

"SENSE AND SENSIBILITY"

Screenplay by

Emma Thompson

Based on the novel
"Sense and Sensibility"
by
Jane Austen

EXT. NORLAND PARK. ENGLAND. MARCH 1800. NIGHT.

Silence. Norland Park, a large country house built in the early part of the eighteenth century, lies in the moonlit parkland.

INT. NORLAND PARK. MR. DASHWOOD'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

In the dim light shed by candles we see a bed in which a MAN (MR DASHWOOD, 52) lies - his skin waxy, his breathing laboured. Around him two silhouettes move and murmur, their clothing susurrating in the deathly hush. DOCTORS. A WOMAN (MRS DASHWOOD, 50) sits by his side, holding his hand, her eyes never leaving his face.

MR DASHWOOD
(urgent) Is John not yet arrived?

MRS DASHWOOD
We expect him at any moment dearest.

MR DASHWOOD looks anguished.

MR DASHWOOD
The girls - I have left so little.

MRS DASHWOOD
Shh, hush, Henry.

MR DASHWOOD
Elinor will try to look after you all but make sure she finds a good husband. The men are such noodles hereabouts, little wonder none has pleased her.

They smile at each other. MRS DASHWOOD is just managing to conceal her fear and grief.

MRS DASHWOOD
But Marianne is sure to find her story-book hero.

MR DASHWOOD
A romantic poet with flashing eyes and empty pockets?

MRS DASHWOOD
As long as she loves him, whoever he is.

MR DASHWOOD
Margaret will go to sea and become a pirate so we need not concern ourselves with her.

MRS DASHWOOD tries to laugh but it emerges as a sob.
An older MANSERVANT (THOMAS) now enters, anxiety
written on every feature.

THOMAS

Your son is arrived from London sir.

MR DASHWOOD squeezes his wife's hand.

MR DASHWOOD

Let me speak to John alone.

She nods quickly and he smiles at her with infinite
tenderness.

MR DASHWOOD

Ah my dear. How happy you have made
me.

MRS DASHWOOD makes a superhuman effort and smiles back.
She allows THOMAS to help her out. She passes JOHN
DASHWOOD as he enters, presses his hand, but cannot
speak. JOHN takes her place by the bed.

JOHN

Father...

MR DASHWOOD summons his last ounces of energy and
starts to whisper with desperate intensity.

MR DASHWOOD

John - you will find out soon enough
from my will that the estate of
Norland was left to me in such a way
as prevents me from dividing it
between my families.

JOHN blinks. He cannot quite take it in.

JOHN

Calm yourself Father - this is not
good for you -

But MR DASHWOOD continues with even greater
determination.

MR DASHWOOD

Norland - in its entirety - is
therefore yours by law and I am happy
for you and Fanny.

JOHN looks torn between genuine distress and unexpected
delight.

MR DASHWOOD

But your stepmother - my wife and daughters are left with only five hundred pounds a year, barely enough to live on and nothing for the girls' dowries. You must help them.

JOHN's face is a picture of conflicting emotions. Behind them is the ominous rustling of parchments.

JOHN

Of course -

MR DASHWOOD

You must promise to do this.

A brief moment of sincerity overcomes JOHN's natural hypocrisy.

JOHN

I promise, Father, I promise.

MR DASHWOOD seems relieved. Suddenly his breathing changes. JOHN looks alarmed. He rises and we hear him going to find the DOCTOR.

JOHN

Come! Come quickly!

But it is we who share the dying man's last words.

MR DASHWOOD

Help them...

EXT. JOHN AND FANNY'S TOWN HOUSE. LONDON. DAY.

Outside the house sits a very well-to-do carriage. Behind it waits another open carriage upon which servants are laying trunks and boxes.

FANNY (V/O)

"Help them?"

INT. JOHN AND FANNY'S TOWN HOUSE. DRESSING ROOM. DAY.

JOHN is standing in mourning-clothes and a travelling cape. He is watching, and obviously waiting for, a pert WOMAN (FANNY DASHWOOD) who is standing by a mirror looking at him keenly.

FANNY

What do you mean, "help them"?

JOHN

Dearest, I mean to give them three thousand pounds.

FANNY goes very still. JOHN gets nervous.

JOHN

The interest will provide them with a little extra income. Such a gift will certainly discharge my promise to my father.

FANNY slowly turns back to the mirror.

FANNY

Oh, without question! More than amply...

JOHN

One had rather, on such occasions, do too much than too little.

A pause as FANNY turns and looks at him again.

JOHN

Of course, he did not stipulate a particular sum ...

INT. NORLAND PARK. MRS DASHWOOD'S BEDROOM. DAY.

MRS DASHWOOD is rushing about, mourning-ribbons flapping, putting her knick-knacks into a small valise. The room is in chaos. A young WOMAN (ELINOR DASHWOOD) looks on helplessly.

MRS DASHWOOD

To be reduced to the condition of visitor in my own home! It is not to be borne, Elinor!

ELINOR

Consider Mamma! We have nowhere to go.

MRS DASHWOOD

John and Fanny will descend from London at any moment, followed no doubt by cartloads of relatives ready to turn us out of our rooms one by one - do you expect me to be here to welcome them? Vultures.

She suddenly collapses onto a chair and bursts into tears.

ELINOR
I shall start making enquiries for a
new house at once. Until then we
must try to bear their coming.

INT. JOHN AND FANNY'S CARRIAGE. DAY.

JOHN and FANNY are on their way out of London.

JOHN
Fifteen hundred then. What say you
to fifteen hundred?

FANNY
What brother on earth would do half
so much for his real sisters - let
alone half-blood?

JOHN
They can hardly expect more.

FANNY
There is no knowing what they expect.
The question is, what can you afford?

INT. NORLAND PARK. DRAWING ROOM. DAY.

A beautiful young WOMAN (MARIANNE DASHWOOD) is sitting
at the piano playing a particularly sad piece. ELINOR
enters.

ELINOR
Marianne, cannot you play something
else? Mamma has been weeping since
breakfast.

MARIANNE stops, turns the pages of her music-book and
starts playing something equally lugubrious.

ELINOR
I meant something less mournful,
dearest.

EXT. ROADSIDE INN. DAY.

JOHN and FANNY are waiting as the OSTLERS make the
final adjustments to their carriage. The LANDLORD
hovers, waiting for a tip.

JOHN

A hundred pounds a year to their mother while she lives. Would that be more advisable? It is better than parting with the fifteen hundred all at once.

He displays some coins in his hand. FANNY removes one and nods.

FANNY

But if she should live longer than fifteen years we would be completely taken in. People always live forever when there is an annuity to be paid them.

JOHN gives the coins to the LANDLORD.

EXT. NORLAND PARK. MARGARET'S TREE-HOUSE. DAY.

ELINOR comes to the foot of a large tree from which a small staircase issues.

ELINOR

Margaret - are you there? Please come down, John and Fanny will be here soon.

A pause. ELINOR is about to leave when a disembodied and truculent young voice stops her.

MARGARET (V/O)

Why are they coming to live at Norland? They already have a house in London.

ELINOR

Because houses go from father to son, dearest - not from father to daughter. It is the law.

Silence. ELINOR tries another tack.

ELINOR

If you come inside we could play with your atlas.

MARGARET (V/O)

It's not my atlas any more. It's their atlas.

CLOSE on ELINOR as she ponders the truth of this statement.

INT. JOHN AND FANNY'S CARRIAGE. DAY.

JOHN and FANNY joggle on.

JOHN

Twenty pounds now and then will amply discharge my promise, you are quite right.

FANNY

Indeed. Although to say the truth, I am convinced within myself that your father had no idea of your giving them money.

JOHN

They will have five hundred a year amongst them as it is -

FANNY

(cheery)- and what on earth can four women want for more than that? Their housekeeping will be nothing at all - they will have no carriage, no horses, hardly any servants and will keep no company. Only conceive how comfortable they will be.

INT. NORLAND PARK. SERVANTS' HALL. DAY.

The large contingent of SERVANTS who staff Norland Park are gathered in gloomy silence as ELINOR addresses them.

ELINOR

As you know we are looking for a new home. When we leave we shall be able to retain only Thomas and Betsy.

CAM holds on THOMAS and BETSY, a capable woman.

ELINOR (CONT'D)

We are very sorry to have to leave you all. But we are certain you will find the new Mrs Dashwood a fair and generous mistress.

EXT. NORLAND PARK. DRIVE. DAY.

JOHN and FANNY's carriage approaches Norland.

FANNY (V/O)
They will be much more able to give
you something.

INT. JOHN AND FANNY'S CARRIAGE. DAY.

JOHN and FANNY are about to get out.

JOHN
So - we are agreed. No money - but
the occasional gift of game and fish
in season will be very welcome.

FANNY
Your father would be proud of you.

INT. NORLAND PARK. DINING ROOM. EARLY EVE.

The entire family with the exception of MARGARET is present. FOOTMEN are serving food in an atmosphere of stiff silence. Cutlery clinks. JOHN chews loudly. MARIANNE is rigid with resentment. MRS DASHWOOD maintains a cool, removed dignity. ELINOR tries to observe the courtesies.

ELINOR
How is Mrs Ferrars?

FANNY
My mother is always in excellent health, thank you. My brother Robert is in town with her this season and quite the most popular bachelor in London! He has his own barouche.

In the brief silence which follows this, FANNY surreptitiously checks the hallmark on her butterknife.

ELINOR
You have two brothers, have you not?

FANNY
Indeed yes. Edward is the eldest - and as head of the family, we all quite depend upon him. He is travelling up from Plymouth shortly and will break his journey here.

MRS DASHWOOD looks at ELINOR pointedly. JOHN notices.

JOHN
(to MRS DASHWOOD) If that is agreeable to you, of course.

MRS DASHWOOD
My dear John - this is your home now.

FANNY looks about, barely able to conceal her satisfaction.

INT. NORLAND PARK. ELINOR'S BEDROOM. DAY.

ELINOR is sitting with a little pile of parcels. She puts a shawl into some paper and ties it with ribbon as MARIANNE thunders in looking mutinous.

MARIANNE
Fanny wishes to know where the key for the silver cabinet is kept.

ELINOR
Betsy has it, I think. What does Fanny want with the silver?

MARIANNE
I can only presume she wants to count it. What are you doing?

ELINOR
Presents for the servants. Have you seen Margaret? I am worried about her. She has taken to hiding in the oddest places.

MARIANNE
Fortunate girl. At least she can escape Fanny which is more than any of us is able.

ELINOR
You do your best. You have not said a word to her for a week.

MARIANNE
(truculently) I have! I have said 'yes' and 'no'.

INT. NORLAND PARK. BREAKFAST ROOM. DAY.

FANNY, MRS DASHWOOD, ELINOR and JOHN are at breakfast. MARIANNE enters. ELINOR catches her eye and indicates FANNY with a slight motion of her head. MARIANNE makes a face.

MARIANNE
(very polite) Good morning, Fanny.

FANNY is rather startled.

FANNY
Good morning, Marianne.

ELINOR is relieved.

MARIANNE
(to Fanny) How did you find the
silver? Is it all genuine?

ELINOR rushes in before MARIANNE gets any further.

ELINOR
Pray when may we expect the pleasure
of your brother's company?

FANNY
Edward is due tomorrow. And my dear
Mrs Dashwood, in view of the fact
that he will not be with us for long,
I wondered if Miss Margaret would
mind giving up her room to him - the
view is quite incomparable from her
windows and I should so much like
Edward to see Norland at its best.

MARIANNE slams her cup down and throws a furious look
at ELINOR.

INT. NORLAND PARK. MARGARET'S BEDROOM. DAY.

ELINOR and MARIANNE are removing MARGARET's toys.

MARIANNE
Intolerable woman!

ELINOR
There is but one consolation - if
Edward is anything like Fanny we
shall be only too happy to leave.

EXT. NORLAND PARK. DRIVE. DAY.

A very capable HORSEMAN (EDWARD FERRARS) canters up the
gravel drive. CLOSE on his face as he gazes up at the
elegant facade.

INT. NORLAND PARK. DRAWING ROOM. DAY.

Everyone except MARGARET is present. EDWARD has just
shaken hands with ELINOR. He behaves with great
respect to the DASHWOODS and seems embarrassed by
FANNY's proprietorial air.

FANNY

But where is Miss Margaret? I declare, Mrs Dashwood, I am beginning to doubt of her existence! She must run positively wild!

MRS DASHWOOD

Forgive us, Mr Ferrars. My youngest is not to be found this morning. She is a little shy of strangers at present.

EDWARD

Naturally. I am also shy of strangers and I have nothing like her excuse.

MARIANNE

(dangerous) How do you like your view, Mr Ferrars?

ELINOR glances at her warningly but EDWARD replies with careful consideration.

EDWARD

Very much. Your stables are very handsome and beautifully kept Mrs Dashwood.

FANNY

Stables! Edward - your windows overlook the lake.

EDWARD

An - oversight, Fanny, led me to the wrong room. I have rectified the situation and am happily settled in the guest quarters.

MARIANNE and ELINOR look at each other in surprise. FANNY looks furious. MRS DASHWOOD smiles warmly at EDWARD. CLOSE on ELINOR. She is impressed.

INT. NORLAND PARK. STAIRCASE. MORNING.

FANNY is walking with EDWARD who looks at the pictures with interest.

FANNY

They are all exceedingly spoilt I find. Miss Margaret spends all her time up trees and under furniture and I have barely had a civil word from Marianne.

EDWARD

My dear Fanny - they have just lost
their father - their lives will never
be the same again.

FANNY

That is no excuse.

INT. NORLAND PARK. LIBRARY. MORNING.

FANNY leads EDWARD in. She sniffs with distaste.

FANNY

I have never liked the smell of
books.

EDWARD

Oh? No. The dust, perhaps.

As they speak, EDWARD notices a large ATLAS retreating
apparently all by itself across the floor. Someone is
obviously under the table, pulling it out of sight. He
registers it and immediately moves in such a way as to
shield it from FANNY. He turns back, searching for
something to divert her.

EDWARD

I hear you have great plans for the
walnut grove.

FANNY

Oh yes! I shall have it pulled down
to make room for a Grecian temple.

There is a stifled wail from under the table which
EDWARD covers with a cough.

EDWARD

How picturesque. Will you show me
the site?

And he ushers FANNY out, flicking a quick glance over
his shoulder at the fugitive's foot.

INT. NORLAND PARK. VELVET ROOM. MORNING.

ELINOR, MRS DASHWOOD and MARIANNE are sitting round a
table with a pile of letters. ELINOR is handing one
back to her mother.

ELINOR

Too expensive. We do not need four
bedrooms, we can share.

MARIANNE
This one then?

ELINOR reads the letter quickly.

ELINOR
Marianne - we have only five hundred
pounds a year. I will send out more
enquiries today.

There is a knock on the door. Hesitantly, EDWARD
appears.

EDWARD
Pardon my intrusion - but I believe I
have found what you are looking
for...

MARIANNE and MRS DASHWOOD are puzzled by his elliptical
manner but ELINOR immediately understands and rises, in
smiling relief.

INT. NORLAND PARK. ENTRANCE HALL OUTSIDE LIBRARY. MORNING.

EDWARD is standing outside keeping a discreet lookout.
The door is half-open and he can hear ELINOR trying to
coax MARGARET out. FANNY walks by with a BUTLER to
whom she is giving instructions. EDWARD pretends to
examine the mouldings and she passes on unsuspecting.

ELINOR (V/O)
Won't you come out, dearest? We
haven't seen you all day. Mamma is
very concerned.

More silence. EDWARD thinks hard. He makes a
decision.

INT. NORLAND PARK. LIBRARY. MORNING.

EDWARD walks in loudly.

EDWARD
Oh Miss Dashwood! Excuse me - I was
wondering - do you by any chance have
such a thing as a reliable atlas?

ELINOR looks up at him in astonishment.

ELINOR
I believe so.

EDWARD
Excellent. I wish to check the
position of the Nile.

EDWARD appears to be utterly sincere.

EDWARD
My sister says it is in South
America.

From under the table we hear a snort. ELINOR looks at
him in realisation.

ELINOR
Oh! No, no indeed. She is quite
wrong. For I believe it is in - in -
Belgium.

EDWARD
Belgium? Surely not. You must be
thinking of the Volga.

MARGARET
(from under the table) The Volga?

ELINOR
Of course. The Volga - which as you
know, starts in -

EDWARD
Vladivostoc, and ends in -

ELINOR
Wimbledon.

EDWARD
Indeed. Where the coffee beans come
from...

They are having such a good time that it is rather a
pity the game is stopped by the appearance from under
the table of MARGARET who reveals herself to be a
dishevelled girl of eleven. She hauls the atlas up and
plonks it in front of EDWARD.

MARGARET
The source of the Nile is in
Abyssinia.

EDWARD
Is it? Good heavens. How do you do.
Edward Ferrars.

MARGARET
Margaret Dashwood.

EDWARD shakes MARGARET's hand solemnly and looks over
her head at ELINOR. They smile at each other, a
connection made.

INT. NORLAND PARK. DRAWING ROOM. ANOTHER DAY.

JOHN is reading a newspaper. MRS DASHWOOD sits across from FANNY who thumbs through a fashion-plate magazine. ELINOR is at a desk by the window writing a letter - we see the words "of course we should like to leave as soon as possible". Suddenly she hears a commotion outside. MARGARET runs past the window brandishing a stick. EDWARD follows, and proceeds to teach her the first principles of sword-fighting. They feint and parry, EDWARD serious and without a hint of condescension, MARGARET concentrating furiously. EDWARD suddenly turns, as though feeling ELINOR's gaze. She smiles, but looks away quickly.

INT. NORLAND PARK. VELVET ROOM. ANOTHER DAY.

EDWARD comes into the doorway and sees ELINOR who is listening to MARIANNE playing a concerto. ELINOR stands in a graceful, rather sad attitude, her back to us. Suddenly she senses EDWARD behind her and turns. He is about to turn away, embarrassed to have been caught admiring her, when he sees she has been weeping. Hastily she tries to dry her eyes. He comes forward and offers her a handkerchief which she takes with a grateful smile. We notice his monogram in the corner: ECF.

ELINOR
(apologetic) That was my father's
favourite.

EDWARD nods kindly.

ELINOR
Thank you so much for your help with
Margaret, Mr Ferrars. She is a
changed girl since your arrival.

EDWARD
Not at all. I enjoy her company.

ELINOR
Has she shown you her tree-house?

EDWARD
Not yet. Would you do me the honour
Miss Dashwood? It is very fine out,

ELINOR
With pleasure.

They start to walk out of shot, still talking.

ELINOR

Margaret has always wanted to travel.

EDWARD

I know. She is heading an expedition to China shortly. I am to go as her servant but only on the understanding that I will be very badly treated.

ELINOR

What will your duties be?

EDWARD

Sword-fighting, administering rum and swabbing.

ELINOR

Ah.

CAM tilts up to find MRS DASHWOOD on the middle landing of the staircase, smiling down at them. CAM tilts up yet further to find FANNY on the landing above, watching EDWARD and ELINOR with a face like a prune.

EXT. NORLAND PARK. GARDENS. DAY.

EDWARD and ELINOR are still talking as they walk arm-in-arm in the late afternoon sun.

EDWARD

All I want - all I have ever wanted - is the quiet of a private life but my mother is determined to see me distinguished.

ELINOR

As?

EDWARD

She hardly knows. Any fine figure will suit - a great orator, a leading politician, even a barrister would serve but only on the condition that I drive my own barouche and dine in the first circles.

His tone is light but there is an underlying bitterness to it.

ELINOR

And what do you wish for?

EDWARD

I wish to be moderately happy - as everybody does - greatness will not make me so.

ELINOR

What is your choice of profession?

EDWARD

I always preferred the church, but that is not smart enough for my mother - she prefers the army but that is a great deal too smart for me.

ELINOR

Would you stay in London?

EDWARD

I hate London. No peace. A country living is my ideal - a small parish where I might do some good, keep chickens and give very short sermons.

EXT. FIELDS NEAR NORLAND. DAY.

EDWARD and ELINOR are on horseback. The atmosphere is intimate, the quality of the conversation rooted now in their affections.

ELINOR

You talk of feeling idle and useless - imagine how that is compounded when one has no choice and no hope whatsoever of any occupation.

EDWARD nods and smiles at the irony of it.

EDWARD

Our circumstances are therefore precisely the same.

ELINOR

Except that you will inherit your fortune.

He looks at her slightly shocked but enjoying her boldness.

ELINOR (CONT'D)

We cannot even earn ours.

