

# PERUSAL SCRIPT

## Jane Austen's **Sense and Sensibility**

by Mahonri Stewart

*(based on the novel)*



Newport, Maine

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## **Jane Austen's SENSE AND SENSIBILITY**

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Media Cover Art by: Liz Pulido

**LBT ORDER #3313**

**For my sisters Sarah, who introduced me to Jane Austen in general, and Mary, who introduced me to one of the film versions of this particular story when I was 15. It was a gateway to Miss Austen's simultaneously sharp and vulnerable texts. I loved her tales, and especially her characters, from the beginning.**

**And for Jeff McMahon, who has so encouraged this adaptation with his insight, his enthusiasm for the piece, and his friendship.**

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS — 10f, 5m (+servants)**

**ELINOR** Dashwood, a sensible, lovely woman in her twenties (Should play the piano)

**MARIANNE** Dashwood, a young, vivacious woman in her late teens

**MRS. DASHWOOD**

**FANNY** Dashwood

**JOHN** Dashwood

**EDWARD** Ferrars

**MARGARET**, the youngest Dashwood sister, between 12 and 15

**COLONEL BRANDON**, over 35 years old, with a very sober demeanor, but kindly

**SIR JACK** (John) Middleton, is in his forties, and has a very active and cheerful demeanor that belies his age.

**LADY MIDDLETON**, is in her mid to late twenties, and is quite different than her husband.  
(Should play the piano well)

**MRS. JENNINGS**, Lady Middleton's mother, considerably older than the rest of the group.

**WILLOUGHBY**, a young, stunningly handsome man, carrying a hunting rifle.

**LUCY** Steele

**ANNE** Steele

**SOPHIA** Grey

**SERVANTS**, as stage hands

## **SCENE LIST**

### ACT ONE

Scene One — Norland

Scene Two — Barton Cottage

Scene Three — Outdoors near the Cottage

Scene Four — Barton Cottage

Scene Five — Barton Cottage

Scene Six — Barton Cottage

Scene Seven — Outdoors near the Cottage

### ACT TWO

Scene One — Barton Cottage

Scene Two — picnic outside the Cottage

Scene Three — Sir Jack and Lady Middleton's home

Scene Four — Barton Cottage

Scene Five — Mrs. Jennings London home

Scene Six — Barton Cottage

Scene Seven — Norland

Scene Eight — Barton Cottage

Scene Nine — Outdoors at the Cottage

**SENSE AND SENSIBILITY** by *Mahonri Stewart*. RUN TIME: 2 hours. CAST SIZE: 15 (11 f, 4 m). In this adaptation of Jane Austen's classic novel, sisters Elinor and Marianne Dashwood couldn't be more different in temperament, but they find themselves in similar circumstances as they are cast out of their former livelihoods after the death of their father and then subsequently have their hearts broken by tragic circumstances in love. Yet, the heart is a resilient thing, and continues to hope for happiness and love even in the face of the greatest opposition. **ORDER #3313**

**Mahonri Stewart** is an award winning writer and educator. He has written over two dozen plays, most of which have been produced throughout the U.S. and Europe, including productions in Los Angeles, Scotland, and Switzerland. In 2004, his premiere play *Farewell to Eden* won the Kennedy Center's American College Theater Festival's National Playwriting Award (Second Place) and their National Selection Team Fellowship Award. His play *Legends of Sleepy Hollow* won the Ruth and Nathan Hale Comedy Playwriting Award. Since then he has also received numerous other awards and honors and continues to expand his writing into various mediums, including screenplays, graphic novels, poetry, and novels. He received his MFA degree in Dramatic Writing from Arizona State University and a bachelors degree in Theatre Arts from Utah Valley University. He's a former Playwright in Residence at the Noorda Regional Theater for Children and Youth.

## Sense and Sensibility

### ACT ONE

#### SCENE ONE-

*England, around 1815. As the lights raise, we find ELINOR DASHWOOD at a table, drawing. ELINOR looks up and down from her work as she occasionally gazes out of a window. All is very quiet for several moments, as ELINOR is taking an immense amount of gratification from both the activity and the quietude.*

**ELINOR:** *(smiling at the silence)* Hm....

*(Soon, however, that tranquility is disrupted as MARIANNE and MRS. DASHWOOD enter, already in the midst of an animated and emotional discussion.)*

*(sighs)*

Oh...

