see, is not altered since you knew us last.

EDWARD

She is grown more sober. You are not as vivacious a girl as you were.

ELINOR

Vivacious? No, Marianne is earnest and eager—she sometimes talks a great deal—but she is rarely vivacious. When I detect myself in such mistakes, in a total misapprehension of character, where I fancy people other than they really are, it is confusing because I can't tell in what way the deception originated. I wonder did I imagine something to be so that isn't true at all?

EDWARD

Perhaps it's.... Shyness, for example—acquaintances often mistake it for deep thought when it is really only a sense of inferiority keeping one quiet. Perhaps it is not your fault at all.

ELINOR

Perhaps. I hope I am conversant enough with the effects of shyness to see beyond them.

MARIANNE

But even if you weren't shy, Edward— Well, you were talking about yourself—even if you weren't shy, you should still be reserved, and that is worse. It is secretive.

EDWARD

Reserved? Am I reserved?

MARIANNE

Yes, very.

EDWARD

I do not understand you. Reserved!—how, in what manner? What am I supposed to tell you? What can you suppose of me?

ELINOR

Only that you are like most people who keep part of themselves private. It is Marianne's views that are unusual.

MOTHER

(pause) And what are Mrs. Ferrars's views for you at present, Edward? Are you still to be a great orator in spite of yourself?

EDWARD

My mother is now convinced I have no talent for greatness.

ELINOR

And you?

EDWARD

I merely wish to be happy.

MARIANNE

But why should she want you to be famous? What have fame or wealth to do with happiness?

ELINOR

Fame very little, but I believe wealth has a great deal to do with it.

MARIANNE

For shame! How can you say so? Beyond a competence, wealth can afford no real satisfaction at all.

ELINOR

But your competence and my wealth are very much alike, I dare say. What do you consider a competence?

MARIANNE

Eighteen hundred or two thousand a year, no more than that.

ELINOR

Two thousand a year! One thousand a year is my wealth.

MARGARET

I wish someone would give us all one thousand a year.

EDWARD

Imagine what magnificent orders would travel from here to London—to booksellers and music sellers from Marianne, and you, Miss Dashwood, would give a general commission for every new print of merit to be sent to you.

MOTHER

I know I should be puzzled how to spend a large fortune on myself if my girls were well settled.

ELINOR

Begin your improvements on the cottage and that difficulty would soon vanish.

MARGARET

What about my money? What should I do with mine?

MARIANNE

(to MOTHER while the others converse) Do you see the ring Edward wears? There's a lock of hair in it.

MOTHER

What color is it?

MARIANNE

The same as Elinor's.

MOTHER

Did she give it to him?

MARIANNE

(to EDWARD) Is that your sister's hair in your new ring, Edward? I thought Fanny's hair is darker.

EDWARD

Yes. It is Fanny's.

(Pause. EDWARD looks at ELINOR, then to MARIANNE.)

MOTHER

How long will you stay with us, Edward? A month, or more?

EDWARD

No. No, I can only stay a week.

MARIANNE

One week!

ELINOR

You have business to attend to?

EDWARD

No. I'll go to Norland or London after here. Probably London.

MARGARET

Everyone is going to London.

MOTHER

But you must make this a good, long visit. Stay two weeks at least.

EDWARD

I wish I could.

MARIANNE

What prevents you if not business? You have an engagement elsewhere?

EDWARD

I must go. I value your kindness beyond anything, and my greatest pleasure is with you. I detest London. But I fear at the end of the week I must go.

ELINOR

(to audience) And he does.

(EDWARD exits. ELINOR works on papers while the family stares at her.)

MOTHER

You needn't do that today, dear.

ELINOR

Of course I must, mama.

MOTHER

You wouldn't rather take a walk?

ELINOR

Perhaps later.

MARIANNE

(to ELINOR) You feel his absence so little—I am not like you in that. But our situations are not the same after all. I had thought that—

ELINOR

Marianne, Mister Abernathy must be paid for our tea and groceries, and today is the day I do the bills.

MARIANNE

Then I won't disturb you anymore.

MOTHER

Margaret come, we will walk. Marianne?

MARGARET

Must I?

MARIANNE

(to MOTHER) Elinor doesn't do the bills on Wednesdays. She didn't last week.

MOTHER

No, I'm sure she did. If you're staying, don't disturb her. Come along, Margaret.

(MARIANNE indicates not and hunts through piano music while MOTHER and MARGARET exit.)

SCENE SIX – A Flurry of Visitors

(MARIANNE plays a moody piece then stops. Knocking. SIR JOHN steps over to the window to talk to ELINOR. LADY MIDDLETON, MRS. JENNINGS, CHARLOTTE and MR. PALMER are at the door, knocking. MARIANNE stays behind the piano, somewhat hidden from view.)

SIR JOHN

We have brought you some strangers. How do you like them? It's only the Palmers. You may see them if you lean out and look this way.

(MRS. JENNINGS comes to the window.)

MRS JENNINGS

What, all alone!

(MARIANNE pulls out of sight more.)

MRS JENNINGS *(con't)*

Then you will be glad of a little company to sit with you. I have brought my youngest daughter and my son-in-law to see you. Only think of their coming so suddenly.

(Noise from the door as the MAID gets the names to introduce. SIR JOHN joins them at the door. CHARLOTTE, MR. PALMER, SIR JOHN and LADY MIDDLETON enter the parlor while MRS. JENNINGS circles back to the door and enters without stopping talking. Most of the following dialogue overlaps.)

MRS. JENNINGS *(con't)*

I thought I heard a carriage last night, while we were drinking our tea in the front parlor, near the drive, but it never entered my head that it could be them.

MAID

Sir John Middleton, Lady Middleton—

SIR JOHN

We don't require any introductions, that's good.