EDWARD

Perhaps Margaret is right.

ELINOR

Right?

EDWARD

Piracy is our only option.

They ride on in silence for a moment.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
What is swabbing exactly?

INT. NORLAND PARK. DRAWING ROOM. EVE.

Dinner is over. JOHN and FANNY are examining plans of the Norland estate, looking for somewhere to build a hermitage. Edward is reading out loud. Elinor embroiders and listens. Mrs. Dashwood and Marianne make up the rest of the audience, the latter in a state of high impatience.

EDWARD
No voice divine the storm allayed
No light propitious shone,
When snatched from all effectual aid,
We perished each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.

Marianne jumps up and goes to him.

MARIANNE
No, Edward! Listen -

She takes the book from him and reads the stanza with passionate brio.

MARIANNE
Can you not feel his despair? Try
again.

Rather mortified, EDWARD starts again, but not before receiving a sympathetic look from ELINOR which seems to comfort him a little.

INT. NORLAND. PARK. MORNING-ROOM. DAY

MRS DASHWOOD is ruminating sadly. MARIANNE rushes in holding a letter.

MARIANNE
Mamma, look. This has just arrived.

MRS DASHWOOD
(reading from the letter) "I should
be pleased to offer you a home at
Barton Cottage as soon as ever you
have need of it" - why, it is from my
cousin, Sir John Middleton!

MARIANNE

Even Elinor must approve the rent.

MRS DASHWOOD looks at the letter again and thinks.

MRS DASHWOOD

Has Elinor not yet seen this?

MARIANNE

No - I will fetch her.

MRS DASHWOOD

Wait. No. Let us delay.

MARIANNE

Why?

MRS DASHWOOD

I think - I believe - that Edward and Elinor have formed an attachment.

MARIANNE nods, a little reluctantly.

MRS DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

It would be cruel to take her away so soon - and Devonshire is so far.

MRS DASHWOOD makes her decision. She takes the letter and hides it in the pocket of her gown. MARIANNE looks on frowningly.

MRS DASHWOOD

Why so grave? Do you disapprove her choice?

MARIANNE

By no means. Edward is very amiable.

MRS DASHWOOD

Amiable - but?

MARIANNE

But - there is something wanting - his reading last night -

MRS DASHWOOD

Elinor has not your feelings, his reserve suits her.

MARIANNE thinks for a little.

MARIANNE

Can he love her? Can the soul really be satisfied with such - polite - affections? To love is to burn - to be on fire, all made of passion, of adoration, of sacrifice! Like Juliet, or Guinevere or Heloise -

MRS DASHWOOD

They made rather pathetic ends, dear.

MARIANNE

Pathetic! To die for love? How can you say so? What could be more glorious?

MRS DASHWOOD

I think that may be taking your romantic sensibilities a little far...

MARIANNE

The more I know of the world, the more I am convinced that I shall never see a man whom I can truly love.

MRS DASHWOOD

You require so much!

MARIANNE

I do not! I require only what any young woman of taste should - a man who sings well, dances admirably, rides bravely, reads with passion and whose tastes agree in every point with my own.

INT. NORLAND PARK. ELINOR'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

ELINOR is in bed, deep in thought. MARIANNE enters in her nightclothes, carrying a book of poetry. She reads, teasingly.

MARIANNE

Is love a fancy, or a feeling? No/
It is immortal as immaculate
truth/'Tis not a blossom shed as soon
as Youth/Drops from the stem of life
- for it will grow/In barren regions,
where no waters flow/Nor ray of
promise cheats the pensive gloom -

She jumps onto the bed. ELINOR smiles - somewhat suspiciously.

MARIANNE

What a pity it is that Edward has no passion for reading.

ELINOR

It was you who asked him to read - and then you made him nervous.

MARIANNE

Me?

ELINOR

But your behaviour to him in all other respects is perfectly cordial so I must assume that you like him in spite of his deficiencies.

MARIANNE

(trying hard) I think him everything that is amiable and worthy.

ELINOR

Praise indeed!

MARIANNE

But he shall have my unswerving devotion - when you tell me he is to be my brother...

ELINOR is greatly taken aback and does not know how to reply. Suddenly MARIANNE hugs her passionately.

MARIANNE

How shall I do without you?

ELINOR

Do without me?

MARIANNE pulls away, her eyes full of tears.

MARIANNE

I am sure you will be very happy. But you must promise not to live too far away.

ELINOR

Marianne, there is no question of - that is, there is no understanding between...

ELINOR trails off. MARIANNE looks at her keenly.

MARIANNE

Do you love him?

The bold clarity of this question discomforts ELINOR.

ELINOR

I do not attempt to deny that I think very highly of him - that I greatly esteem - that I like him...

MARIANNE

Esteem him! Like him! Use those insipid words again and I shall leave the room this instant!

This makes ELINOR laugh in spite of her discomfort.

ELINOR

Very well - forgive me - believe my feelings to be stronger than I have declared - but further than that you must not believe -

MARIANNE is flummoxed but she rallies swiftly and picks up her book again.

MARIANNE

"Is love a fancy or a feeling?" Or a Ferrars?

ELINOR

Go to bed!

ELINOR blushes in good earnest. MARIANNE goes to the door.

MARIANNE

(imitating Elinor) "I do not attempt to deny that I think highly of him - greatly esteem him! Like him!"

And she is gone, leaving ELINOR both agitated and amused.

INT. NORLAND PARK. BREAKFAST ROOM. DAY.

FANNY is standing by the window looking out. We see her P.O.V. of ELINOR and EDWARD walking in the garden. MRS DASHWOOD enters, pauses for a moment and then joins FANNY at the window. FANNY pretends not to have been watching but MRS DASHWOOD looks down at the lovers and then smiles sweetly at her.

MRS DASHWOOD

We are all so happy that you chose to invite Edward to Norland. He is a dear boy and we are all very fond of him.

FANNY does a bit of quick thinking.

FANNY

We have great hopes for him. Much is expected of him by our mother - with regard to his profession -

MRS DASHWOOD

Naturally -

FANNY

And in marriage. She is determined that both he and Robert will marry well.

MRS DASHWOOD

Of course. But I hope she desires them to marry for love, first and foremost? I have always felt that contrary to common wisdom, true affection is by far the most valuable dowry.

FANNY

Love is all very well, but unfortunately we cannot always rely on the heart to lead us in the most suitable directions.

FANNY lowers her voice confidingly.

FANNY

You see, my dear Mrs Dashwood, Edward is entirely the kind of compassionate person upon whom penniless women can prey - and having entered into any kind of understanding, he would never go back on his word. He is quite simply incapable of doing so. But it would lead to his ruin. I worry for him so, Mrs Dashwood. My mother has always made it perfectly plain that she will withdraw all financial support from Edward should he choose to plant his affections in less - exalted - ground than he deserves.

It is impossible for MRS DASHWOOD not to get the point. She is appalled and furious.

MRS DASHWOOD

I understand you perfectly.

She sweeps off.

INT. NORLAND PARK. MRS DASHWOOD'S DRESSING ROOM. DAY.

MRS DASHWOOD, breathless with rage, is searching through her wardrobe for the gown which contains SIR JOHN's letter. Frocks fly hither and thither. Finally MRS DASHWOOD plunges her hand into the right pocket and withdraws the letter. She looks at it, suddenly concerned and anxious.

INT. NORLAND PARK. DINING ROOM. EVE.

The entire family is present. Everyone is watching MRS DASHWOOD who has just made her announcement.

EDWARD
Devonshire!

He is devastated. FANNY is thrilled. MRS DASHWOOD looks at him with compassion and then at ELINOR, who is trying to keep calm.

MRS DASHWOOD
My cousin Sir John Middleton has offered us a small house on his estate.

JOHN
Sir John Middleton? What is his situation? He must be a man of property.

MRS DASHWOOD
He is a widower. He lives with his mother-in-law at Barton Park and it is Barton Cottage that he offers us.

FANNY
Oh, a cottage! How charming. A little cottage is always very snug.

EDWARD
But you will not leave before the summer?

MRS DASHWOOD
Oh, my dear Edward, we can no longer trespass upon your sister's good will. We must leave as soon as possible.

MARGARET
You will come and stay with us, Edward!

EDWARD
I should like that very much.

FANNY
Edward has long been expected in town
by our mother.

MRS DASHWOOD ignores FANNY.

MRS DASHWOOD
Come as soon as you can, Edward.
Remember that you are always welcome.

INT/EXT. NORLAND PARK. STABLES. DAY.

ELINOR has come to say goodbye to her HORSE. She
strokes the soft face sadly. Then she senses someone
and turns to find EDWARD standing nearby.

EDWARD
Cannot you take him with you?

ELINOR
We cannot possibly afford him.

EDWARD
Perhaps he could make himself useful
in the kitchen?

ELINOR tries to smile. EDWARD looks at her for a long
moment and then comes closer.

EDWARD
Miss Dashwood - Elinor. I must talk
to you.

The use of her Christian name - and in such a loving
tone stops ELINOR's breath altogether.

EDWARD
There is something of great
importance I need - to tell you -

He comes closer still. The HORSE breathes between
them. ELINOR is on fire with anticipation but EDWARD
looks troubled and has less the air of a suitor than he
might.

EDWARD
- about - about my education.

ELINOR
(after a beat) Your education?

EDWARD

Yes.

EDWARD laughs nervously. ELINOR is completely bewildered.

EDWARD

It was conducted in Plymouth - oddly enough -

ELINOR

Indeed?

EDWARD

Yes. Do you know it?

ELINOR

Plymouth?

EDWARD

Yes.

ELINOR

No.

EDWARD

Oh - well - I spent four years there
- at a school run by a - a Mr Pratt -

ELINOR

Pratt?

ELINOR is beginning to feel like a parrot.

EDWARD

Precisely - Mr Pratt - and there, I -
that is to say, he has a -

As EDWARD flounders, a familiar voice cuts through this unexpected foray into his academic past.

FANNY

Edward! Edward!

They turn to find FANNY powering down upon them waving a letter. EDWARD steps back, glancing almost guiltily at ELINOR who is as confused as we are.

FANNY

I have been all over for you! You
are needed in London this instant!

EDWARD

Fanny, I am leaving this afternoon as
it is -

FANNY

No, no, that will not do. Family affairs are in chaos owing to your absence. Mother is quite adamant that you should leave at once.

FANNY is determined. She obviously has no intention of leaving him alone with ELINOR. EDWARD turns to ELINOR, frustration in every muscle, his jaw set tight.

EDWARD

Excuse me, Miss Dashwood.

FANNY drags EDWARD off, leaving ELINOR to gaze sadly after them.

INT. THE LADIES' CARRIAGE. OPEN ROAD. RAIN. EVE.

The DASHWOODS are on their way. The mood is very sombre.

MARGARET

Edward promised he would bring the atlas to Barton for me.

MARIANNE looks at ELINOR, pleased.

MARIANNE

Did he? Well, I will wager he will do so in less than a fortnight!

MRS DASHWOOD looks at ELINOR with satisfaction.

MRS. DASHWOOD

Dear Edward - it is enough to say that he is unlike Fanny - it implies everything amiable.

EXT. THE LADIES' CARRIAGE. OPEN ROAD. EVE.

The carriage rolls on.

MARGARET (V/O)

Are we there yet?

EXT. ROAD TO AND FROM BARTON COTTAGE. DAY.

In comparison to Norland, Barton Cottage has the air of a damp shoebox. It sits low and bleak in the grey lonely countryside. From one side we can see the DASHWOODS' carriage drawing up at the gate. From the other, a much grander vehicle from which loud whooping can be heard, is approaching.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. GARDEN PATH. DAY.

As the exhausted DASHWOODS alight they converge with a ruddy-complexioned MAN in a reding-coat (SIR JOHN MIDDLETON) and a rotund, equally roseate LADY (MRS JENNINGS) who have fallen over each other in their haste to get out of their carriage.

MRS DASHWOOD

Sir John!

SIR JOHN clasps her hands and starts to help her up the path, followed by ELINOR, MARIANNE and MARGARET who is clearly fascinated by his bouncy companion.

SIR JOHN

Dear ladies, dear ladies, upon my word, here you are, here you are, here you are!

MRS DASHWOOD

Sir John - your extraordinary kindness -

SIR JOHN

Oh none of that, hush please, none of that, but here is my dear mamma-in-law Mrs Jennings -

MRS JENNINGS

Was the journey tolerable, you poor souls?

SIR JOHN

Why did you not come up to the Park first and take your ease? We saw you pass -

Like many people who live rather lonely lives together, SIR JOHN and MRS JENNINGS talk incessantly, interrupt each other all the time and never listen.

MRS JENNINGS

- but I would not wait for you to come to us, I made John call for the carriage -

SIR JOHN

She would not wait, you know -

MRS JENNINGS

- as we get so little company.

They reach the front door and BETSY's smiling welcome. In the confusion of milling people and THOMAS carrying

the lighter luggage, MARIANNE contrives to slip into the house alone. We follow her but hear the conversation continuing in V/O. MARIANNE looks about the parlour, where a dismal fire is smoking. She starts up the stairs, expressionless.

MRS JENNINGS V/O

But I feel as if I know you already -
delightful creatures -

SIR JOHN V/O

Delightful! And you know you are to
dine at Barton Park every day!

MRS DASHWOOD V/O

Oh, but dear Sir John, we cannot -

SIR JOHN V/O

Oh, no no no no no no no, I shall not
brook refusals, I am quite deaf to
'em, you know -

MRS JENNINGS V/O

- deaf -

MARIANNE enters a small bedroom. She sits on the bed. Then she goes to the window and opens it. Voices float up.

SIR JOHN V/O

- but I insist!

ELINOR V/O

Let us only settle in for a few days,
Sir John, and thank you -

SIR JOHN V/O

Oh no thankings, no, please, can't
bear 'em, embarrassing you know -

MARIANNE closes the window and crosses the corridor to another bedroom - similarly stark. She sighs and turns back down the stairs.

SIR JOHN V/O

We will send game and fruit as a
matter of course -

MRS JENNINGS V/O

- fruit and game -

SIR JOHN V/O

- and the carriage is at your beck
and call -

MARIANNE joins the group, who are now in the parlour.

MRS JENNINGS

- call - and here is Miss Marianne!
-

SIR JOHN

Where did you disappear to? -

MRS JENNINGS

I declare you are the loveliest girls
I ever set eyes on! Cannot you get
them married Mrs Dashwood? You must
not leave it any longer!

SIR JOHN

But alas there are no smart young men
hereabouts to woo them -

MRS JENNINGS

- not a beau for miles!

The strain of exhibiting joy and gratitude is beginning
to tell on MRS DASHWOOD who is sagging visibly.

SIR JOHN

Come, Mother, let us leave them in
peace.

MRS JENNINGS

But there is Colonel Brandon!

SIR JOHN is dragging her down the path.

- excellent fellow! We served in the
East India Regiment together -

MRS JENNINGS

Just wait till he sees you! If we
can persuade him out to meet you!

SIR JOHN

- reclusive individual. But you are
fatigued. I can see that you are
fatigued.

MRS JENNINGS

Of course she's fatigued!

Now he is pushing her into the carriage.

SIR JOHN

Send Thomas to us for the carriage
when you are ready!

They take off, waving wildly. MARGARET goes down the
path to watch them and turns back to her slightly
stunned family.

MARGARET
I like them.

MRS DASHWOOD
(weakly) What generosity.

ELINOR
Indeed. I am surprised they did not
offer us their clothing.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. ELINOR AND MARIANNE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

MARIANNE and ELINOR are getting undressed for bed. It is very cold. They keep their underclothing on and get in, shivering at the bony chill of the linen.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. KITCHEN GARDEN. DAY.

BETSY is pinning out laundry.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. GARDEN. DAY.

MARGARET tries to climb an impossible tree. Her petticoats snag and tear.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. ELINOR AND MARIANNE'S BEDROOM. DAY.

MARIANNE looks out of the window at the wild countryside. Unconsciously, one hand plays up and down on the sill as though it were a keyboard.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. DAY.

ELINOR sits at a little desk counting money and making notes. BETSY enters to clean out the fire. She notices the money.

BETSY
Sugar is five shilling a pound these
parts Miss Dashwood.

ELINOR
(lightly) No more sugar then.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. EVE.

CLOSE on MRS DASHWOOD looking out of the window, thinking. She remembers MRS JENNINGS's words:

MRS JENNINGS (V/O)
Not a beau for miles...

MRS DASHWOOD turns into the room to look at her brood.
ELINOR and MARIANNE are mending MARGARET's petticoats.
CLOSE on the mother's anxious expression - what is to become of them?

EXT. BARTON PARK. EVE.

Establishing shot of SIR JOHN's house - a very comfortable-looking country seat with fine grounds.

SIR JOHN (V/O)
Where can Brandon be, poor fellow? I hope he has not lamed his horse.

INT. BARTON PARK. DINING ROOM. EVE.

CLOSE on an empty chair and place setting. Pull out to reveal the DASHWOODS at their first dinner with SIR JOHN and MRS JENNINGS.

MRS JENNINGS
Colonel Brandon is the most eligible bachelor in the county - he is bound to do for one of you - mind, he is a better age for Miss Dashwood - but I dare say she has left her heart behind in Sussex, eh?

MARIANNE flashes an unmistakeable glance of alarmed concern at her sister, which MRS JENNINGS notices.

MRS JENNINGS
Aha! I see you, Miss Marianne! I think I have unearthed a secret!

SIR JOHN
Oho! Have you sniffed one out already, Mother? You are worse than my best pointer Flossie!

They both laugh immoderately. ELINOR tries to stay calm.

MRS JENNINGS
What sort of man is he, Miss Dashwood? Is he butcher, baker, candlestick-maker? I shall winkle it out of you somehow, you know!

SIR JOHN
She's horribly good at winking.

MRS JENNINGS

You are in lonely country now, Miss Dashwood, none of us has any secrets here -

SIR JOHN

- or if we do, we do not keep them for long!

ELINOR tries to smile. MARIANNE looks furious. MARGARET is staring at MRS JENNINGS as if she were some particularly thrilling form of wildlife.

MRS JENNINGS

He is curate of the parish, I dare say!

SIR JOHN

Or a handsome lieutenant!

MRS JENNINGS

Give us a clue, Miss Dashwood - is he in uniform?

ELINOR starts to change the subject, but MARGARET interrupts her.

MARGARET

He has no profession!

SIR JOHN and MRS JENNINGS turn on her with screams of delight. ELINOR, MARIANNE and MRS DASHWOOD look at each other helplessly.

SIR JOHN

No profession! A gentleman, then!

MARIANNE

(with daggers) Margaret you know perfectly well there is no such person.

MARGARET

There is! There is! And his name begins with an 'F'!

ELINOR looks hard at her plate.

MRS DASHWOOD

Margaret!

MRS DASHWOOD is appalled at her youngest's relish for such a vulgar game. SIR JOHN and MRS JENNINGS are cock-a-hoop.

SIR JOHN

'F' indeed! A very promising letter
- let me - F, F - Fo - Fa - upon my
word but I cannot think of a single
name beginning with F -

MRS JENNINGS

Forrest? Foster? Frost? Foggarty?

MARIANNE suddenly stands up. SIR JOHN and MRS JENNINGS
are so surprised they stop talking. Everyone stares at
MARIANNE.

MARIANNE

(controlled fury) Sir John, might I
play your pianoforte?

SIR JOHN

Of course, yes - my goodness. We do
not stand on ceremony here, my dear.

For once, ELINOR is grateful for her sister's rudeness
as everyone rises and follows MARIANNE out.

EXT. BARTON PARK. FRONT STEPS. EVE.

A soldierly MAN of about forty (COLONEL BRANDON) is
dismounting from his horse. From within we hear
MARIANNE's song begin. His head snaps up to the
windows. An expression of pained surprise comes into
his melancholy, brooding eyes.

INT. BARTON PARK. MUSIC ROOM. EVE.

Everyone watches MARIANNE as she plays and sings.
Behind them we see BRANDON entering. But he stays in
the shadow of the door and no-one notices him. CLOSE
on his face. He gazes at MARIANNE with an unfathomable
look of grief and longing. He breathes in deeply.
Suddenly, ELINOR feels his presence and looks around at
him. After a few moments, she turns back, slightly
puzzled. The song finishes. Everyone claps. The MAN
ventures out into the light and SIR JOHN springs from
his seat.

SIR JOHN

Brandon! Where have you been? Come,
come and meet our beautiful new
neighbours!

MRS JENNINGS

What a pity you are late Colonel -
you have missed the most delightful
singing!

BRANDON bows to the company and smiles slightly.