*(Throughout this scene ELINOR continues to try and concentrate on her art, but is obviously straining to do so throughout the overwrought conversation, until eventually it will become impossible not to be pulled into the discussion.)*

**MARIANNE:** You are perfectly right, Mother.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** I trusted him, Marianne. I trusted him to at least be true to his word. To be a man of honor! When Henry told me of John's promise to take care of us, I thought we were saved. Saved! What a false idol I trusted in... a false idol!

**MARIANNE:** John dares to hoist his false phrases of "Dear Sisters" and "Esteemed Mother" upon us, as if he were the most gracious and giving man on earth.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** I never knew your father's first wife, but I have had suspicion after suspicion that it was all her fault. John certainly didn't inherit *Henry's* good heart.

**MARIANNE:** No, mother, don't look to the dead for this fault, but to the living! Look to the ever present living!

*(Enter FANNY.)*

Look to *her*, Mother!

**FANNY:** Is everything all right?

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** *(quietly to MARIANNE, calming her angry passion)* Do not give her any reason to smirk in her smug self satisfaction, my dear. We are stronger than she is. We are marble.

(to FANNY)

Everything is well, Fanny.

**FANNY:** I am not accustomed to such . . . passionate declarations. The Dashwood women are certainly an animated group. Except for Elinor, of course. There are times I don't even *see* Elinor. What a pleasant quality that is, my dear.

**MARIANNE:** It's a wonder you see anyone beyond your own reflection, Fanny.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Marianne. . .

**MARIANNE:** Oh, and your fat, precious son, of course. It's for *his* fortune that we are to be denied our very bread. Not yet four years old and yet he is the richest soul of this family!

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Marianne!

**FANNY:** Mrs. Dashwood, I would ask that you do more efficient work in restraining the wild tongue of your daughter.

**MARIANNE:** That would be a simple task, if only you could control the wild appetite of your son.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Really, Marianne, this is not the child's fault.

**FANNY:** Fault? Why should anything be anyone's fault? I have no inkling as to what you are referring to.

**MARIANNE:** Come now, Fanny, not even you could be so detached as to not know what troubles us about this entire arrangement.

**FANNY:** What I know, Marianne, is that for these past six months since your father's death, we have shown you every kindness by taking you into our home.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** *Your* home!

**FANNY:** Well, yes. Who else would Norland belong to?

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Before these past six months, this home belonged to us.

**FANNY:** Norland never belonged to you.

**MARIANNE:** Mother, are you hearing this? I have never encountered such cruel audacity!

**FANNY:** I repeat, this home never belonged to you.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** The cruel audacity. . .

**FANNY:** Men inherit, not women. Before us, this home belonged to your husband, just as it belonged to his father before that. This home was not, is not, and cannot belong to you.

**MARIANNE:** Well, by that reasoning, this is not your home either, Fanny. It belongs to John. And when he becomes a corpse, it shall belong to your chunk of a son.

**ELINOR:** Marianne. . .

**MARIANNE:** And you better hope when that day comes, as it inevitably will, that he has a truer heart in his flabby cavity than you have proven to possess in your hollow, creaking frame!

**ELINOR:** Marianne!

**FANNY:** Apologize.

**MARIANNE:** I will not.

**FANNY:** Apologize!

**MARIANNE:** It was upon my father's deathbed that he asked John to take care of us... a most solemn vow in the most sacred of moments. And John was committed to that path until you, with your needle-like fingers and foul wisp of a voice whittled away our inheritance until it was a sliver of the original intention. All so you can continue to bloat your son's face with sweets and your own soul with vanity!

*(They are all stunned, except for MARIANNE, of course, who feel vindicated. Enter JOHN.)*

**JOHN:** Not to offend, but is this commotion absolutely necessary?

**FANNY:** John, this arrangement has become absolutely impossible. I expect your family to be out of our home before the end of the month.

**MARIANNE:** Out of *your* home, she means.

**FANNY:** I expect them out of *our* house!

**JOHN:** But, darling...

**FANNY:** I expect it.

*(Exit FANNY.)*

**JOHN:** Oh. Well then. I think I am going for a walk.

*(JOHN goes to exit, until MARIANNE interjects.)*

**MARIANNE:** John... you really are a jelly fish of a man.

*(ELINOR sighs in defeat.)*

**JOHN:** Well, Dear Sister, if I may be so bold...

**MARIANNE:** Yes, yes, be bold for once!

**JOHN:** Well ... you may be a little over spirited, my dear.

*(JOHN exits. MARIANNE yells out after him.)*

**MARIANNE:** Jellyfish!

**ELINOR:** Marianne, what were you thinking?

**MARIANNE:** And you, Elinor, you hardly said two words! When are you going to learn to stand up for our family?

**ELINOR:** Oh, is that what you were doing? From my vantage point, you just got us thrown out of here.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Well, I suppose it is for the best. Haven't you been the one telling us that we need to move on more quickly? Now we will have to do just that.