COLONEL BRANDON
A great pity indeed.

ELINOR looks at him, even more puzzled.

SIR JOHN
Mrs Dashwood - may I present my dear
friend Colonel Brandon - we served
together in the East Indies and I
assure you there is no better fellow
on earth -

MARGARET
Have you really been to the East
Indies, Colonel?

COLONEL BRANDON
I have.

MARGARET
What is it like?

MARGARET is quivering with fascination.

SIR JOHN
Like? Hot.

But COLONEL BRANDON knows what MARGARET wants to hear.

COLONEL BRANDON
(mysteriously) The air is full of
spices.

MARGARET smiles with satisfaction.

SIR JOHN
Come, Miss Dashwood - it is your turn
to entertain us!

ELINOR
Oh no, Sir John - I do not -

SIR JOHN
- and I think we can all guess what
key you will sing in!

SIR JOHN and MRS JENNINGS are bursting with their new
joke.

SIR JOHN/MRS JENNINGS
'F' major!!

They fall about.

INT. SIR JOHN'S CARRIAGE. NIGHT.

THE DASHWOODS are returning home. A row is in progress.

MARIANNE

(to Margaret) As for you, you have no right, no right at all, to parade your ignorant assumptions -

MARGARET

They are not assumptions. You told me.

ELINOR stares at MARIANNE. MARIANNE colours and attacks MARGARET again.

MARIANNE

I told you nothing -

MARGARET

They'll meet him when he comes, anyway.

MARIANNE

That is not the point. You do not speak of such things before strangers -

MARGARET

But everyone else was -

MARIANNE

Mrs Jennings is not everyone.

MARGARET

I like her! She talks about things. We never talk about things.

MRS DASHWOOD

Hush, please, now that is enough, Margaret. If you cannot think of anything appropriate to say, you will please restrict your remarks to the weather.

A heated pause.

MARGARET

I like Colonel Brandon too. He's been to places.

INT. POND NEAR BARTON PARK. DAY.

In the background, SIR JOHN, ELINOR and MRS JENNINGS pack the remains of a picnic into a basket. MRS DASHWOOD and MARGARET examine a foxhole. In the foreground, MARIANNE is cutting bulrushes for basket-work. Her knife is blunt and she saws impatiently. COLONEL BRANDON materialises at her side and wordlessly offers her his hunting knife.

Oddly nervous, MARIANNE takes it. She turns back to the rushes and cuts them with ease. The COLONEL's gaze follows her movements as if held by a magnet.

INT. KEEPER'S LODGE. BARTON PARK. DAY.

SIR JOHN and BRANDON are cleaning their guns in companionable silence - a habit left over from army days. SIR JOHN eyes BRANDON roguishly.

SIR JOHN
You know what they're saying, of course...

No answer.

SIR JOHN
The word is that you have developed a taste for - certain company...

BRANDON stays resolutely silent. SIR JOHN is emboldened.

SIR JOHN
And why not, say I? A man like you - in his prime - she'd be a most fortunate young lady -

BRANDON cuts across him.

COLONEL BRANDON
Marianne Dashwood would no more think of me than she would of you, John.

SIR JOHN
Brandon, my boy, do not think of yourself so meanly -

COLONEL BRANDON
- and all the better for her.

SIR JOHN subsides. BRANDON is clearly as angry with himself as he is with SIR JOHN.

EXT. POND NEAR BARTON PARK. ANOTHER DAY.

BRANDON strides along in hunting gear, a gun slung under one arm, his dog trotting behind him with a duck clamped between its jaws. The bulrushes catch his eye and he slows, then stops. He stands for a moment deep in thought. Then he takes his hunting-knife, cuts one and walks off contemplatively.

EXT. BARTON PARK. GARDENS. DAY.

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An outdoor luncheon is in progress. COLONEL BRANDON is talking to MRS DASHWOOD. Occasionally he looks over towards MARIANNE, who is playing bilbo catch with SIR JOHN and MARGARET. MRS JENNINGS nudges ELINOR hard and gestures to BRANDON.

MRS JENNINGS

(stage whisper) Besotted! Excellent match, for he is rich and she is handsome.

ELINOR

How long have you known the Colonel?

MRS JENNINGS

Oh Lord bless you, as long as ever I have been here and I came fifteen years back. His estate at Delaford is but four mile hence and he and John are very thick. He has no wife or children of his own, for -

MRS JENNINGS lowers her voice to a stentorian whisper.

MRS JENNINGS

he has a tragic history - he loved a girl once - twenty years ago now - a ward to his family, but they were not permitted to marry...

ELINOR is intrigued.

ELINOR

On what grounds?

MRS JENNINGS

Money. Eliza was poor. When the father discovered their amour, she was flung out of the house and he packed off into the army. I believe he would have done himself a harm if not for John...

ELINOR

What became of the lady?

MRS JENNINGS

Oh, she was passed from man to man - disappeared from all good society. When Brandon got back from India he searched for heaven knows how long only to find her dying in a poor-house. You have seen how it has affected him. Once I thought my daughter Charlotte might have cheered him up but she is much better off where she is.

ELINOR is silent with amazement at this unexpected history.

MRS JENNINGS

Look at him now, though. So attentive. I shall try an experiment on him.

ELINOR

Oh no, please, dear Mrs Jennings, leave the poor Colonel alone.

MRS JENNINGS

No, no, it is just the thing - all suitors need a little help, my dear...

MRS JENNINGS winks at ELINOR and rubs her hands as though about to perform a magic trick.

MRS JENNINGS

(trillingly) Colonel Brandon!

BRANDON looks up.

MRS JENNINGS

We have not heard you play for us of late!

COLONEL BRANDON

For the simple reason that you have a far superior musician here -

He indicates MARIANNE who smiles absently.

MRS JENNINGS

Perhaps you did not know, Miss Marianne, that our dear Brandon shares your passion for music and plays the pianoforte very well.

MARIANNE looks at BRANDON in some surprise.

MRS JENNINGS
Play us a duet!

BRANDON looks at MRS JENNINGS warningly but she ignores him.

MRS JENNINGS
I'll trow you know quite as many
melancholy tunes as Miss Marianne!

Her tone is so knowing that MARIANNE frowns uncomfortably.

MRS JENNINGS
Come! Let us see you both side by
side!

MARIANNE rises impatiently.

MARIANNE
I do not know any duets. Forgive me,
Colonel.

She moves away. MRS JENNINGS chuckles.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. LATE AFTERNOON.

The DASHWOODS returning. MARIANNE is taking her bonnet off so furiously that she simply gets the knot tighter and tighter. Despite themselves, ELINOR and MRS DASHWOOD are amused.

MARIANNE
Oh! Are we never to have a moment's
peace? The rent here may be low but
I think we have it on very hard
terms...

ELINOR
Mrs Jennings is a wealthy woman with
a married daughter - she has nothing
to do but marry off everyone else's.

BETSY pokes her head out from the dining-room.

BETSY
There's a parcel arrived for you, Mrs
Dashwood!

MARGARET
A parcel!

They all crowd into the dining-room to find a large package on the table which MARGARET is permitted to

open. In the meantime ELINOR comes to the rescue with the bonnet and MARIANNE stands shifting like a spirited mare as ELINOR patiently unravels the knot.

MARIANNE

It is too ridiculous! When is a man to be safe from such wit if age and infirmity do not protect him?

ELINOR

Infirmity!

MRS DASHWOOD

If Colonel Brandon is infirm, then I am at death's door.

ELINOR

It is a miracle your life has extended this far...

MARIANNE

Did you not hear him complain of a rheumatism in his shoulder?

ELINOR

"A slight ache" I believe was his phrase...

MARIANNE smiles and ELINOR laughs at her. Then MARGARET pulls away the last of the paper to reveal - her atlas. The atmosphere alters immediately as MRS DASHWOOD and MARIANNE look at ELINOR in consternation.

MARGARET

But Edward said he would bring it himself.

There is a letter on top of the atlas. CLOSE on the address "To the Dashwoods". MRS DASHWOOD picks it up, looks at ELINOR, and opens it.

MRS DASHWOOD

"Dear Mrs Dashwood, Miss Dashwood, Miss Marianne, and Captain Margaret - it gives me great pleasure to restore this Atlas to its rightful owner. Alas, business in London does not permit me to accompany it, although this is likely to hurt me far more than it hurts you. For the present my memories of your kindness must be enough to sustain me, and I remain your devoted servant always. E. C. Ferrars."

A silence greets this brief epistle. ELINOR struggles to contain her bitter disappointment.

MARGARET
But why hasn't he come?

MRS DASHWOOD
He says he is busy, dear.

MARGARET
He said he'd come.

MARGARET is genuinely upset. ELINOR quietly hangs up MARIANNE's bonnet.

MARGARET
Why hasn't he come?

MRS DASHWOOD looks beseechingly at MARIANNE who nods and grasps MARGARET's hand.

MARIANNE
I am taking you for a walk.

MARGARET
No! I've been a walk.

MARIANNE
You need another.

MARGARET
It is going to rain.

MARIANNE shoves her bonnet back on and drags MARGARET out.

MARIANNE
It is not going to rain.

MARGARET
You always say that and then it always does.

We hear the front door slam behind them. There is a short silence.

MRS DASHWOOD
I fear Mrs Jennings is a bad influence.

She approaches ELINOR.

MRS DASHWOOD
You must miss him, Elinor.

ELINOR looks very directly at her mother.

ELINOR
We are not engaged, Mamma.

MRS DASHWOOD
But he loves you, dearest, of that I
am certain.

ELINOR looks down. She speaks slowly, choosing her
words with care.

ELINOR
I am by no means assured of his
regard for me...

MRS DASHWOOD
Oh, Elinor!

ELINOR
- but even were he to feel such a -
preference, I think we should be
foolish to assume that there would
not be many obstacles to his choosing
a woman of no rank who cannot afford
to buy sugar...

MRS DASHWOOD
But Elinor - your heart must tell you

ELINOR
In such a situation, Mamma, it is
perhaps better to use one's head.

She clears her throat, rises determinedly, picks up the
accounts book and opens it. MRS DASHWOOD is silenced.

EXT. FIELDS NEAR BARTON COTTAGE. DAY.

MARIANNE walks very briskly, dragging an unwilling
MARGARET behind her.

EXT. DOWNS NEAR BARTON COTTAGE. DAY.

It has started to rain. Mists are gathering around the
two figures struggling against the wind.

MARIANNE
Is there any felicity in the world
superior to this?

MARGARET
I told you it would rain.

MARIANNE

Look! There is some blue sky! Let
us chase it!

MARGARET

I'm not supposed to run.

MARIANNE runs off down the hill into the heart of the
mist. MARGARET stumbles after her, grumbling. We
follow MARIANNE in her headlong descent and suddenly,
dramatically, she trips and sprawls to the ground,
letting out a sharp cry of pain.

MARGARET

Marianne!

MARIANNE

Help me.

She tries to get up, but the pain in her ankle is too
great. She sinks back to the ground. MARGARET is very
alarmed.

MARIANNE

Margaret - run home and fetch help.

The mists have thickened. They can no longer see where
they are. Despite her rising fear, MARGARET squares
her shoulders bravely and tries to sense the direction.

MARGARET

I think it is this way - I will run
as fast as I can, Marianne.

She dashes off. As she goes into the mist we hear the
thunder of hooves. CU Margaret's terrified expression
- they seem to be coming from all around. She wheels
and turns and then - CRASH! Through the mist breaks a
huge white HORSE. Astride sits an Adonis in hunting
gear. MARGARET squeals. The horse rears. Its rider
controls it and slides off. He rushes to MARIANNE's
side.

THE STRANGER

Are you hurt?

MARIANNE

(transfixed) Only my ankle.

THE STRANGER

May I have your permission to -

He indicates her leg. Decorous - perhaps faintly
impish.

THE STRANGER

- ascertain if there are any breaks?

MARIANNE nods speechlessly. With great delicacy, he feels her ankle. MARGARET's eyes are out on chapel-hooks. MARIANNE almost swoons with embarrassment and excitement mixed.

THE STRANGER

It is not broken. Now - can you put your arm about my neck?

MARIANNE does not need any encouragement. He lifts her effortlessly and calls to his HORSE "Bedivere!" which trots obediently forward. THE STRANGER smiles down at MARIANNE.

THE STRANGER

Allow me to escort you home.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. DINING ROOM. DAY.

Rain is thudding against the window from which MRS DASHWOOD turns, looking very worried.

MRS DASHWOOD

Marianne was sure it would not rain.

ELINOR

Which invariably means it will.

But we can see she is trying to conceal her anxiety from her mother. There are noises in the hall.

MRS DASHWOOD

At last!

MARGARET runs into the room dripping wet.

MARGARET

She fell over! She fell down - and he's carrying her!

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. FRONT DOOR. DAY.

MRS DASHWOOD and ELINOR rush to the front door. They see the STRANGER carrying MARIANNE up the garden path, his scarlet coat staining the monochrome rain.

MRS DASHWOOD

Marianne!

The STRANGER reaches the door - this is no time for introductions.

ELINOR

In here, sir - this way, Margaret,
open the door wider. Please, sir,
lay her here. Marianne, are you in
pain?

They move into the parlour.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. DAY.

MARIANNE is carried in, surrounded by ELINOR, MRS
DASHWOOD and MARGARET.

THE STRANGER

It is a twisted ankle.

MARIANNE

Do not be alarmed, Mamma.

THE STRANGER deposits MARIANNE on the sofa. They look
straight into each other's eyes. Electric.

THE STRANGER

I can assure you it is not serious.
I took the liberty of feeling the
bone and it is perfectly sound.

ELINOR raises her eyebrows at MARIANNE who blushes to
her roots.

MRS DASHWOOD

Sir, I cannot even begin to thank
you.

THE STRANGER

Please do not think of it. I am
honoured to be of service.

MRS DASHWOOD

Will you not be seated?

THE STRANGER

Pray excuse me - I have no desire to
leave a water mark! But permit me to
call tomorrow afternoon and enquire
after the patient?

MRS DASHWOOD

We shall look forward to it!

He turns to MARIANNE and smiles. She smiles back
gloriously. He bows, and sweeps out of the room.

MARIANNE

(hissing) His name! His name!

MRS DASHWOOD silences her with a gesture and follows him out with all the solicitous charm she can command. while MARGARET pokes her head around the door to watch. ELINOR is removing MARIANNE's boot and trying not to laugh at her.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. FRONT DOOR. DAY.

MRS DASHWOOD calls out after him.

MRS DASHWOOD
Please tell us to whom we are so much obliged?

THE STRANGER mounts BEDIVERE and turns to her.

THE STRANGER
John Willoughby of Allenham - your servant, ma'am!

And he gallops off into the mist - we almost expect BEDIVERE to sprout wings. CLOSE on MRS DASHWOOD's excited expression.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. DAY.

MRS DASHWOOD runs back into the parlour jittering with excitement and anxiety.

MARIANNE
Mr John Willoughby of Allenham!

MRS DASHWOOD
What an impressive gentleman!

MARIANNE
He lifted me as if I weighed no more than a dried leaf!

ELINOR
Is he human?

MARIANNE hits ELINOR. MRS DASHWOOD tends to her ankle?

MRS DASHWOOD
Tell me if I hurt you.

ELINOR
(regarding Marianne's ecstatic expression) She feels no pain, Mamma. Margaret, ask Betsy to make up a cold compress, please.

MARGARET
(leaving reluctantly) Oh, please
don't say anything important!

MARIANNE
Did you see him? He expressed
himself well, did he not?

MRS DASHWOOD
With great decorum and honour.

MARIANNE
And spirit and wit and feeling.

ELINOR
And economy - ten words at most.

From below stairs we can hear MARGARET wailing "Wait
for me!"

MARIANNE
And he is to come tomorrow!

ELINOR
You must change, Marianne - you will
catch a cold.

MARIANNE
What care I for colds when there is
such a man?

ELINOR
You will care very much when your
nose swells up.

MARIANNE
You are right. Help me, Elinor.

MARGARET comes back with the bandages.

MARGARET
What has happened?

ELINOR
We have decided to give you to the
gypsies.

ELINOR and MARIANNE go upstairs. MARGARET whispers to
MRS DASHWOOD.

MARGARET
Will they be married before Edward
and Elinor, do you think, Mamma?

MRS DASHWOOD
Margaret, you are worse than Mrs
Jennings.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. MORNING.

The rain has cleared. SIR JOHN's horse munches grass
contentedly by the side of the road.

SIR JOHN V/O
Mr Willoughby is well worth catching
Miss Dashwood - Miss Marianne must
not expect to have all the men to
herself!

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. MORNING.

The DASHWOODS are having a frustrating time winking
information about WILLOUGHBY out of SIR JOHN, who is in
turn only anxious to protect BRANDON's interests.
MARIANNE has her bandaged foot up on the sofa and is
fast losing patience.

MARIANNE
But what do you know of Mr
Willoughby, Sir John?

SIR JOHN
Decent shot - and there is not a
bolder rider in all England.

MARIANNE
But what is he like?

SIR JOHN
Like?

MARIANNE
What are his tastes? His passions?
His pursuits?

SIR JOHN
(mystified) Well - he has the nicest
little bitch of a pointer - was she
out with him yesterday?

MARIANNE gives up. MRS DASHWOOD takes over.

MRS DASHWOOD
Where is Allenham, Sir John?

SIR JOHN

Nice little estate three miles east.
He is to inherit it from an elderly
relative - Lady Allen is her name.

Now they are getting somewhere. MARIANNE is about to ask another question when they hear a horse galloping up. Everyone is electrified. MARGARET runs to the window and turns back in disappointment.

MARGARET

It is Colonel Brandon. I shall go
outside and keep watch.

MARGARET runs out of the room.

SIR JOHN

You are all on the look out for
Willoughby, eh? Dear me, poor
Brandon. You will none of you think
of him now.

BRANDON is admitted by BETSY. He is carrying a large bunch of hothouse flowers.

COLONEL BRANDON

How is the invalid?

He hands MARIANNE the flowers with a smile.

MARIANNE

Thank you so much, Colonel.

She rather absently hands the flowers to ELINOR who goes out for a vase. SIR JOHN gestures at BRANDON with bluff insensitivity.

SIR JOHN

Miss Marianne, I cannot see why you
should set your cap at Mr Willoughby
when you have already made such a
splendid conquest!

MARIANNE

I have no intention of "setting my
cap" at anyone, Sir John!

COLONEL BRANDON

Mr Willoughby - Lady Allen's nephew?

BRANDON's light tone betrays no emotion. ELINOR comes back in with the flowers and puts them on the table next to MARIANNE.

SIR JOHN

Aye - he visits every year for he is to inherit Allenhurst - and he has a very pretty estate of his own, Miss Dashwood, Combe Magna in Somerset. If I were you I would not give him up to my younger sister in spite of all this tumbling down hills...

Suddenly MARGARET runs in screaming "Marianne's preserver!" at the top of her voice. Everyone starts to move at once. MARGARET is silenced. BRANDON looks at MARIANNE whose incandescent expression makes her feelings all too clear.

SIR JOHN

Here is the man himself. Come, Brandon - we know when we are not wanted. Let us leave him to the ladies!

ELINOR

Marianne! Sir John and the Colonel are leaving.

MARIANNE looks up, suddenly self-conscious.

MARIANNE

Goodbye, Colonel. Thank you for the flowers.

ELINOR sees them out. We hear WILLOUGHBY's voice outside. CLOSE on MARIANNE's radiant anticipation.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. FRONT DOOR. DAY.

WILLOUGHBY is shaking hands with COLONEL BRANDON and SIR JOHN.

WILLOUGHBY

How do you do Colonel?

SIR JOHN

How does he do? How do you do, more like. Go on in, they're waiting for you!

BRANDON looks at WILLOUGHBY for a moment. He bows. WILLOUGHBY bows. Then BRANDON and SIR JOHN exit.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. DAY.

ELINOR leads in WILLOUGHBY. MRS DASHWOOD greets him with outstretched arms.

MRS DASHWOOD

Mr Willoughby! What a pleasure to see you again!

WILLOUGHBY

The pleasure is all mine I can assure you. I trust Miss Marianne has not caught cold?

MARIANNE

You have found out my name!

WILLOUGHBY

Of course. The neighbourhood is crawling with my spies.

He suddenly produces a bunch of wild flowers from behind his back and offers them to MARIANNE with a courtly, humorous bow.

WILLOUGHBY

And since you cannot venture out to nature, nature must be brought to you!

MARIANNE

How beautiful. These are not from the hothouse.

WILLOUGHBY sees BRANDON's flowers.

WILLOUGHBY

Ah! I see mine is not the first offering, nor the most elegant. I am afraid I - obtained these from an obliging field.

MARIANNE

But I have always preferred wild flowers!

WILLOUGHBY

I suspected as much.

ELINOR takes the delicate flowers from WILLOUGHBY.

ELINOR

I will put these in water.

MRS DASHWOOD

Our gratitude, Mr Willoughby, is beyond expression -

WILLOUGHBY

But it is I who am grateful - I have often passed this cottage and grieved for its lonely state - and then the first news I had from Lady Allen when I arrived was that it was taken. I felt a peculiar interest in the event which nothing can account for but my present delight in meeting you.

He is merry, spirited, voluble - a breath of fresh air. ELINOR brings back WILLOUGHBY's flowers and places them next to BRANDON's on the side-table.

MRS DASHWOOD

Pray sit down, Mr Willoughby.

She indicates a chair but WILLOUGHBY sees a book lying on MARIANNE's footstool, picks it up and - to her great delight - sits down on the stool at her feet.

WILLOUGHBY

Who is reading Shakespeares's sonnets?

Everyone answers at once.

MARIANNE/MARGARET/MRS DASHWOOD

I am / We all are / Marianne.

MRS DASHWOOD

Marianne has been reading them out to us.

WILLOUGHBY

Which are your favourites?

It is a general question but MARIANNE gaily commandeers it.

MARIANNE

Without a doubt, mine is 116.

WILLOUGHBY

'Let me not to the marriage of true minds Admit impediments. Love is not love Which alters when it alteration finds, Or bends with the remover to remove' - then how does it go?

MARIANNE

'Oh no - it is an ever-fixed mark'

WILLOUGHBY joins in the line halfway through and continues. ELINOR and MRS DASHWOOD exchange glances.

Clearly, their contribution to this conversation will be minimal.

WILLOUGHBY

'That looks on storms' - or is it tempests? Let me find it.

WILLOUGHBY gets out a tiny leatherbound book.

WILLOUGHBY

It is strange you should be reading them - for look, I carry this with me always.

It is a miniature copy of the Sonnets. MARIANNE is delighted, and, mutually astonished at this piece of synchronicity, they proceed to look up other favourites, chatting as though they were already intimates. MRS DASHWOOD smiles at ELINOR with satisfaction. ELINOR, amused, picks up her sewing. MARGARET stares. WILLOUGHBY and MARIANNE are oblivious to everything but each other.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. GARDEN PATH. DAY.

WILLOUGHBY is leaving. He has a flower from MARIANNE's bunch in his buttonhole and is on his horse looking about as virile as his horse. Everyone has come out to say goodbye, MARIANNE supported by ELINOR and MRS DASHWOOD.

WILLOUGHBY

Till tomorrow! And my pocket sonnets are yours Miss Marianne! A talisman against further injury!

MARIANNE

Goodbye! Thank you!

He gallops off. They all wave. MARGARET follows him down the road for a while.

ELINOR

Good work, Marianne! You have covered Shakespeare, Scott, and all forms of poetry, another meeting will ascertain his views on nature and romantic attachments and then you will have nothing left to talk about and the acquaintanceship will be over.

MARIANNE

I suppose I have erred against decorum. I should have been dull and spiritless and talked only of the weather - or the state of the roads...

ELINOR

No, but Mr Willoughby can be in no doubt of your enthusiasm for him...

MARIANNE

Why should he doubt it? Why should I hide my regard?

ELINOR

No particular reason, Marianne, only that we know so little of him -

MARIANNE

But time alone does not determine intimacy. Seven years would be insufficient to make some people acquainted with each other and seven days are more than enough for others.

ELINOR

Or seven hours in this case.

MARIANNE

I feel I know Mr Willoughby well - already. If I had weaker, more shallow feelings perhaps I could conceal them, as you do -

Then she realises what she's said.

MRS DASHWOOD

Marianne, that is not fair -

MARIANNE

I am sorry, Elinor, I did not mean...

ELINOR

I know. Do not trouble yourself, Marianne.

ELINOR turns back into the house.

MARIANNE

I do not understand her, Mamma. Why does she never mention Edward? I have never even seen her cry about him, or about Norland...

MRS DASHWOOD

Nor I. But Elinor is not like you or I, dear. She does not like to be swayed by her emotions.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. ELINOR AND MARIANNE'S BEDROOM. DAY.

CLOSE on Edward's handkerchief. We can see the monogram ECF clearly. CLOSE on ELINOR staring out of the window. Tears stand in her eyes but she presses the handkerchief to them before they fall.

EXT. BARTON PARK. DRAWING ROOM. DAY.

After dinner. Tea has been served. ELINOR, COLONEL BRANDON, MRS DASHWOOD and MRS JENNINGS play at cards. In a far corner of the room, MARIANNE is concentrating as she draws a silhouette. WILLOUGHBY's profile glows behind the screen in front of her. She looks up and stops, gazing, bewitched, at his beauty. The lips move - a whisper: "Marianne." Then louder: "Haven't you finished?" He moves out from behind the screen, eyes full of laughter. They look at each other.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. DAY.

ELINOR and MRS DASHWOOD are at the accounts. WILLOUGHBY and MARIANNE are on the other side of the room in the window seat, whispering together. Clearly, he is already part of the family.

MRS DASHWOOD

Surely you are not going to deny us beef as well as sugar?

ELINOR

There is nothing under tenpence a pound. We have to economise.

MRS DASHWOOD

Do you want us to starve?

ELINOR

No. Just not to eat beef.

MRS DASHWOOD is silenced but sighs crossly. ELINOR looks over to the lovers and sees WILLOUGHBY in the act of cutting off a lock of MARIANNE's hair, which he kisses and places in his pocket-book. ELINOR is transfixed by this strangely erotic moment. WILLOUGHBY senses her gaze and looks over. She snaps her head back to her sums and is astonished to find that she has written 'Edward' at the top of the sheet. Hastily she rubs it out and writes 'Expenses'.

EXT. BARTON CHURCH. DAY.

MRS JENNINGS is talking to the elderly CURATE. Other PARISHIONERS exit the church as WILLOUGHBY's curricule (the eighteenth century equivalent of a sports car) goes flying by. MARIANNE sits by his side, the picture of happiness. MRS JENNINGS nudges the CURATE and whispers. The PARISHIONERS stare after them and comment to each other.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. GARDEN PATH. DAY.

MARIANNE and ELINOR are coming down the path together. MARIANNE is dressed to go out. The argument has evidently started indoors and is being continued here.

MARIANNE

If there was any true impropriety in my behaviour I should be sensible of it, Elinor -

ELINOR

But as it has already exposed you to some very impertinent remarks, do you not begin to doubt your own discretion?

MARIANNE

If the impertinent remarks of such as Mrs Jennings are proof of impropriety, then we are all offending every moment of our lives -

The conversation is halted by the arrival of COLONEL BRANDON on horseback.

COLONEL BRANDON

(dismounting) Miss Dashwood! Miss Marianne!

ELINOR

Good morning, Colonel!

COLONEL BRANDON

I come to issue an invitation. A picnic on my estate at Delaford - if you would care to join us on Thursday next, Mrs Jennings's daughter and her husband are travelling up especially.

ELINOR

Thank you, Colonel, we shall be delighted.

At that moment, WILLOUGHBY's curricule hoves into view and MARIANNE's face lights up.

COLONEL BRANDON
(to Marianne) I will of course be
including Mr Willoughby in the party.

Even MARIANNE is a little embarrassed and recollects her manners. She smiles kindly at BRANDON.

MARIANNE
I should be delighted to join you,
Colonel!

The COLONEL helps her into the curricule, exchanging nods with WILLOUGHBY, who is regarding him with some suspicion.

WILLOUGHBY
Good morning, Miss Dashwood; good
morning, Colonel.

MARIANNE
The Colonel has invited us to
Delaford!

WILLOUGHBY
Excellent. I understand you have a
particularly fine pianoforte,
Colonel.

The undercurrents of this conversation are decidedly tense.

COLONEL BRANDON
A Broadwood Grand.

MARIANNE
A Broadwood Grand! Then I shall
really be able to play for you!

WILLOUGHBY
We shall look forward to it!

MARIANNE smiles her perfect happiness at him and he whips up the HORSES. They drive off, waving their farewells. BRANDON looks after them for a silent moment, and then collects himself and turns to ELINOR, who is less than satisfied with their behaviour.

COLONEL BRANDON
Your sister seems very happy.

ELINOR

Yes. Marianne does not approve of hiding her emotions. In fact, her romantic prejudices have the unfortunate tendency to set propriety at naught.

COLONEL BRANDON

She is wholly unspoilt.

ELINOR

Rather too unspoilt, in my view. The sooner she becomes acquainted with the ways of the world, the better.

COLONEL BRANDON looks at her sharply and then speaks very deliberately, as though controlling some powerful emotion:

COLONEL BRANDON

I knew a lady like your sister - the same impulsive sweetness of temper - who was forced into, as you put it, a better acquaintance with the world. The result was only ruination and despair.

He stops, and briskly remounts his horse.

COLONEL BRANDON

Do not desire it, Miss Dashwood.

EXT. BARTON PARK. DRIVE. DAY.

People and carriages fill the drive, the sun shines and the atmosphere is pleasantly expectant. SIR JOHN is organising the provision of blankets and parasols and COLONEL BRANDON is busy furnishing the DRIVERS with their routes. There are three new faces: a pretty, blowsy WOMAN (CHARLOTTE PALMER), a stony-faced MAN (MR PALMER) and an exceedingly good-looking GIRL (LUCY STEELE) who are standing with ELINOR, MARGARET, MRS JENNINGS and MRS DASHWOOD. MARIANNE is standing slightly apart looking out along the road, impatient for WILLOUGHBY.

MRS JENNINGS

Imagine my surprise, Mrs Dashwood, when Charlotte and her lord and master appeared with our cousin Lucy! The last person I expected to see! "Where did you pop out from, Miss?" says I, I was never so surprised to see anyone in all my life!

LUCY STEELE smiles shyly and looks at the ground. MRS JENNINGS continues sotto voce to MRS DASHWOOD:

MRS JENNINGS

She probably came on purpose to share the fun, for there are no funds for such luxuries at home, poor thing.

LUCY

I had not seen you for so long, dear Mrs Jennings, I could not resist the opportunity.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, you sly thing! It was the Misses Dashwood she wanted to see, not Delaford, Mamma! I have heard nothing but "Miss Dashwood this, Miss Dashwood that" for I don't know how long! And what do you think of them now you do see them, Lucy? My mother has talked of nothing else in her letters since you came to Barton, Mrs Dashwood. Mr Palmer - are they not the very creatures she describes?

MR PALMER regards his wife with a less than enchanted expression.

MR PALMER

Nothing like.

CHARLOTTE

(laughing gaily) Why, Mr Palmer! Do you know you are quite rude today? He is to be an MP, you know Mrs Dashwood, and it is very fatiguing for him for he is forced to make everybody like him - he says it is quite shocking -

MR PALMER

I never said anything so irrational. Don't palm all your abuses of the language upon me.

MRS JENNINGS

(to Mrs Dashwood) Mr Palmer is so droll - he is always out of humour.

MR PALMER does indeed have the air of a man under siege. WILLOUGHBY suddenly appears in his curricule. MARIANNE waves to him with a radiant smile. MRS JENNINGS nudges CHARLOTTE and points to MARIANNE.

MRS JENNINGS

Here he is! Now you shall see,
Charlotte.

WILLOUGHBY drives up as close to MARIANNE as possible,
making her laugh.

MRS JENNINGS

How now, Mr Willoughby! You must
greet my daughter Charlotte, and Mr
Palmer -

WILLOUGHBY

How do you do?

MRS JENNINGS

And my little cousin, Miss Lucy
Steele.

WILLOUGHBY

Welcome to our party, Miss Steele!

LUCY bobs demurely. WILLOUGHBY inclines his head
politely, leaps from the curricule and hands MARIANNE
in. MRS JENNINGS coos and chuckles at them. CHARLOTTE
nudges ELINOR.

CHARLOTTE

I know Mr Willoughby extremely well -
not that I ever spoke to him but I
have seen him forever in town. Your
sister is monstrous lucky to get him.
Mamma says Colonel Brandon is in love
with her as well, which is a very
great compliment for he hardly ever
falls in love with anyone.

ELINOR smiles politely. WILLOUGHBY moves the curricule
out to the front of the drive. CHARLOTTE points after
them and laughs with MRS JENNINGS. LUCY edges up
beside ELINOR.

LUCY

May I beg a seat beside you, Miss
Dashwood? I have so longed to make
your better acquaintance! I have
heard nothing but the highest praise
for you.

ELINOR is relieved to change the subject.

ELINOR

I would be delighted. But Sir John
and Mrs Jennings are too excessive in
their compliments. I am sure to
disappoint.

LUCY

No, for it was from quite another source that I heard you praised and one not at all inclined to exaggeration.

LUCY speaks in a knowing, confidential undertone, as though not wanting anyone else to hear. At that moment a HORSEMAN thunders up the drive towards them. Everyone turns to face the new arrival.

SIR JOHN

What can this be?

It is a MESSENGER who has obviously had a long, hard ride. He asks for COLONEL BRANDON and hands him a letter, which BRANDON tears open. MRS JENNINGS is puce with suppressed curiosity.

COLONEL BRANDON

My horse! Quickly!

SIR JOHN

What is the matter, Brandon?

COLONEL BRANDON

I must away to London.

SIR JOHN

No! Impossible!

Everyone gathers round BRANDON, who is, naturally, mortified. A SERVANT brings up the COLONEL's horse.

COLONEL BRANDON

Imperative.

There is a murmur of disappointment from the party. SIR JOHN is embarrassed and protests again.

SIR JOHN

But Brandon, we are all assembled. We cannot picnic at Delaford without our host! Go up to town tomorrow.

WILLOUGHBY

Or wait till we return and start then - you would not be six hours later.

COLONEL BRANDON

I cannot afford to lose one minute. Forgive me.

As he speaks he is mounting his horse. His grave urgency silences all protest and he gallops off leaving everyone stunned and, of course, deeply curious. Then

they all start to talk at once. LUCY is still next to ELINOR.

LUCY

Oh, Miss Dashwood. I cannot bear it.
Just when I was to have the
opportunity of speaking with you.

EXT. MEADOW NEAR BARTON COTTAGE. DAY.

Having been denied their trip, THE DASHWOODS and WILLOUGHBY have set out an impromptu picnic. WILLOUGHBY is wandering restlessly about. The weather is sublime.

WILLOUGHBY

Frailty, thy name is Brandon!

MARIANNE

There are some people who cannot bear
a party of pleasure. I think he
wrote the letter himself as a trick
for getting out of it.

MRS DASHWOOD

(indulgently) You are a very wicked
pair, Colonel Brandon will be sadly
missed.

WILLOUGHBY

Why? When he is the kind of man that
everyone speaks well of and no one
remembers to talk to.

MARIANNE

Exactly!

ELINOR

Nonsense.

MRS DASHWOOD

Colonel Brandon is very highly
esteemed at the Park.

WILLOUGHBY

Which is enough censure in itself.

ELINOR

(half laughing) Really, Willoughby!

WILLOUGHBY

(imitating MRS JENNINGS perfectly)
Come, come Mr Impudence - I know you
and your wicked ways - oh!

He gives a little shriek and waddles about the garden doing her walk. He comes up to ELINOR and puts his head on her shoulder.

WILLOUGHBY

Come, Miss Dashwood, reveal your beau, reveal him, I say! Let's have no secrets between friends! Let me winkle them out of you!

ELINOR hits him on the nose with her teaspoon and he waddles off to MARIANNE.

WILLOUGHBY

(as Mrs Jennings) I declare, Miss Marianne, if I do not have you married to the Colonel by teatime, I shall swallow my own bonnet.

MARIANNE laughs. WILLOUGHBY drops the parody suddenly.

WILLOUGHBY

As if you could marry such a character.

ELINOR

Why should you dislike him?

There is indeed an edge to WILLOUGHBY's raillery. He flicks ELINOR an almost alarmed glance and then sweeps MARIANNE to her feet and starts to dance around the garden with her.

WILLOUGHBY

Because he has threatened me with rain when I wanted it fine, he has found fault with the balance of my curricule and I cannot persuade him to buy my brown mare. If it will be of any satisfaction to you, however, to be told I believe his character to be in all other respects irreproachable, I am ready to confess it. And in return for an acknowledgement that must give me some pain (he is slowing down) you cannot deny me the privilege (slower still) of disliking him (and stopping) as much as I adore

He and MARIANNE are standing looking at each other. The expression on WILLOUGHBY's face is heart-stopping. MARGARET has stopped eating and is staring with her mouth open. ELINOR glances at MRS DASHWOOD but she is gazing up at them with almost as many stars in her eyes as MARIANNE. Suddenly WILLOUGHBY breaks the mood by

swinging away from MARIANNE and gesturing to the house.

WILLOUGHBY
- this cottage!

The tension is broken. MARGARET starts to chew again.

MRS DASHWOOD
I have great plans for improvements
to it, you know, Mr Willoughby.

WILLOUGHBY
Now that I will never consent to.
Not a stone must be added to its
walls. Were I rich enough, I would
instantly pull down Combe Magna and
build it up again in the exact image
of this cottage!

ELINOR
With dark narrow stairs, a poky hall
and a fire that smokes?

WILLOUGHBY
Especiallly the fire that smokes!
Then I might be as happy at Combe
Magna as I have been at Barton.

He looks at MARIANNE, who has gone to sit at her
mother's feet.

WILLOUGHBY
But this place has one claim on my
affection which no other can possibly
share.

MARIANNE is so irradiated with happiness that she looks
like an angel.

WILLOUGHBY
Promise me you will never change it.

MRS DASHWOOD
I do not have the heart.

ELINOR
Or the money.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. GARDEN PATH AND GATE. DUSK.

MARIANNE is seeing WILLOUGHBY off.

WILLOUGHBY

Miss Marianne, will you - will you do me the honour of granting me an interview tomorrow - alone?

MARIANNE

Willoughby, we are always alone!

WILLOUGHBY

But there is something very particular I should like to ask you.

There is something about his formal tone that makes her feel shy.

MARIANNE

Of course. I shall ask Mamma if I may stay behind from church.

WILLOUGHBY

Thank you. Until tomorrow then - Miss Marianne.

He mounts Bedivere and leaves. MARIANNE looks after him, her eyes shining. He is coming to propose.

EXT. LONDON TENEMENTS. NIGHT.

A district of extreme poverty, populated by the LOWLIFE of LONDON - FOOTPADS, DOGS, RATS and SCAVENGERS of all kinds. In the distance a TAVERN belches forth drunken REVELLERS who sway and reel into the night. A hooded HORSEMAN pulls up his exhausted steed at the entrance to a Slum. He dismounts and looks up at one of the windows. The rags hanging there twitch as if someone is watching for him. He strides inside.

INT. TENEMENT STAIRS. NIGHT.

Stepping over a supine BEGGAR at the foot of the stairs, the HORSEMAN flings back his hood - it is BRANDON, hollow-eyed and dropping with weariness. We follow him up the stairs to a door which is opened by an OLDER WOMAN.

INT. TENEMENT ROOM. NIGHT.

He enters a bare room partitioned with filthy rags hung from the ceiling and lit with stinking tallow lamps. At the window stands the slight figure of a VERY YOUNG WOMAN. She turns. BRANDON reacts with a tender smile which stiffens into an expression of deep shock. We see her silhouette. She is heavily pregnant. She bursts into tears and runs into his arms.

INT. BARTON CHURCH. DAY.

Amongst the small CONGREGATION listening to the sermon drone on, we see the excited faces of ELINOR, MARGARET and MRS DASHWOOD.

MARGARET

Do you think he will kneel down when he asks her?

ELINOR

Shhh!

MARGARET

(with satisfaction) They always kneel down.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. GARDEN PATH. DAY.

THE DASHWOODS return from church to find THOMAS grooming BEDIVERE at the garden gate. Their excitement mounts.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. FRONT DOOR. DAY.

They all enter the cottage, talking nonsense loudly in order to signal their presence. MARGARET giggles. Suddenly, MARIANNE bursts out of the parlour sobbing, and disappears into the room opposite. ELINOR and MARGARET stand by the door in utter consternation, while MRS DASHWOOD goes to MARIANNE.

MRS DASHWOOD

What is wrong, my dearest?

MARIANNE shakes her head and waves them away.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. DAY.

ELINOR, MARGARET and MRS DASHWOOD enter to find WILLOUGHBY standing in a frozen attitude by the fireplace.

MRS DASHWOOD

Willoughby! What is the matter.

WILLOUGHBY

I - forgive me Mrs Dashwood. I am sent - that is to say, Lady Allen has exercised the privilege of riches upon a dependent cousin and is sending me to London.

He cannot look any of them in the eye.

MRS DASHWOOD
When - this morning?

WILLOUGHBY
Almost this moment.

MRS DASHWOOD
How very disappointing. But your business will not detain you from us for long, I hope?

WILLOUGHBY
You are very kind - but I have no idea of returning immediately into Devonshire. I am seldom invited to Allenham more than once a year.

MRS DASHWOOD
For shame Willoughby! Can you wait for an invitation from Barton Cottage?

WILLOUGHBY
My engagements at present are of such a nature - that is - I dare not flatter myself -

The atmosphere is thick with tension. WILLOUGHBY flicks a glance at the three WOMEN staring at him in mute astonishment.

WILLOUGHBY
It is folly to linger in this manner. I will not torment myself further -

He rushes past them and out of the cottage. They follow him to the door.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. FRONT DOOR. DAY.

THE DASHWOODS cluster round the door.

MARGARET
Willoughby, come back!

She is silenced by ELINOR as WILLOUGHBY seizes Bedivere's reins from THOMAS, mounts up and rides off at a furious pace.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. DAY.

They all rush back into the parlour.

ELINOR

Meg, dearest, please ask Betsy to
make a cup of hot tea for Marianne.

MARGARET nods dumbly and goes. MRS DASHWOOD has her
arms around MARIANNE.

MRS DASHWOOD

What is wrong, my love?

MARIANNE

Nothing! Please do not ask me
questions!

MARIANNE struggles free.

MARIANNE

Please let me be!

She runs off upstairs and we hear her bedroom door
slamming. There is a moment of stunned silence.

ELINOR

They must have quarrelled.

MRS DASHWOOD

That is unlikely. Perhaps this -
Lady Allen - disapproves of his
regard for Marianne and has invented
an excuse to send him away?

ELINOR

Then why did he not say as much? It
is not like Willoughby to be
secretive. Did he think Marianne was
richer than she is?

MRS DASHWOOD

How could he?

She gestures to the room and then looks at ELINOR with
a frown.

MRS DASHWOOD

What is it you suspect him of?

ELINOR

I can hardly tell you. But why was
his manner so guilty?

MRS DASHWOOD

What are you saying, Elinor? That he
has been acting a part to your sister
for all this time?

MRS DASHWOOD is getting defensive. ELINOR pauses to
think.

ELINOR

No, he loves her, I am sure.

MRS DASHWOOD

Of course he loves her!

ELINOR

But has he left her with any assurance of his return? Cannot you ask her if he has proposed?

MRS DASHWOOD

Certainly not. I cannot force a confidence from Marianne and nor must you. We must trust her to confide in us in her own time.

ELINOR

(shaking her head) There was something so underhand in the manner of his leaving.

MRS DASHWOOD

You are resolved, then, to think the worst of him.

ELINOR

Not resolved -

MRS DASHWOOD

(cold) I prefer to give him the benefit of my good opinion. He deserves no less. From all of us.

She stalks out of the room and starts up the stairs.
ELINOR follows her.

ELINOR

Mamma - I am very fond of Willoughby

-

MRS DASHWOOD goes into her bedroom and shuts the door.
ELINOR is halfway up the stairs. She meets a wet-eyed MARGARET coming down with a cup of tea.

MARGARET

She would not let me in.

ELINOR takes the cup and MARGARET runs out into the garden in tears. The sound of sobbing also comes from MARIANNE's room, and now from MRS DASHWOOD's as well. ELINOR sits down helplessly on the stairs and drinks, the tea.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. RAIN. DAY.

The rain has settled in. The cottage looks cold and bleak.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR. DAY.

BETSY carries another uneaten meal from MARIANNE's room. She looks at the food and tuts in anxiety.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. ELINOR AND MARIANNE'S BEDROOM. DAY.

MARIANNE is sitting by the window looking out at the rain through tear-swollen eyes. WILLOUGHBY's sonnets are on her lap.

MARIANNE

"How like a winter hath my absence
been From thee, the pleasure of the
fleeting year! What freezings have I
felt, what dark days seen! What old
December's bareness everywhere!"

EXT. BARTON PARK. RAIN. EVE.

Smoke issues from every chimney in the place.

INT. BARTON PARK. DRAWING-ROOM. EVE.

Dinner is over. Everyone has repaired to spend a rather dismal evening together. MARIANNE sits listlessly by the window. MR PALMER is hiding behind a newspaper. SIR JOHN and MARGARET are looking at a map and discussing routes through China. LUCY, CHARLOTTE, MRS DASHWOOD and MRS JENNINGS are at cards. ELINOR is reading.

CHARLOTTE

Oh! If only this rain would stop!

MR PALMER

(from behind the paper) If only you
would stop.

MRS JENNINGS and CHARLOTTE laugh at him.

MRS JENNINGS

'Twas you took her off my hands, Mr
Palmer, and a very good bargain you
made of it too, but now I have the
whip hand over you for you cannot
give her back!

The heavy silence behind the paper attests to the unhappy truth of this statement.

MRS JENNINGS

Miss Marianne, come and play a round with us! Looking out at the weather will not bring him back.

CHARLOTTE

(sotto voce) She ate nothing at dinner.

MRS JENNINGS

Mind, we are all a little forlorn these days. London has swallowed all our company.

CHARLOTTE and MRS JENNINGS start to gossip about the disappearances of BRANDON and WILLOUGHBY. LUCY walks over and sits by ELINOR, who politely puts aside her book.

LUCY

(low) Dear Miss Dashwood, perhaps now we might have our - discussion...

ELINOR

Our discussion?

LUCY looks around at MRS JENNINGS and lowers her voice still further, so that ELINOR is obliged to move her chair nearer.

LUCY

There is a particular question I have long wanted to ask you, but perhaps you will think me impertinent?

ELINOR

I cannot imagine so.

LUCY

But it is an odd question - forgive me - I have no wish to trouble you -

She looks away coyly as if deciding whether to speak.

ELINOR

My dear Miss Steele -

CHARLOTTE

(interrupting) Miss Dashwood, if only Mr Willoughby had gone home to Combe Magna, we could have taken Miss Marianne to see him! For we live but half a mile away.

MR PALMER

Five and a half.

CHARLOTTE

No. I cannot believe it is that far, for you can see the place from the top of our hill. Is it really five and a half miles? No. I cannot believe it.

MR PALMER

Try.

ELINOR

You have my permission to ask any manner of question, if that is of any help.

LUCY

Thank you. I wonder, are you at all acquainted with your sister-in-law's mother? Mrs Ferrars?

ELINOR sits back in deep surprise.

ELINOR

With Fanny's mother? No, I have never met her.

LUCY

I am sure you think me strange for enquiring - if I dared tell -

MRS JENNINGS

(shouting over) If she tells you aught of the famous 'Mr F', Lucy, you are to pass it on.

ELINOR tries to ignore MRS JENNINGS who is keeping a curious eye on them.

LUCY

Will you take a turn with me, Miss Dashwood?

LUCY rises and takes ELINOR's arm. She guides her as far away as possible from MRS JENNINGS and CHARLOTTE.

ELINOR

I had no idea at all that you were connected with that family.

LUCY

Oh! I am certainly nothing to Mrs Ferrars at present - but the time may come when we may be very intimately connected.

ELINOR

(low) What do you mean? Do you have an understanding with Fanny's brother Robert?

LUCY

The youngest? No, I never saw him in my life. No, with Edward.

ELINOR

Edward?

ELINOR stops walking.

ELINOR

Edward Ferrars?

LUCY nods.

LUCY

Edward and I have been secretly engaged these five years.

ELINOR is frozen to the spot.

LUCY

You may well be surprised. I should never have mentioned it, had I not known I could entirely trust you to keep our secret. Edward cannot mind me telling you for he looks on you quite as his own sister.

ELINOR walks on mechanically. Disbelief has set in.

ELINOR

I am sorry, but we surely - we cannot mean the same Mr Ferrars?

LUCY

The very same - he was four years under the tutelage of my uncle Mr Pratt, down in Plymouth. Has he never spoken of it?

ELINOR

(awareness dawning) Mr Pratt! Yes -
I believe he has...

LUCY

I was very unwilling to enter into it without his mother's approval but we loved each other with too great a passion for prudence. Though you do not know him so well as I, Miss Dashwood, you must have seen how capable he is of making a woman sincerely attached to him. I cannot pretend it has not been very hard on us both. We can hardly meet above twice a year.

She sniffs and produces a large handkerchief which she holds to her eyes so that the monogram is clearly visible. ECF. ELINOR, seeing the copy of the handkerchief she has held so dear, moves quickly to a chair and sits down.

LUCY

You seem out of sorts Miss Dashwood -
are you quite well?

ELINOR

Perfectly well, thank you.

LUCY

I have not offended you?

ELINOR

On the contrary.

MRS JENNINGS has been watching. Now she rises unable to contain herself.

MRS JENNINGS

I can stand it no longer, I must know what you are saying, Lucy! Miss Dashwood is quite engrossed!

MRS JENNINGS starts to bear down on them. LUCY whispers with real urgency:

LUCY

Oh, Miss Dashwood, if anyone finds out, it will ruin him - you must not tell a soul! Edward says you would not break your word to save your life! Promise me!

ECU on ELINOR's face.

ELINOR
I give you my word.

MRS JENNINGS looms over them.

MRS JENNINGS
Well - what can have fascinated you
to such an extent Miss Dashwood?

CHARLOTTE
Tell us all!

ELINOR cannot speak but LUCY glides smoothly in.

LUCY
We were talking of London ma'am and
all its - diversions.

MRS JENNINGS
Do you hear, Charlotte?

MRS JENNINGS claps her hands delightedly.

MRS JENNINGS
While you were so busy whispering,
Charlotte and I have concocted a
plan!

CHARLOTTE
It is the best plan in the world.

MRS JENNINGS
I make for London shortly and I
invite you, Lucy, and both the Misses
Dashwood to join me!

ELINOR cannot hide her dismay. MARIANNE springs from
her seat.

MARIANNE
London!

MARGARET
Oh, can I go! Can I go?

MRS DASHWOOD
You know perfectly well you are too
young, dearest.

MRS JENNINGS
I shall convey you all to my house in
Berkeley Street and we shall taste
all the delights of the season - what
say you?

MARGARET

Oh please can I go? I'm twelve soon.

CHARLOTTE

Mr Palmer, do you not long to have the Misses Dashwood come to London?

MR PALMER

I came into Devonshire with no other view.

ELINOR exerts herself.

ELINOR

Mrs Jennings, you are very kind, but we cannot possibly leave our mother...

LUCY's calculating eyes turn to MRS DASHWOOD with alacrity.

LUCY

Indeed the loss would be too great.

A chorus of objections goes up, particularly from MRS DASHWOOD, who is both delighted and relieved to see MARIANNE with a smile on her face.

MRS JENNINGS

Your mother can spare you very well.

MRS DASHWOOD

Of course I can!

CHARLOTTE

Of course she can!

SIR JOHN

And look at Miss Marianne - it would break her heart to deny her.

MRS JENNINGS

I will brook no refusal, Miss Dashwood!

MARIANNE claps her hands, her eyes ablaze with joy. MRS JENNINGS takes ELINOR's hand.

MRS JENNINGS

Let you and me strike hands upon the bargain - and if I do not have the three of you married by Michaelmas, it will not be my fault!

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. ELINOR/MARIANNE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

We are in ELINOR and MARIANNE's bedroom. ELINOR is in bed. She is lying on her side with her back to MARIANNE. We are CLOSE on her face. MARIANNE is running around excitedly, pulling out ribbons, looking at dresses, etc.

MARIANNE

I was never so grateful in all my life as I am to Mrs Jennings. What a kind woman she is! I like her more than I can say. Oh, Elinor! I shall see Willoughby. Think how surprised he will be! And you will see Edward!

ELINOR cannot reply.

MARIANNE

Are you asleep?

ELINOR

With you in the room?

MARIANNE laughs.

MARIANNE

I do not believe you feel as calm as you look, not even you, Elinor. I will never sleep tonight! Oh, what were you and Miss Steele whispering about so long?

CLOSE on ELINOR's expression as she struggles with the impossibility of unburdening herself to her sister without breaking her promise to LUCY. After a pause -

ELINOR

Nothing of significance.

MARIANNE looks at ELINOR curiously.

MARIANNE

Really nothing? But you seemed so interested -

ELINOR

No, it was merely dull gossip. Let me sleep, dearest.

MARIANNE is slightly hurt by ELINOR's coldness and goes back to her preparations quietly.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. GARDEN GATE. DAY.

MRS DASHWOOD and MARGARET are waving MRS JENNINGS's carriage off. MARIANNE waves back with such exuberance tha she practically falls out.

INT. MRS JENNINGS'S CARRIAGE. ROAD TO LONDON. DAY.

MRS JENNINGS is chattering about London to MARIANNE, who listens with new-found tolerance. LUCY is whispering into ELINOR's ear.

LUCY

I have written to Edward, Miss Dashwood, and yet I do not know how much I may see of him. Secrecy is vital, he will never be able to call.

ELINOR

I should imagine not.

LUCY

It is so hard. I believe my only comfort has been the constancy of his affection.

ELINOR

You are fortunate, over such a lengthy engagement, never to have had any doubts on that score.

LUCY looks at ELINOR sharply, but ELINOR is impassive.

LUCY

Oh! I am of rather a jealous nature and if he had talked more of one young lady than any other...but he has never given a moment's alarm on that count.

We can see from ELINOR's expression that she understands LUCY perfectly. The strain around her eyes is pronounced.

LUCY

Imagine how glad he will be to learn that we are friends.

EXT. LONDON STREET. DAY.

MRS JENNINGS's carriage trundles along.

EXT. MRS. JENNINGS'S HOUSE. LONDON. DAY.

Establishing shot of a handsome town house. MRS JENNINGS's carriage comes into shot and stops in front of it.

INT. MRS. JENNINGS'S HOUSE. HALL. DAY.

They enter the grand hallway under the supercilious gaze of a powdered FOOTMAN (MR PIGEON). ELINOR is haggard after two days of close proximity with LUCY. MRS JENNINGS is all officious bustle and MARIANNE is feverish with anticipation. She whispers to MRS JENNINGS, who laughs heartily.

MRS JENNINGS

To be sure my dear, you must just hand it to Pigeon there. He will take care of it.

MARIANNE hands a letter to the sphinx-like FOOTMAN. We can see a large 'W' in the address. ELINOR looks at MARIANNE inquiringly but MARIANNE moves away from her.

MRS JENNINGS

Lord above, you do not waste any time, Miss Marianne!

MARIANNE glances self-consciously at ELINOR and follows MRS JENNINGS upstairs. LUCY goes up to ELINOR and whispers.

LUCY

A letter! So they are definitely engaged! Mrs Jennings says your sister will buy her wedding-clothes here in town.

ELINOR

Indeed, Miss Steele, I know of no such plan...

But ELINOR does not know what else to say. She marches firmly upstairs.

INT. MRS JENNINGS'S HOUSE. DRAWING-ROOM. DAY.

MARIANNE and ELINOR have changed from their travelling-clothes and are having a cup of tea. At least, ELINOR is. MARIANNE is pacing up and down in front of the window.

ELINOR

John and Fanny are in town. I think we shall be forced to see them.

There is a faint knocking from somewhere. MARIANNE jumps.

ELINOR
I think it was for next door.

MARIANNE looks out of the window.

MARIANNE
Yes, you are right.

She sits down with a rueful smile. Suddenly a much louder rap is heard and they both jump. We hear a bustling downstairs. MARIANNE can hardly breathe. She goes to the drawing-room door, opens it, goes out, comes back in. We hear a MAN's voice.

MARIANNE
Oh, Elinor! It is Willoughby, indeed it is!

She turns and almost throws herself into the arms of COLONEL BRANDON.

MARIANNE
Oh! Excuse me, Colonel -

She leaves the room hastily. ELINOR is so ashamed of MARIANNE's rudeness that she does not at first notice BRANDON's mood of tense distress.

ELINOR
Colonel Brandon, what a pleasure to see you. Have you been in London all this while?

COLONEL BRANDON
I have. How is your dear mother?

ELINOR
Very well, thank you.

Silence.

ELINOR
Colonel - is there anything -

But BRANDON interrupts her.

COLONEL BRANDON

Forgive me, Miss Dashwood, but I have heard reports through town... is it impossible to - but I could have no chance of succeeding - indeed I hardly know what to do. Tell me once and for all... is everything finally resolved between your sister and Mr Willoughby?

ELINOR is torn between discomfiture and compassion.

ELINOR

Colonel, though neither one has informed me of their understanding, I have no doubt of their mutual affection.

BRANDON stands very still.

COLONEL BRANDON

Thank you, Miss Dashwood. To your sister I wish all imaginable happiness. To Mr Willoughby, that he may endeavour to deserve her.

His tone is heavy with some bitter meaning.

ELINOR

What do you mean?

But he recollects himself.

COLONEL BRANDON

Forgive me, I - forgive me.

He bows and leaves abruptly. ELINOR is deeply troubled.

EXT. GREENWICH ARCADE. LONDON. DAY.

The PALMERS, MRS JENNINGS, JOHN, FANNY, LUCY, ELINOR and MARIANNE are walking through the arcade.

Additional wealth has evidently encouraged FANNY sartorially and she sprouts as much fruit and feathers as a market-stall. LUCY is holding ELINOR's arm in a pinion-like grip. MRS JENNINGS is gossiping with CHARLOTTE. MARIANNE's good looks are heightened by her feverish expectation of seeing WILLOUGHBY at every step, and many young men raise their hats to her and turn as she passes.

MARIANNE

Where is dear Edward, John? We expect to see him daily.

FANNY stiffens. LUCY's sharp eyes dart hither and thither. MRS JENNINGS senses gossip. ELINOR steels herself.

MRS JENNINGS
And who is "dear Edward"?

CHARLOTTE
Who indeed?

FANNY smiles glacially.

FANNY
My brother, Mrs Jennings - Edward Ferrars.

MRS JENNINGS looks at ELINOR in sly triumph.

MRS JENNINGS
Indeed! Is that Ferrars with an "F"?

She and CHARLOTTE chuckle to each other. LUCY looks at ELINOR.

INT. MRS JENNINGS'S HOUSE. HALL. EVE.

MRS JENNINGS, LUCY, ELINOR and MARIANNE return from their outing. MARIANNE immediately assails PIGEON.

MARIANNE
Are there any messages, Pigeon?

PIGEON
No, ma'am.

MARIANNE
No message at all? No cards?

PIGEON
(affronted) None, ma'am.

MARIANNE sighs with disappointment and starts up the stairs. MRS JENNINGS looks archly at ELINOR.

MRS JENNINGS
I note you do not enquire for your messages, Miss Dashwood!

ELINOR
No, for I do not expect any Mrs Jennings. I have very little acquaintance in town.

And she follows MARIANNE firmly upstairs. LUCY watches her go, and MRS JENNINGS chuckles and turns to her.

MRS JENNINGS
She is as sly as you, Lucy!

INT. MRS JENNINGS'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

ELINOR wakes up. The flickering of a candle has disturbed her. She sits up in bed and sees MARIANNE sitting at the desk in her nightgown, writing another letter.

ELINOR
Marianne, is anything wrong?

MARIANNE
(brightly) Nothing at all. Go back to sleep.

INT. MRS JENNINGS'S HOUSE. MORNING-ROOM. NIGHT.

MARIANNE, in her nightclothes and dressing gown, paces restlessly, her letter in her hands. A slight knock at the door heralds a much-ruffled PIGEON, wig askew. MARIANNE hands him the letter. He bows and goes, highly disgruntled.

INT. MRS JENNINGS'S HOUSE. HALL. MORNING.

MRS JENNINGS is giving PIGEON his instructions for the day. MARIANNE comes running downstairs. PIGEON regards her drily.

PIGEON
No messages, ma'am.

MARIANNE looks so dejected that MRS JENNINGS takes her hand.

MRS JENNINGS
Do not fret, my dear - I am told that this good weather is keeping many sportsmen in the country at present, but the frost will drive them back to town very soon, depend upon it.

MARIANNE brightens.

MARIANNE
Of course! I had not thought of - thank you, Mrs Jennings!

She runs back upstairs. MRS JENNINGS calls after her.

MRS JENNINGS

And Miss Dashwood may set her heart at rest for I overheard your sister-in-law say that she was to bring the elusive Mr 'F' to the ball tonight!

EXT. GRAND CRESCENT LEADING TO BALLROOM ENTRANCE. NIGHT.

So many carriages have entered the crescent to deliver the GUESTS that gridlock has occurred and people are forced to walk to the entrance. We see MRS JENNINGS, MARIANNE, ELINOR and LUCY alighting from their carriage and picking their way through the mud, their skirts raised above their ankles. ELINOR nearly trips and is obliged to grab onto LUCY in order not to slip into the dirt.

INT. GRAND BALLROOM. EVE.

The great ballroom is crammed with GUESTS all determined to enjoy themselves despite the considerable inconveniences caused by noise, heat and overcrowding. MEN are sweating profusely, WOMEN dab their brows, rack punch is being swallowed by the gallon, flirting is conducted at fever pitch and all conversation is inordinately loud. Only the DANCERS have a modicum of space in which to perform their mincing steps. MRS JENNINGS and her brood bump into the PALMERS.

CHARLOTTE

(screeching) This is very merry!

MRS JENNINGS then spots FANNY who is conducting a desultory conversation with an overpowdered ACQUAINTANCE. She drags ELINOR, MARIANNE and LUCY over to her.

MRS JENNINGS

There you are! Goodness, how hot it is, Mrs Dashwood. You are not alone, I trust?

FANNY

Indeed not. John is just gone to fetch my brother - he has been eating ices.

LUCY clutches at ELINOR's sleeve.

MRS JENNINGS

Your brother! I declare - that is good news indeed. At long last!

And she beams her approval upon ELINOR.

LUCY
(whispering) Miss Dashwood - I
declare I shall faint clean away.

FANNY has seen JOHN threading his way towards them and waves at him. There is someone behind him. LUCY preens. JOHN bows to them.

JOHN
Mrs Jennings - may I present my
brother-in-law?

He turns to reveal a good-looking young MAN with a vacuous smile.

JOHN
Mr Robert Ferrars!

ROBERT
My dear ladies - we meet at last!

There is a general bowing and shaking of hands. ELINOR is relieved. LUCY drops a low curtsy.

MRS JENNINGS
So you must be the younger brother?
Is Mr Edward not here? Miss Dashwood
here was counting on him!

ROBERT looks ELINOR up and down. He exchanges glances with FANNY before he speaks.

ROBERT
Oh! He is far too busy for such
gatherings - and has no special
acquaintance here to make his
attendance worthwhile.

MRS JENNINGS looks at ELINOR in puzzlement.

MRS JENNINGS
Well, I declare, I do not know what
the young men are about these days -
are they all in hiding?

ELINOR looks down, agonised with embarrassment.

MRS JENNINGS
Come, Mr Robert, in the absence of
your brother, you must dance with our
lovely Miss Dashwood!

ROBERT
(not best pleased) It would be my
honour.

He turns to LUCY and bows.

ROBERT
And perhaps Miss Steele might
consider reserving the allemande?

LUCY curtsies again. ROBERT escorts a most unwilling
ELINOR onto the dance floor.

ROBERT
You reside in Devonshire, I b'lieve,
Miss Dashwood?

ELINOR
We do.

ROBERT
In a cottage.

ELINOR
Yes.

ROBERT
I am excessively fond of a cottage.
If I had any money to spare, I should
build one myself.

Thankfully for ELINOR, the set changes and she is
obliged to turn away from ROBERT. She wheels round to
face her new partner. It is WILLOUGHBY. They both
stop dancing and stare at each other aghast. A traffic
jam starts and they are forced to take hands and resume
the steps.

WILLOUGHBY
(stiff) How do you do, Miss
Dashwood?

ELINOR does not know quite how to respond.

ELINOR
I am well, thank you, Mr Willoughby.

She looks about for MARIANNE, instinctively wanting to
keep her away from WILLOUGHBY.

WILLOUGHBY
How is your - family?

ELINOR
(cold) We are all extremely well, Mr
Willoughby - thank you for your kind
enquiry.

WILLOUGHBY is shamed into silence. Then he sees
MARIANNE. At the same moment the music pauses.

MARIANNE looks up. In the brief moment of relative quiet, her great cry rings across the room.

MARIANNE
WILLOUGHBY!

Everyone turns to look as MARIANNE rushes towards him with both arms outstretched, her face luminous with joy. As the noise of the room builds again and PEOPLE change their partners, we are aware that many are surreptitiously watching. MARIANNE reaches him but WILLOUGHBY stands with his arms frozen at his side. MARIANNE gives a little confused laugh.

MARIANNE
Good God, Willoughby! Will you not shake hands with me?

WILLOUGHBY looks uncomfortable and glances towards a group of very smart PEOPLE who are watching him closely. Central to this group is a SOPHISTICATED WOMAN who frowns at him proprietorially. WILLOUGHBY shakes MARIANNE's hand briefly. Behind her, MRS JENNINGS is giving an animated commentary to FANNY and JOHN, while LUCY whispers in ROBERT's ear as they go past to join the set.

WILLOUGHBY
(strangled) How do you do, Miss Marianne?

MARIANNE
Willoughby, what is the matter? Why have you not come to see me? Were you not in London? Have you not received my letters?

WILLOUGHBY is sweating with tension.

WILLOUGHBY
Yes, I had the pleasure of receiving the information which you were so good as to send me.

MARIANNE
(piteously) For heaven's sake, Willoughby, tell me what is wrong!

WILLOUGHBY
Thank you - I am most obliged. If you will excuse me, I must return to my party.

He bows, white to the teeth, and walks away to join the SOPHISTICATED WOMAN.

MARIANNE
Willoughby!

He is drawn away by his PARTY, some of whom look back at MARIANNE with a mixture of curiosity and condescension. MARIANNE almost sinks to her knees. ELINOR supports her.

ELINOR
Marianne! Come away!

MARIANNE
Go to him Elinor - force him to come to me.

MRS JENNINGS has come up, full of concern.

ELINOR
Dearest, do not betray what you feel to everyone present! This is not the place for explanations -

MRS JENNINGS
Come along, dear -

They almost have to drag MARIANNE away. MRS JENNINGS turns back to the DASHWOOD party. FANNY and JOHN have practically imploded with embarrassment and are distancing themselves as much as possible from the source. LUCY and ROBERT are dancing nearby.

MRS JENNINGS
Will you come, Lucy?

LUCY
Oh, are we leaving so soon?

ROBERT
If I might be so bold, Mrs Jennings, it would be our pleasure to escort your young charge home.

LUCY
How very kind!

MRS JENNINGS
That is very handsome -

She rushes off to follow MARIANNE and ELINOR. We stay for a moment with LUCY and ROBERT, who have left the set to join JOHN and FANNY.

ROBERT
She actually sent him messages during the night?

CAM rises to show the DASHWOODS exiting past the whispering, sneering faces of the CROWD.

INT. MRS. JENNINGS'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

MARIANNE sits scribbling a letter at the desk.

ELINOR

Marianne, please tell me -

MARIANNE

Do not ask me questions!

ELINOR

You have no confidence in me.

MARIANNE

This reproach from you! You, who confide in no one.

ELINOR

I have nothing to tell.

MARIANNE

Nor I. We have neither of us anything to tell. I because I conceal nothing and you, because you communicate nothing.

INT. MRS JENNINGS'S HOUSE. BREAKFAST ROOM. DAY.

A silent breakfast. MARIANNE is red-eyed from crying and limp from lack of sleep. MRS JENNINGS is dressed to go out, pulling on her gloves and bustling as usual. PIGEON enters with a letter on a salver. He offers it to MARIANNE. She seizes it and runs out of the room. MRS JENNINGS chuckles.

MRS JENNINGS

There now! Lovers' quarrels are swift to heal! That letter will do the trick, mark my word.

She goes to the door.

MRS JENNINGS

I must be off. I hope he won't keep her waiting much longer, Miss Dashwood. It hurts to see her looking so forlorn.

She leaves and ELINOR finds herself alone with LUCY, who loses no time in sharing her new-found happiness.

LUCY

What a welcome I had from Edward's family, Miss Dashwood - I am surprised you never told me what an agreeable woman your sister-in-law is! And Mr Robert - all so affable!

ELINOR

It is perhaps fortunate that none of them knows of your engagement. Excuse me.

ELINOR rises and leaves.

INT. MRS. JENNINGS'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. DAY.

ELINOR finds MARIANNE sitting on the edge of the bed. She does not acknowledge ELINOR but merely lifts the letter and reads out, with deadly calm:

MARIANNE

"My dear Madam - I am quite at a loss to discover in what point I could be so unfortunate as to offend you. My esteem for your family is very sincere but if I have given rise to a belief of more than I felt or meant to express, I shall reproach myself for not having been more guarded. My affections have long been engaged elsewhere and it is with great regret that I return your letters and the lock of hair which you so obligingly bestowed upon me. I am etc. John Willoughby.

ELINOR

Oh, Marianne.

MARIANNE gives a great howl of pain and flings herself across the bed as though in physical agony.

ELINOR

Marianne, oh, Marianne - it is better to know at once what his intentions are. Dearest, think of what you would have felt if your engagement had carried on for months and months before he chose to put an end to it.

MARIANNE

We are not engaged.

ELINOR

But you wrote to him! I thought then that he must have left you with some kind of understanding?

MARIANNE

No - he is not so unworthy as you think him.

ELINOR

Not so unworthy! Did he tell you that he loved you?

MARIANNE

Yes. No - never absolutely. It was every day implied, but never declared. Sometimes I thought it had been, but it never was. He has broken no vow.

ELINOR

He has broken faith with all of us, he made us all believe he loved you.

MARIANNE

He did! He did - he loved me as I loved him.

MRS JENNINGS bursts through the door in her hat and coat, panting.

MRS JENNINGS

I had to come straight up - how are you, Miss Marianne?

MARIANNE begins to sob uncontrollably.

MRS JENNINGS

Poor thing! She looks very bad. No wonder Miss Dashwood, for it is but too true - I was told here in the street by Miss Morton who is a great friend - he is to be married at the end of the month - to a Miss Grey with fifty thousand pounds. Well, said I, if 'tis true then he is a good-for-nothing who has used my young friend abominably ill, and I wish with all my soul that his wife may plague his heart out!

She goes round the bed to comfort MARIANNE.

MRS JENNINGS

But he is not the only young man
worth having, my dear, and with your
pretty face you will never want for
admirers.

MARIANNE sobs even harder.

MRS JENNINGS

Ah, me! She had better have her cry
out and have done with it. I will go
and look out something to tempt her -
does she care for olives?

ELINOR

I cannot tell you.

MRS JENNINGS leaves. MARIANNE seizes the letter again.

MARIANNE

I cannot believe his nature capable
of such cruelty!

ELINOR

Marianne, there is no excuse for him
- this is his hand -

MARIANNE

But it cannot be his heart! Oh,
Mamma! I want Mamma! Elinor, please
take me home! Cannot we go tomorrow?

ELINOR

There is no one to take us.

MARIANNE

Cannot we hire a carriage?

ELINOR

We have no money - and indeed we owe
Mrs Jennings more courtesy.

MARIANNE

All she wants is gossip and she only
likes me because I supply it! Oh,
God! I cannot endure to stay.

ELINOR

I will find a way. I promise.

INT. COFFEE-HOUSE. COVENT GARDEN. DAY.

FANNY, JOHN and ROBERT are drinking chocolate together.

ROBERT

Apparently they never were engaged.

FANNY

Miss Grey has fifty thousand pounds.
Marianne is virtually penniless.

JOHN

She cannot have expected him to go through with it. But I feel for Marianne - she will lose her bloom and end a spinster like Elinor. I think, my dear, we might consider having them to stay with us for a few days - we are, after all, family, and my father...

He trails off. FANNY exchanges an alarmed glance with ROBERT. She thinks fast.

FANNY

My love, I would ask them with all my heart, but I have already asked - Miss Steele for a visit and we cannot deprive Mrs Jennings of all her company at once. We can invite your sisters some other year, you know, and Miss Steele will profit far more from your generosity - poor girl!

JOHN

That is very thoughtful, Fanny. We shall ask Elinor and Marianne next year, then...

FANNY

Certainly!

EXT. JOHN AND FANNY'S TOWN HOUSE. LONDON STREET. DAY

MRS JENNINGS's carriage stands outside. A liveried FOOTMAN opens the door and LUCY steps out brandishing a new muff.

INT. MRS JENNINGS'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. DAY.

MARIANNE sits alone on the bed. Around her lie her notes to Willoughby, her lock of hair and the pocket sonnets. In her hands is the creased and tear-stained letter from Willoughby which she is examining over and over.

INT. MRS. JENNINGS'S HOUSE. DRAWING-ROOM. DAY.

ELINOR is seated at a desk writing a letter. There is a sudden rap at the front door. Footsteps are heard and as she turns, the maid enters with COLONEL BRANDON. ELINOR rises to greet him.

ELINOR

Thank you for coming, Colonel.

He bows. ELINOR is on edge. BRANDON looks haggard with concern.

COLONEL BRANDON

How does your sister?

ELINOR

I must get her home as quickly as possible. The Palmers can take us as far as Cleveland, which is but a day from Barton -

COLONEL BRANDON

Then permit me to accompany you and take you straight on from Cleveland to Barton myself.

ELINOR takes his hands gratefully.

ELINOR

I confess that is precisely what I had hoped for. Marianne suffers cruelly, and what pains me most is how hard she tries to justify Mr Willoughby. But you know her disposition.

After a moment BRANDON nods. He seems unable to remain still or calm and finds it difficult to begin speaking.

COLONEL BRANDON

Perhaps I - my regard for you all - Miss Dashwood, will you allow me to prove it by relating some circumstances which nothing but an earnest desire of being useful -

ELINOR

You have something to tell me of Mr Willoughby.

COLONEL BRANDON

(nods) When I quitted Barton last - but I must go further back. A short account of myself will be necessary. No doubt - no doubt - Mrs Jennings has apprised you of certain events in my past - the sad outcome of my connection with a young woman named Eliza.

ELINOR nods.

COLONEL BRANDON

What is not commonly known is that twenty years ago, Eliza bore an illegitimate child. The father, whoever he was, abandoned them.

This is strong stuff. ELINOR's concern deepens.

COLONEL BRANDON

As she lay dying, she begged me to look after the child. Eliza died in my arms, broken, wasted away - ah! Miss Dashwood, such a subject - untouched for so many years - it is dangerous...

He paces about, barely able to conceal his distress.

COLONEL BRANDON

I had failed Eliza in every other way - I could not refuse her now. I took the child - Beth is her name - and placed her with a family where I could be sure she would be well looked after. I saw her whenever I could. I saw that she was headstrong like her mother - and, God forgive me, I indulged her, I allowed her too much freedom. Almost a year ago, she disappeared.

ELINOR

Disappeared!

COLONEL BRANDON

I instigated a search but for eight months I was left to imagine the worst. At last, on the day of the Delaford picnic, I received the first news of her. She was - with child...and the blackguard who had -

BRANDON stops and looks straight at ELINOR.

ELINOR

Good God. Do you mean - Willoughby?

BRANDON nods. ELINOR drops into a chair, utterly shocked.

COLONEL BRANDON

Before I could return to confront him, Lady Allen learned of his behaviour and turned him from the house. He beat a hasty retreat to London -

ELINOR

Yes! He left us that morning, without any explanation!

COLONEL BRANDON

Lady Allen had annulled his legacy. He was left with next to nothing, and in danger of losing all that remained to his debtors -

ELINOR

- and so abandoned Marianne for Miss Grey and her fifty-thousand pounds.

BRANDON is silent. ELINOR is breathless.

ELINOR

Have you seen Mr Willoughby since you learned...

BRANDON

(nodding) We met by appointment, he to defend, I to punish his conduct.

ELINOR stares at him, aghast.

BRANDON

We returned unwounded, so the meeting never got abroad.

ELINOR nods and is silent for a moment.

ELINOR

Is Beth still in town?

COLONEL BRANDON

She has chosen to go into the country for her confinement. Such has been the unhappy resemblance between the fate of mother and daughter, and so imperfectly have I discharged my trust.

A pause.

COLONEL BRANDON

I would not have burdened you, Miss Dashwood, had I not from my heart believed it might, in time, lessen your sister's regrets.

BRANDON moves to the door and then stops. He turns to her and speaks with effort.

COLONEL BRANDON

I have described Mr Willoughby as the worst of libertines - but I have since learned from Lady Allen that he did mean to propose that day. Therefore I cannot deny that his intentions towards Marianne were - honourable, and I feel certain he would have married her, had it not been for -

ELINOR

For the money.

She looks up at BRANDON. Silence.

INT. MRS JENNINGS'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

MARIANNE is sitting on the bed staring into space. ELINOR is kneeling by her, holding her hands.

ELINOR

Dearest, was I right to tell you?

MARIANNE

Of course.

ELINOR

Whatever his past actions, whatever his present course, at least you may be certain that he loved you.

MARIANNE

But not enough. Not enough.

INT. MRS JENNINGS'S HOUSE. STUDY. DAY.

ELINOR sits alone with her head in her hands. Suddenly MRS JENNINGS bustles in looking pleased.

MRS JENNINGS

Here is someone to cheer you up, Miss Dashwood!

She is followed in by LUCY. MRS JENNINGS leaves, busy as ever. LUCY plants an expression of ghastly concern on her face.

LUCY

How is your dear sister, Miss Dashwood? Poor thing! I must say, I do not know what I should do if a man treated me with so little respect.

ELINOR

I hope you are enjoying your stay with John and Fanny, Miss Steele?

LUCY

I was never so happy in my entire life, Miss Dashwood! I do believe your sister-in-law has taken quite a fancy to me. I had to come and tell you - for you cannot imagine what has happened!

ELINOR

No, I cannot.

LUCY

Yesterday I was introduced to Edward's mother!

ELINOR

Indeed?

LUCY

And she was a vast deal more than civil. I have not yet seen Edward but now I feel sure to very soon -

A MAID knocks and enters.

MAID

There's a Mr Edward Ferrars to see you, Miss Dashwood.

There is a tiny frozen silence.

ELINOR

Do ask him to come up.

ELINOR quite involuntarily sits down and then stands up again. EDWARD is admitted, looking both anxious and eager. As LUCY is sitting in the window seat, at first he sees only ELINOR.

EDWARD

Miss Dashwood, how can I -

But ELINOR cuts him off.

ELINOR

Mr Ferrars, what a pleasure to see you. You... know Miss Steele, of course.

EDWARD turns slowly and encounters LUCY's glassy smile. He all but blanches. Then bows, and clears his throat.

EDWARD

How do you do, Miss Steele.

LUCY

I am well, thank you, Mr Ferrars.

EDWARD has no notion of what to do or say. He swallows.

ELINOR

Do sit down, Mr Ferrars.

LUCY's eyes are sharp as broken glass. EDWARD remains on his feet, looking helplessly from one woman to the other.

LUCY

You must be surprised to find me here, Mr Ferrars! I expect you thought I was at your sister's house.

This is precisely what EDWARD had thought. He tries to smile but his facial muscles won't work. ELINOR decides to fetch help.

ELINOR

Let me call Marianne Mr Ferrars. She would be most disappointed to miss you.

ELINOR goes to the door, thankful to escape, but MARIANNE prevents her by walking in at that moment. Despite her anguish she is very pleased to see EDWARD and embraces him warmly.

MARIANNE

Edward! I heard your voice! At last you have found us!

EDWARD is shocked by her appearance and momentarily forgets his own confusion.

EDWARD

Forgive me, Marianne, my visit is shamefully overdue. You are pale. I hope you have not been unwell?

MARIANNE

Oh, don't think of me - Elinor is well, you see, that must be enough for both of us!

MARIANNE gestures to ELINOR encouragingly but EDWARD seems unable to look at her.

EDWARD

How do you like London, Marianne?

MARIANNE

Not at all. The sight of you is all the pleasure it has afforded - is that not so, Elinor?

Again, MARIANNE endeavours to ignite the lovers. ELINOR tries to silence MARIANNE with her eyes but to no avail. MARIANNE puts their coolness down to the presence of LUCY, at whom she glances with a none too friendly air.

MARIANNE

Why have you taken so long to come and see us?

EDWARD

I have been much engaged elsewhere.

MARIANNE

Engaged elsewhere! But what was that when there were such friends to be met?

LUCY

Perhaps, Miss Marianne, you think young men never honour their engagements, little or great.

ELINOR is appalled by this remark but MARIANNE does not notice it and turns back to LUCY earnestly.

MARIANNE

No, indeed - for Edward is the most fearful of giving pain and the most incapable of being selfish of anyone I ever saw -

EDWARD makes an uncomfortable noise.

MARIANNE

Edward, will you not sit? Elinor, help me to persuade him.

Now EDWARD can stand it no longer.

EDWARD

Forgive me but I must take my leave -

MARIANNE

But you are only just arrived!

ELINOR rises, desperate for them both to go.

EDWARD

You must excuse me, I have a
commission to attend to for Fanny -

LUCY jumps in like a shot.

LUCY

In that case perhaps you might escort
me back to your sister's house, Mr
Ferrars?

There is an extremely awkward pause.

EDWARD

I would be honoured. Goodbye, Miss
Dashwood, Miss Marianne.

He shakes hands with ELINOR and with MARIANNE, who is
silent with dismay. LUCY takes EDWARD's arm and looks
up at him proprietorially. After an awkward bow and a
muttered farewell from EDWARD, they leave. MARIANNE
looks at her sister in astonishment.

MARIANNE

Why did you not urge him to stay?

ELINOR

He must have had his reasons for
going.

MARIANNE

His reason was no doubt your
coldness. If I were Edward I would
assume you did not care for me at
all.

EXT. JOHN AND FANNY'S TOWN HOUSE. DAY.

A tranquil afternoon...

INT. JOHN AND FANNY'S TOWN HOUSE. DRAWING-ROOM. DAY.

LUCY is sitting with FANNY, who is making velvet
flowers. LUCY hands her materials as needed.

LUCY

Poor Miss Marianne looked very badly t'other day. When I think of her, deserted and abandoned, it frightens me to think I shall never marry.

FANNY

Nonsense. You will marry far better than either of the Dashwood girls.

LUCY

How can that possibly be?

FANNY

You have ten times their sense and looks.

LUCY

But I have no dowry.

FANNY

There are qualities which will always make up for that, and you have them in abundance. It would not surprise me if you were to marry far and away beyond your expectations.

LUCY

I wish it might be so. There is a young man -

FANNY

Ah ha! I am glad to hear of it. Is he of good breeding and fortune?

LUCY

Of both - but his family would certainly oppose the match.

FANNY

Tush! They will allow it as soon as they see you my dear.

LUCY

It is a very great secret - I have told no one in the world for fear of discovery.

FANNY looks up, curious to know more.

FANNY

My dear, I am the soul of discretion.

LUCY

If I dared tell -

FANNY

I can assure you I am as silent as
the grave.

LUCY leans forward to whisper in FANNY's ear.

EXT. JOHN AND FANNY'S TOWN HOUSE. DAY.

We hold a long shot of the house for a moment of
silence. Then from inside comes an almost inhumanly
loud shriek.

FANNY (V/O)

VIPER IN MY BOSOM!

EXT. JOHN AND FANNY'S TOWN HOUSE. BACK GARDEN. DAY.

FANNY is trying to drag LUCY out of the house. ROBERT
and JOHN are trying to reason with her. FANNY loses
her grip and falls backwards. LUCY flings herself into
ROBERT's arms. ROBERT falls over.

EXT. LONDON STREET. DAY.

MRS JENNINGS is running as fast as her fat little legs
will carry her.

EXT. MRS JENNINGS'S HOUSE. BERKELEY STREET. DAY.

MRS JENNINGS pants up the front steps.

INT. MRS. JENNINGS'S HOUSE. BEDROOM. DAY.

ELINOR and MARIANNE are packing. Their mood is gloomy
and uncommunicative. MRS JENNINGS explodes into the
room fighting for breath.

MRS JENNINGS

Oh my dears! What a commotion! Mr
Edward Ferrars - the very one I used
to joke you about, Miss Dashwood -
has been engaged these five years to
Lucy Steele!

MARIANNE lets out a gasp. She looks at ELINOR, who
nods at her in swift confirmation.

MRS JENNINGS

Poor Mr Ferrars! His mother, who by all accounts is very proud, demanded that he break the engagement on pain of disinheritance. But he has refused to break his promise to Lucy. He has stood by her, good man, and is cut off without a penny! She has settled it all irrevocably upon Mr Robert. But I cannot stop, I must go to Lucy. Your sister-in-law scolded her like any fury - drove her to hysterics...

She leaves the room still rabbiting on. There is a silence.

MARIANNE

How long have you known?

ELINOR

Since the evening Mrs Jennings offered to take us to London.

MARIANNE

Why did you not tell me?

ELINOR

Lucy told me in the strictest confidence.

MARIANNE looks at her in complete incredulity.

ELINOR.

I could not break my word.

Clearly, there is no arguing this point.

MARIANNE

But Edward loves you.

ELINOR

He made me no promises. He tried to tell me about Lucy.

MARIANNE

He cannot marry her.

ELINOR

Would you have him treat her even worse than Willoughby has treated you?

MARIANNE

No - but nor would I have him marry where he does not love.

ELINOR tries hard to be controlled.

ELINOR

Edward made his promise a long time ago, long before he met me. Though he may harbour some regret, I believe he will be happy - in the knowledge that he did his duty and kept his word. After all - after all that is bewitching in the idea of one's happiness depending entirely on one person - it is not always possible. We must accept. Edward will marry Lucy - and you and I will go home.

MARIANNE

Always resignation and acceptance!
Always prudence and honour and duty!
Elinor, where is your heart?

ELINOR finally explodes. She turns upon MARIANNE almost savagely.

ELINOR

What do you know of my heart? What do you know of anything but your own suffering? For weeks, Marianne, I have had this pressing on me without being at liberty to speak of it to a single creature. It was forced upon me by the very person whose prior claims ruined all my hopes. I have had to endure her exultation again and again while knowing myself to be divided from Edward forever. Believe me, Marianne, had I not been bound to silence I could have produced proof enough of a broken heart even for you.

Complete silence. Then MARIANNE speaks in a whisper.

MARIANNE

Oh Elinor.

MARIANNE bursts into sobs and flings her arms around ELINOR who, almost impatiently, tries to comfort her.

EXT. PALMER RESIDENCE. LONDON STREET. DAY.

LUCY and MRS JENNINGS are on the doorstep. LUCY looks rather lost and pathetic, with her little bundles, hastily packed. The door opens and CHARLOTTE precedes the SERVANT, ushering them in with shrill cries of sympathy.

COLONEL BRANDON V/O
I have heard that your friend Mr
Ferrars has been entirely cast off by
his family for persevering in his
engagement to Miss Steele...

EXT. SQUARE IN FRONT OF MRS JENNINGS'S HOUSE. LONDON. DAY.

ELINOR and BRANDON walk round the quiet square.

COLONEL BRANDON
Have I been rightly informed? Is it
so?

ELINOR is greatly taken aback by this unexpected query.

ELINOR
It is indeed so. Are you acquainted
with Mr Ferrars?

COLONEL BRANDON
No, we have never met. But I know
only too well the cruelty - the
impolitic cruelty of dividing two
young people long attached to one
another. Mrs Ferrars does not know
what she may drive her son to -

He pauses, frowning in remembrance. ELINOR waits in
suspense.

COLONEL BRANDON
I have a proposal to make that should
enable him to marry Miss Steele
immediately. Since the gentleman is
so close a friend to your family,
perhaps you will be good enough to
mention it to him?

ELINOR is completely taken aback. She takes a moment
to reply.

ELINOR
Colonel I am sure he would be only
too delighted to hear it from your
own lips.

COLONEL BRANDON
I think not. His behaviour has
proved him proud - in the best sense.
I feel certain this is the right
course.

INT. MRS. JENNINGS'S HOUSE. STUDY. DAY.

ELINOR is waiting. The MAID announces EDWARD and he walks in momentarily. They are alone for the first time in months and for a moment, neither speaks.

ELINOR
Mr Ferrars.

EDWARD
Miss Dashwood.

ELINOR indicates a seat for him but neither sits.

ELINOR
Thank you for responding so promptly
to my message.

EDWARD
I was most grateful to receive it. I
- Miss Dashwood, God knows what you
must think of me...

ELINOR
Mr Ferrars -

He interrupts her, desperate to explain.

EDWARD
I have no right to speak, I know -

ELINOR has to stop him.

ELINOR
Mr Ferrars, I have good news. I
think you know of our friend Colonel
Brandon -

EDWARD looks completely bewildered.

EDWARD
Yes - I have heard his name.

ELINOR starts to speak rather faster than usual.

ELINOR
Colonel Brandon desires me to say
that, understanding you wish to join
the clergy, he has great pleasure in
offering you the parish on his estate
at Delaford, now just vacant - in the
hope that it may enable you - and
Miss Steele - to marry.

EDWARD cannot at first take it in. ELINOR sits down.

EDWARD
Colonel Brandon?

ELINOR
Yes. He means it as testimony of his concern for - for the cruel situation in which you find yourselves.

Now EDWARD sits - in shock.

EDWARD
Colonel Brandon give me a parish?
Can it be possible?

ELINOR
The unkindness of your family has made you astonished to find friendship elsewhere.

EDWARD looks at ELINOR, his eyes full of growing comprehension.

EDWARD
No. Not to find it in you. I cannot be ignorant that to you - to your goodness - I owe it all. I feel it. I would express it if I could, but, as you know, I am no orator...

ELINOR
You are very much mistaken. I assure you that you owe it almost entirely to your own merit - I have had no hand in it.

But EDWARD clearly believes she has been instrumental in the offer. He frowns slightly before speaking with rather an effort.

EDWARD
Colonel Brandon must be a man of great worth and respectability.

ELINOR finds some relief in saying at least one thing that she truly means.

ELINOR
He is the kindest and best of men.

This makes EDWARD seem even more depressed. He sits silent for a moment but then rouses himself to action.

EDWARD
May I enquire why the Colonel did not tell me himself?

ELINOR

I think he felt it would be better
coming from...a friend.

EDWARD looks at ELINOR, his eyes full of sadness.

EDWARD

Your friendship has been the most
important of my life.

ELINOR

You will always have it.

EDWARD

Forgive me.

ELINOR

Mr Ferrars, you honour your promises
- that is more important than
anything else. I wish you - both -
very happy.

She curtsies. He bows.

EDWARD

Goodbye, Miss Dashwood.

EDWARD leaves silently. ELINOR stands stock-still in
the middle of the room.

EXT. MRS JENNINGS'S HOUSE. DAY.

The PALMERS' carriage stands outside the house.
COLONEL BRANDON helps MARIANNE in beside ELINOR before
mounting his horse to ride alongside. MRS JENNINGS
waves goodbye from the steps. The carriage moves off.
MRS JENNINGS blows her nose, looks up and down the
street in search of gossip and goes back indoors with a
sigh.

INT. THE PALMERS' CARRIAGE. ON THE ROAD. DAY.

MARIANNE is sitting back in her seat with her eyes
closed. She does not look well. MR PALMER is behind
his newspaper.

CHARLOTTE

What a stroke of luck for Lucy and Edward to find a parish so close to Barton! You will all be able to meet very often. That will cheer you up, Miss Marianne. I do declare I have never disliked a person so much as I do Mr Willoughby, for your sake. Insufferable man. To think we can see his insufferable house from the top of our hill!

CLOSE on MARIANNE's eyes slowly opening.

CHARLOTTE

I shall ask Jackson to plant some very tall trees.

MR PALMER

(from behind the paper) You will do nothing of the sort.

EXT. THE PALMERS' CARRIAGE. OPEN ROAD. DAY.

The carriage bowls along, with BRANDON riding next to it.

CHARLOTTE V/O

I hear Miss Grey's bridal gown was everything of the finest - made in Paris, no less. I should have liked to see it, although I dare say it was a sorry affair, scalloped with ruffles - but what do the French know about fashion?

EXT. CLEVELAND. DRIVE. AFTERNOON.

The carriage stands outside the PALMER residence, a resplendent affair with a great deal of land. BRANDON is helping MARIANNE and ELINOR out of the carriage.

CHARLOTTE V/O

I am resolved never to mention Mr Willoughby's name again, and furthermore I shall tell everyone I meet what a good-for-nothing he is.

MR PALMER V/O

Be quiet.

ELINOR and MARIANNE stand on the steps as the PALMERS debouch from the carriage amid a welter of SERVANTS.

ELINOR

(sotto voce) I do not think she drew breath from the moment we left London. It is my fault - I should have found some other way of getting home.

MARIANNE

There was no other way - you said so yourself.

ELINOR

We shall be home soon enough. Mamma will comfort you dearest.

MARIANNE

I am stiff from sitting so long. Will you tell Charlotte that I am going for a stroll?

ELINOR glances at the sky in concern.

ELINOR

I think it is going to rain.

MARIANNE

No, no, it will not rain.

ELINOR cannot help but smile at this return of the old MARIANNE.

ELINOR

You always say that and then it always does.

MARIANNE

I will keep to the garden, near the house.

MARIANNE walks off. ELINOR watches her go anxiously

INT. CLEVELAND. DRAWING-ROOM. DAY.

MRS BUNTING, a rather baleful NANNY, looks on as MR PALMER holds up a screaming BABY in a frilly bonnet for everyone's inspection.

CHARLOTTE

We are very proud of our little Thomas, Colonel - and his papa has such a way with him...

BRANDON flicks a glance at MR PALMER, for whom holding a baby comes as naturally as breathing underwater.

EXT. CLEVELAND. GARDEN. DAY.

MARIANNE walks purposefully towards the garden wall, beyond which lies a hill.

INT. CLEVELAND. DRAWING-ROOM. DAY.

ELINOR enters to find CHARLOTTE alone with the now hysterical BABY THOMAS.

CHARLOTTE

There you are Miss Dashwood - Mr Palmer and the Colonel have locked themselves up in the billiard room - come and meet little Thomas - where is Miss Marianne?

ELINOR

She is taking a little air in the garden.

CHARLOTTE

Oh very good - that is the great advantage of the countryside - all the fresh air and - and all the fresh air -

CHARLOTTE's conversational difficulties are drowned out by her offspring.

EXT. CLEVELAND. GARDEN. DAY.

MARIANNE comes to a gate in the wall and turns the handle. It opens. She throws a glance back to the house and passes through. There is a low rumble of thunder.

INT. CLEVELAND. DRAWING-ROOM. DAY.

BABY THOMAS is purple in the face but shows no signs of quietening. CHARLOTTE joggles him about inefficiently.

CHARLOTTE

(yelling) He is the best child in the world - he never cries unless he wants to and then, Lord, there is no stopping him.

EXT. THE HILL. DAY.

MARIANNE, calm and determined, walks towards the top of the hill. The wind whips and plucks at her hair and skirts.

INT. CLEVELAND. DRAWING-ROOM. DAY.

ELINOR, traumatised by her new acquaintance with the shrieking BABY THOMAS, goes to look out of the window. She frowns.

EXT. CLEVELAND. GARDEN. DAY.

Her P.O.V. MARIANNE is nowhere in sight. Stormclouds have gathered on the hill.

INT. CLEVELAND. DRAWING-ROOM. DAY.

ELINOR turns from the window. BABY THOMAS stops crying for two seconds.

ELINOR
I cannot see Marianne.

There is a crack of thunder. BABY THOMAS starts again.

EXT. THE HILL. DAY.

Rain has started to pour down. MARIANNE walks on regardless.

INT. CLEVELAND. DRAWING-ROOM. DAY.

CHARLOTTE shouts over BABY THOMAS to ELINOR.

CHARLOTTE
She has probably taken shelter in one of the greenhouses!

EXT. THE HILL. DAY.

MARIANNE has reached the top. Soaked to the skin, she stands with the storm raging around her, staring at the spires of Combe Magna, the place that would have been her home. Rain streaks her face and the wind whips her hair about her. Through frozen lips she whispers:

MARIANNE
Love is not love/ Which alters when
it alteration finds/ Or bends with
the remover to remove/ Oh no! It is
an ever-fixed mark/ That looks on
tempests and is never shaken....

EXT. CLEVELAND. GREENHOUSES. DAY.

BRANDON is looking for MARIANNE. He enters a greenhouse.

COLONEL BRANDON
Marianne!

EXT. THE HILL. DAY.

MARIANNE stares at Combe Magna, a strange smile playing about her lips. Then she calls to WILLOUGHBY as though he were near. The effect is eerie, unworldly.

MARIANNE
Willoughby...Willoughby...

INT. CLEVELAND. DRAWING-ROOM. DAY.

CHARLOTTE, MR PALMER and ELINOR are waiting anxiously. BABY THOMAS has been removed. ELINOR is staring out of the window.

CHARLOTTE
One thing is certain - she will be wet through when she returns.

MR PALMER
Thank you for pointing that out, my dear. Do not worry, Miss Dashwood - Brandon will find her. I think we can all guess where she went.

EXT. THE HILL. DAY.

BRANDON runs up the hillside as though the devil were at his heels.

INT. CLEVELAND. DRAWING-ROOM. DAY.

CHARLOTTE is handing ELINOR a cup of tea. ELINOR turns back to look out of the window. She freezes.

EXT. CLEVELAND. GARDEN. DAY.

ELINOR's POV. of BRANDON walking up to the house with MARIANNE cradled in his arms. It is like seeing Willoughbys Ghost.

INT. CLEVELAND. HALL. DAY.

Everyone rushes out of the drawing-room as the COLONEL enters with MARIANNE. He is exhausted and soaked. MARIANNE is dumb with cold and fatigue.

COLONEL BRANDON

She is not hurt - but we must get her warm!

ELINOR and MR PALMER take MARIANNE from BRANDON and go upstairs, with CHARLOTTE in pursuit.

EXT. CLEVELAND. NIGHT. RAIN.

The great house sits in darkness. A sense of foreboding.

INT. CLEVELAND. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

ELINOR is in her nightgown, knocking at a door. MR PALMER answers in his nightshirt, astonished to have been summoned out of bed.

ELINOR

I think Marianne may need a doctor.

INT. CLEVELAND. BREAKFAST ROOM. DAY.

MR PALMER and CHARLOTTE are sitting at the breakfast-table. BRANDON is pacing. The rain has stopped.

CHARLOTTE

You'll wear yourself out, Colonel - do not worry yourself! A day or two in bed will soon set her to rights!

MR PALMER

You can rely upon Harris, Colonel. I have never found a better physician.

Enter ELINOR with DR HARRIS.

COLONEL BRANDON

(urgent) What is your diagnosis?

DR HARRIS

It is an infectious fever that has taken far more serious hold than I would have expected in one so young. I would recommend the hasty removal of your child, Mr Palmer -

CHARLOTTE runs out of the room screaming.

CHARLOTTE
Mrs Bunting! Mrs Bunting!

EXT. CLEVELAND. FRONT STEPS. DAY.

CHARLOTTE is getting into their carriage with MRS BUNTING and BABY THOMAS. MR PALMER is on the steps with ELINOR. He takes her hand and looks at her with real sympathy.

MR PALMER
My dear Miss Dashwood, I am more
sorry than I can say - If you would
prefer me to stay I am at your
service -

ELINOR is touched to find this warm heart beneath his frosty exterior.

ELINOR
Mr Palmer, that is very kind. But
Colonel Brandon and Dr Harris will
look after us. Thank you for
everything you have done.

MR PALMER nods, presses her hand, and walks down the steps to the carriage.

INT. CLEVELAND. DRAWING-ROOM. DAY.

BRANDON sits, head in hands. His ghosts have come to haunt him.

INT. CLEVELAND. ELINOR AND MARIANNE'S BEDROOM. DAY.

MARIANNE is tossing and turning in the bed. DR HARRIS is trying to take her pulse. He looks up at ELINOR, who is watching anxiously.

DR HARRIS
She is not doing as well as I would
like.

INT. CLEVELAND. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR. DAY.

ELINOR exits the bedroom to find BRANDON outside. She jumps.

COLONEL BRANDON
What can I do?

ELINOR
Colonel, you have done so much
already.

COLONEL BRANDON
Give me an occupation, Miss Dashwood,
or I shall run mad.

He is dangerously quiet.

ELINOR
She would be easier if her mother
were here.

COLONEL BRANDON
Of course. Barton is but eight hours
away. If I make no stop you may see
us early tomorrow morning.

He takes ELINOR's hand and kisses it.

COLONEL BRANDON
In your hands I know she will be
safe.

EXT. CLEVELAND. DRIVE. EVE.

BRANDON mounts his HORSE, turns to look at the house
for a moment, and then spurs it violently forward.

INT. CLEVELAND. ELINOR AND MARIANNE'S BEDROOM. EVE.

ELINOR is by the window, having watched BRANDON's
departure. DOCTOR HARRIS is by MARIANNE's side. He
turns to ELINOR.

DOCTOR HARRIS
Double the number of drops and I will
return as soon as I can.

EXT. CLEVELAND. NIGHT.

The house stands in virtual darkness with only a dim
light issuing from one of the upper rooms.

EXT. OPEN ROAD. NIGHT.

BRANDON riding fast, his cape billowing out behind him.

INT. CLEVELAND. ELINOR AND MARIANNE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

MARIANNE's eyes glitter with the fever. ELINOR wipes her brow. Suddenly she speaks.

MARIANNE

Who is that?

She is looking at the end of the bed.

MARIANNE

Look, look, Elinor.

ELINOR

There is no one there, dearest.

MARIANNE

It is Papa. Papa has come.

ELINOR looks fearfully towards the end of the bed.
MARIANNE tries to smile with her cracked lips.

MARIANNE

Dearest Papa!

The dead are coming for the dying.

INT. CLEVELAND. ELINOR AND MARIANNE'S BEDROOM. LATER.

ELINOR, her eyes red from watching, wipes MARIANNE's temples. DR HARRIS takes her pulse and looks at ELINOR anxiously. His silence is worse than any utterance.

INT. CLEVELAND. ELINOR AND MARIANNE'S BEDROOM. LATER.

The room is very still. MARIANNE is pale as wax. DR HARRIS puts on his coat. ELINOR looks at him fearfully.

DOCTOR HARRIS

I must fetch more laudanum. I cannot pretend Miss Dashwood, that your sister's condition is not very serious. You must prepare yourself. I will return very shortly.

He leaves the room.

INT. CLEVELAND. ELINOR AND MARIANNE'S BEDROOM. LATER.

MARIANNE lies in the grip of her fever. ELINOR sits watching her. Slowly she rises and walks to the bed. When she speaks, her tone is very practical.

ELINOR

Marianne, Marianne, please try -

Suddenly, almost unconsciously, she starts to heave with dry sobs, wrenched out of her, full of anguish and heartbreak and all the more painful for being tearless.

ELINOR

Marianne, please try - I cannot - I cannot do without you. Oh please, I have tried to bear everything else - I will try - but please, dearest, beloved Marianne, do not leave me alone...

She falls to her knees by the bed, gulping for breath, taking MARIANNE's hand and kissing it again and again.

EXT. CLEVELAND. GARDENS. DAWN.

A shimmer of light appears on the rim of the horizon. Somewhere a lark breaks into clear untroubled song.

INT. CLEVELAND. ELINOR AND MARIANNE'S BEDROOM. MORNING.

DR HARRIS sits slumped in a chair. MARIANNE lies motionless. ELINOR rises with difficulty from the bedside and goes to the window. She is white as paper. The lark sings. Then, from behind, comes the faintest of whispers.

MARIANNE (V/O)

Elinor.

ELINOR turns with a cry. DR HARRIS springs from his seat and examines MARIANNE. He then turns to ELINOR with a smile of relief and nods. At that moment the sound of carriage-wheels is heard on the gravel.

ELINOR

My mother!

EXT. CLEVELAND. FRONT STEPS. MORNING.

BRANDON helps MRS DASHWOOD, who is weak with exhaustion and distress, out of the carriage.

INT. CLEVELAND. STAIRCASE. MORNING.

ELINOR hurls herself down the stairs. She reaches the door just as BRANDON and MRS DASHWOOD enter and practically swoons into her mother's arms.

ELINOR
Mamma! She is out of danger!

INT. CLEVELAND. ELINOR AND MARIANNE'S BEDROOM. MORNING.

Close on MARIANNE's face as MRS DASHWOOD kisses her.

MRS DASHWOOD
There, there, my love, my Marianne.

MARIANNE opens her eyes and smiles at her mother. MRS DASHWOOD takes her gently into her arms. MARIANNE suddenly looks anxious. She is too weak to move her head. She whispers with urgent effort.

MARIANNE
Where is Elinor?

ELINOR
I am here, dearest, I am here.

MARIANNE looks at her with deep relief. Behind the DASHWOODS, BRANDON stands at the door, unwilling to intrude on this intimacy. He wipes his eyes and turns away. MARIANNE sees and whispers to him.

MARIANNE
Colonel Brandon.

BRANDON turns back, his eyes full of tears. MARIANNE looks at him for a moment. Then, very quietly:

MARIANNE
Thank you.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. GARDEN AND SURROUNDINGS. DAY.

The cottage nestles in the first buds of spring. A piece of rope hangs down from the branches of a tree in the garden. It starts to wave about wildly and we see MARGARET emerging and climbing down. She has built herself a new tree-house.

COLONEL BRANDON V/O
"What though the sea with waves
continuall/Doe eate the earth, it is
no more at all..."

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. DAY.

MARIANNE is on the sofa by the window. She is pale, convalescent and calm. Different somehow. She listens intently as BRANDON reads her the poem.

COLONEL BRANDON

Nor is the earth the lesse, or loseth
aught./For whatsoever from one place
doth fall,/Is with the tide unto
another brought...

We move back to find MRS DASHWOOD and ELINOR at the
other end of the room, sewing peacefully.

MRS DASHWOOD

He certainly is not so dashing as
Willoughby but he has a far more
pleasing countenance. There was
always a something, if you remember,
in Willoughby's eyes at times which I
did not like.

ELINOR listens patiently as her mother rewrites
history. We cut back to BRANDON as he finishes
reading.

COLONEL BRANDON

For there is nothing lost, but may be
found, if sought...

He looks up at MARIANNE. A soul-breathing glance. She
smiles as he closes the book.

MARIANNE

Shall we continue tomorrow?

COLONEL BRANDON

No - for I must away.

MARIANNE

Away? Where?

COLONEL BRANDON

(teasing) That I cannot tell you. It
is a secret.

He rises to leave.

MARIANNE

(impulsive) But you will not stay
away long?

CLOSE on BRANDON's reaction.

EXT. FIELDS NEAR BARTON COTTAGE. DAY

ELINOR and MARIANNE are out on a walk. They go very
slowly, MARIANNE leaning on ELINOR's arm. Their mood
is loving, companionable.

EXT. DOWNS NEAR BARTON COTTAGE. DAY.

ELINOR and MARIANNE walk on. Suddenly, MARIANNE stops.

MARIANNE

There.

She indicates a spot on the ground but ELINOR can see nothing and is momentarily alarmed. MARIANNE gazes at the ground and breathes in deeply.

MARIANNE

There I fell, and there I first saw Willoughby.

ELINOR

Poor Willoughby. He will always regret you.

MARIANNE

But does it follow that had he chosen me he would have been content?

ELINOR looks at MARIANNE, surprised.

MARIANNE

He would have had a wife he loved but no money - and might soon have learned to rank the demands of his pocket-book far above the demands of his heart.

ELINOR regards MARIANNE admiringly. MARIANNE smiles sadly.

MARIANNE

If his present regrets are half as painful as mine, he will suffer enough.

ELINOR

Do you compare your conduct with his?

MARIANNE

No. I compare it with what it ought to have been. I compare it with yours.

ELINOR

Our situations were very different.

MARIANNE

My illness has made me consider the past. I saw in my own behaviour nothing but imprudence - and worse. I was insolent and unjust to everyone

-

ELINOR tries to stem the flow but MARIANNE continues.

MARIANNE

- but you - you I wronged above all. Only I knew your heart and its sorrows but even then I was never a grain more compassionate. I brought my illness upon myself - I wanted to destroy myself. And had I succeeded, what misery should I have caused you

-

ELINOR embraces her. They stand with their arms round one another in silence for a moment. Then MARIANNE breaks away and speaks with great good humour and energy.

MARIANNE

I shall mend my ways! I shall no longer worry others nor torture myself. I am determined to enter on a course of serious study - Colonel Brandon has promised me the run of his library and I shall read at least six hours a day. By the end of the year I expect to have improved my learning a very great deal. I shall start with the accounts.

EXT. ROAD NEAR BARTON COTTAGE. DAY

THOMAS is sitting on the back of a local wagon, holding a basket of food. He jumps off near the cottage and waves a cheery farewell to the DRIVER.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. DAY.

CLOSE on the accounts book, covered in blots and crossed out sums. Pull up to reveal MARIANNE labouring over it. Her sickness has left her slightly short-sighted and she uses a pince-nez that makes her look like an owl. ELINOR is sewing and MRS DASHWOOD is snoozing. MARGARET goes up and looks over MARIANNE's shoulder. She frowns at the spider's web of ink.

MARGARET
You'll go blind if you're not
careful.

BETSY brings in coals for the fire. MRS DASHWOOD
rouses herself.

MRS DASHWOOD
Is Thomas back from Exeter, Betsy?

BETSY
Yes, ma'am - he brung back two lovely
fillets for you.

MRS DASHWOOD looks nervously at ELINOR like a child who
has been caught out.

MRS DASHWOOD
Beef is far less expensive in Exeter,
and anyway they are for Marianne.

ELINOR laughs and rolls her eyes to heaven. BETSY
turns on her way out to remark:

BETSY
Sixpence a piece, Miss Dashwood. Oh,
and he says Mr Ferrars is married,
but I suppose you know that, ma'am.

There is a stunned silence. Everyone looks at ELINOR.

MRS DASHWOOD
Fetch Thomas to us, Betsy.

BETSY leaves. They all sit very still. MARGARET is
about to talk to ELINOR about it but MARIANNE stops
her. THOMAS enters.

THOMAS
Beg pardon, Miss Dashwood, but they
was the cheapest in the market -

MRS DASHWOOD
It was a very good price, Thomas,
well done. Would you be so kind as
to build up the fire a little?

THOMAS
(relieved) Yes, ma'am.

There is a pause.

MRS DASHWOOD
Who told you that Mr Ferrars was
married, Thomas?

THOMAS builds up the fire as he answers. He tells the story with pleasure.

THOMAS

I seen him myself, ma'am, and his lady too, Miss Lucy Steele as was - they were stopping in a chaise at the New London Inn. I happened to look up as I passed the chaise and I see it was Miss Steele. So I took off my hat and she enquired after you, ma'am, and all the young ladies, especially Miss Dashwood, and bid me I should give you her and Mr Ferrars's best compliments and service and how they'd be sure to send you a piece of the cake.

MRS DASHWOOD

Was Mr Ferrars in the carriage with her?

THOMAS

Yes, ma'am - I just seen him leaning back in it, but he did not look up.

ELINOR screws up her courage.

ELINOR

Did -

But she cannot continue. MARIANNE glances at her compassionately and takes over.

MARIANNE

Did Mrs Ferrars seem well?

THOMAS

Yes, Miss Marianne - she said how she was vastly contented and since she was always a very affable young lady, I made free to wish her joy.

MRS DASHWOOD

Thank you, Thomas.

He nods and leaves, confused by the silent atmosphere. ELINOR sits for a moment, then gets up and walks out.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. GARDEN. EVE.

ELINOR is standing by the gate, looking out. MRS DASHWOOD comes down the path to join her. She links arms with ELINOR and they stand in silence for a beat.

MRS DASHWOOD

Your father once told me not to allow you to neglect yourself. Now I find that it is I who have neglected you most.

ELINOR

No, Mamma.

MRS DASHWOOD

Yes I have. We all have. Marianne is right.

ELINOR

I am very good at hiding.

MRS DASHWOOD

Then we must observe you more closely.

A pause.

ELINOR

Mamma?

MRS DASHWOOD

Yes, my darling.

ELINOR

There is a painful difference between the expectation of an unpleasant event and its final certainty.

MRS DASHWOOD squeezes ELINOR's arm tightly.

EXT. OPEN ROAD NEAR BARTON. DAY.

A HORSE and CART are jogging along. The CART contains a large object tied down and covered with canvas.

The DRIVER whistles tunelessly.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. DINING-ROOM. DAY.

MARGARET is standing on the table while ELINOR and MARIANNE pin a piece of material around the bottom of her skirt to lengthen it. Suddenly there is a commotion upstairs.

MRS DASHWOOD V/O

Marianne! Marianne! Come and see what is coming!

Everyone runs out of the room.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. GARDEN. DAY.

THOMAS and the CARTER are carrying a small piano up the path.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. DAY.

They carry the piano into the parlour and to the DASHWOODS' joyful astonishment it fits perfectly. MRS DASHWOOD reads out the letter that has accompanied it.

MRS DASHWOOD

"At last I have found a small enough instrument to fit the parlour. I expect to follow it in a day or two, by which time I expect you to have learned the enclosed. Your devoted friend, Christopher Brandon".

MRS DASHWOOD hands MARIANNE the letter and a broadsheet song.

MARGARET

He must like you very much, Marianne.

MARIANNE

It is not just for me! It is for all of us.

All the same, she looks conscious of the truth.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. GARDEN. DAY.

MARGARET is up her tree. ELINOR is pulling weeds. MRS DASHWOOD is sitting on a stool working on MARGARET's dress and listening to the strains of the new song which MARIANNE is singing in the cottage. All of a sudden, MRS DASHWOOD rises, shielding her eyes with her hand. She walks down to the gate looking out.

MRS DASHWOOD

Here is Colonel Brandon! Marianne!

The piano stops. MARIANNE comes out and they all gather at the gate to watch for the rider.

EXT. OPEN COUNTRY. DAY.

Their POV of a HORSEMAN in the distance.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. GARDEN GATE. DAY.

ELINOR
I do not think it is the Colonel.

MRS DASHWOOD
It must be. He said he would arrive today. You must play him the new song Marianne.

Suddenly there is a yell from MARGARET's tree.

MARGARET
EDWARD!

MARGARET practically throws herself out of the tree onto the grass.

MARGARET
It is Edward!

The women look at each other in complete consternation.

MRS DASHWOOD
Calm. We must be calm.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. DAY.

Tense silence reigns. Everyone tries to busy themselves. BETSY enters.

BETSY
Mr Ferrars for you, ma'am.

EDWARD follows her in looking white and agitated.

MRS DASHWOOD
(rising) Edward! What a pleasure to see you.

EDWARD
Mrs Dashwood. Miss Marianne.
Margaret. Miss Dashwood. I hope I find you all well.

He bows formally to each of them, lingering on ELINOR who is looking firmly at her lap. He looks anxious.

MARIANNE
Thank you, Edward, we are all very well.

There is a pause while they all search for an appropriate remark. Finally MARGARET decides to have a go at polite conversation.

MARGARET
We have been enjoying very fine
weather.

MARIANNE looks at her incredulously.

MARGARET
Well, we have.

EDWARD
I am glad of it. The - the roads
were very - dry.

MRS DASHWOOD decides to bite the bullet.

MRS DASHWOOD
(giving him her hand) May I wish you
great joy, Edward.

He takes her hand somewhat confusedly and accepts her
offer of a seat. There is an awful silence. MARIANNE
tries to help.

MARIANNE
I hope you have left Mrs Ferrars
well?

EDWARD
Tolerably, thank you.

There is another bone-crunching pause.

EDWARD
I -

But EDWARD cannot seem to find any words.

MRS DASHWOOD
Is Mrs Ferrars at the new parish?

EDWARD looks extremely confused.

EDWARD
No - my mother is in town.

He plucks up the courage to look at ELINOR again and is
evidently not much comforted by what he sees.

MRS DASHWOOD
I meant to enquire after Mrs Edward
Ferrars.

EDWARD colours. He hesitates.

EDWARD

Then you have not heard - the news -
I think you mean my brother - you
mean Mrs Robert Ferrars.

They all stare at him in shock.

MRS DASHWOOD

Mrs Robert Ferrars?

ELINOR has frozen. EDWARD rises and goes to the window picking up ELINOR's scissor-case on the way. He stands looking out and unconsciously cutting the scissor-case to pieces as he speaks.

EDWARD

Yes - I received a letter from Miss Steele - or Mrs Ferrars I should say - communicating the - the transfer of her affections to my brother Robert. They were much thrown together in London I believe, .and...and in view of the change in my circumstances I felt it only fair that Miss Steele be released from our engagement. At any rate, they were married last week and are now in Plymouth.

ELINOR rises suddenly, EDWARD turns and they stand looking at one another.

ELINOR

Then you - are not married.

EDWARD

No.

ELINOR bursts into tears. The shock of this emotional explosion stuns everyone for a second and then MARIANNE makes an executive decision. Wordlessly, she takes MARGARET's hand and leads her and MRS DASHWOOD out of the room.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. GARDEN. DAY.

The three DASHWOODS come into the garden, still holding hands.

INT. BARTON COTTAGE. PARLOUR. DAY.

ELINOR cannot stop crying. EDWARD comes forward, very slowly.

EDWARD

Elinor! I met Lucy when I was very young. Had I had an active profession I should never have felt such an idle, foolish inclination. At Norland my behaviour was very wrong. But I convinced myself you felt only friendship for me and it was my heart alone that I was risking. I have come with no expectations. Only to profess, now that I am at liberty to do so, that my heart is and always will be yours.

ELINOR looks at him, her face streaked with tears of released emotion, of pain and of happiness.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE. GARDEN.

MARIANNE and MRS DASHWOOD are stamping about in the garden trying to keep warm. MARGARET has climbed into her tree-house. The branches rustle.

MARGARET

He's sitting next to her!

MRS DASHWOOD/MARIANNE

Margaret, come down!/ Is he?

MRS DASHWOOD

(scolding) Margaret! Will you stop -

MARIANNE

What's happening now?

MRS DASHWOOD

Marianne!

MARGARET V/O

He's kneeling down!

MRS DASHWOOD can't help herself.

MRS DASHWOOD

Oh! Is he? Oh!

She and MARIANNE look at each other joyfully.

EXT. DOWNS NEAR BARTON. DAY.

The figures of EDWARD and ELINOR can be seen walking, in deep conversation.

EXT. PATH NEAR BARTON COTTAGE. DUSK.

Later. The lovers walk slowly, their heads almost touching, their words low and intimate.

ELINOR

Your mother, I suppose will hardly be less angry with Robert for marrying Lucy.

EDWARD

The more so since she settled the money upon him so irrevocably -

ELINOR

- no doubt because she had run out of sons to disinherit -

EDWARD

Her family fluctuates at an alarming rate. Then in London when you told me of the Colonel's offer, I became convinced that you wanted me to marry Lucy and that - well, that you and Colonel Brandon...

ELINOR

Me and Colonel Brandon!

EDWARD

I shall not forget attempting to thank him for making it possible for me to marry the woman I did not love while convinced he had designs upon the woman I did - do - love.

EDWARD stops walking. He looks at ELINOR and realises he can stand it no longer.

EDWARD

Would you - can you - excuse me -

He takes her face in his hands and kisses her.

EXT. PATH TO BARTON CHURCH. DAY.

A group of VILLAGE CHILDREN run down the hillside towards the Church waving ribbons and dressed in their Sunday best.

EXT. BARTON VILLAGE CHURCH. DAY.

A large wedding party is gathered outside the church. The entire village is present - CHILDREN, FARMERS, LABOURERS, SHOPKEEPERS, and all our PRINCIPALS. We see MRS JENNINGS in a gigantic mauve bonnet, CHARLOTTE and MR PALMER, SIR JOHN, MRS DASHWOOD, MARGARET, THOMAS, JOHN and FANNY who is dressed in a fantastically inappropriate concoction, and some MEN in regimental uniform. The path to the church is strewn with wild flowers and everyone holds a bunch of their own. The church bells start to peal, and a great cheer goes up as the door opens and BETSY comes out holding the bridal cake aloft. The bride and groom appear: MARIANNE, in white lawn, and COLONEL BRANDON in full uniform. Behind them come EDWARD in his parson's garb and on his arm, ELINOR as matron of honour. CLOSE on them as they watch the party moving away. MARIANNE and BRANDON make their way forward, everyone throws their flowers over them, whooping and singing.

An open carriage decked with bridal wreaths comes to meet them, and BRANDON lifts MARIANNE in. His melancholy air is all but gone and he radiates with joyful life and vigour. MARIANNE also looks extremely happy - but there is a gravity to her joy that makes her seem much older. According to the custom of the time, BRANDON throws a large handful of sixpences into the crowd, and the VILLAGE CHILDREN jump and dive for them. The coins spin and bounce, catching the sun like jewels. One hits FANNY in the eye. She reels and falls over backwards into a gorse bush. CAM pulls back as the wedding procession makes its glorious way from the church. We draw away into the surrounding countryside. Then we see, on the far edge of frame, very small, a MAN sitting on a white HORSE, watching. It is WILLOUGHBY. As we draw back further still, he slowly pulls the horse around and moves off in the opposite direction.