**ELINOR:** I was not the one preventing us...

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** I gave you several beautiful options.



**ELINOR:** All those homes were out of our price range.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** We could have made them work.

**ELINOR:** Not if we still wanted food on the table and clothes on our backs.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Oh, what a miserable situation.

**ELINOR:** Both of you need to come to the realization that no matter what passions and feelings we may have about all of this, that we are in very dire and very real circumstances. We *must* live within our means. This is our new life and we must forget the old one.

**MARIANNE:** You can be too cold.

**ELINOR:** And you can be too hot. But while you have despaired and raged, my dear, some of us have been trying to come up with actual solutions to our problem.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Please, talk no more of those homes you showed us. You would have us living in poverty.

**ELINOR:** We *are* in poverty, Mother.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Oh, what misery!

**ELINOR:** But never mind those homes, Mother, however convenient they may have been. I enquired with some of our relatives as to whether they knew of any suitable places and received a response back from your cousin Sir John Middleton.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Jack? What did Jack have to say?

**ELINOR:** He says he has a place for us. The price is very reasonable.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** What sort of home is it?

**ELINOR:** He says it is a lovely little cottage...

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** A cottage? From the magnificent Norland to a cottage!

**MARIANNE:** Wait, Mother, I have always thought cottages to be idyllic.

**ELINOR:** Idyllic or not, for the price and situation, this is the best offer we have received.

**MARIANNE:** And I, for one, am glad to see some real feeling from at least some of our relatives.

**ELINOR:** Wait and see, this new little garden of Eden could be just the right place for our healing.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Thank you, my dear.

**ELINOR:** I will write Sir Middleton right away.

*(ELINOR sits and begins to write Sir Middleton.)*

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Good. Now I am going to lay down a bit... I have had the most frightful headache come upon me.

*(Exit MRS. DASHWOOD.)*

**MARIANNE:** I... I am sorry for the trouble I caused.

**ELINOR:** It was inevitable. This is for the best, given the circumstances.

*(As ELINOR finishes the letter, MARIANNE admire her painting.)*

**MARIANNE:** You really are quite talented.

**ELINOR:** I feel like it's a rather feeble attempt--but thank you.

**MARIANNE:** Technically, it's a nearly perfect representation.

**ELINOR:** Yet?

**MARIANNE:** Yet—I do not see your soul in it.

**ELINOR:** It is only a landscape.

**MARIANNE:** Well, you can see how Mother feels about her landscape. How do you feel about yours?

*(Enter EDWARD. ELINOR lights up.)*

Well, it appears the landscape may just have changed. Put *that* feeling into the painting.

**EDWARD:** Miss Dashwood. Miss Marianne.

**MARIANNE:** Oh, you mustn't mind me, Mr. Ferras. I am quite aware of where I stand in this hierarchy.

**EDWARD:** Oh, no, you must not think...

**MARIANNE:** Oh, but I *do* think. Yet you have caused no offense. Quite the opposite. Tell me, what do you think of Elinor's painting?

**EDWARD:** *(quite sincerely)* I think it is absolutely lovely.

*(ELINOR quietly beams at the compliment. MARIANNE goes and takes a book of poetry from off one of the bookshelves and "reads" in another part of the room, although she is mainly eavesdropping on EDWARD and ELINOR.)*

**ELINOR:** So you truly like it?

**EDWARD:** Oh, yes! I am absolutely in awe of the talents other people have.

**ELINOR:** What do you enjoy about it?

**EDWARD:** Well, it looks so... so... *real*, doesn't it?

*(MARIANNE snickers at EDWARD. ELINOR and EDWARD look back to her.)*

**ELINOR:** Marianne?

**MARIANNE:** Oh, it is a comic poem...

**ELINOR:** *(not amused)* Amusing, is it?

**MARIANNE:** Hilarious.

*(MARIANNE sticks her nose back into the book. ELINOR and EDWARD focus back on each other. MARIANNE's eyes peer over the book, still spying.)*

**ELINOR:** Yes, absolute realism is what I'm going for.

**EDWARD:** Sometimes I wish I had such a talent as you, Miss Dashwood. I feel absolutely bereft of such things at times. My family wasn't pre-occupied by such beauties, but my heart always yearned for them. My mother and Fanny were quite intent with me becoming much more grand... more visible. But I had neither my mother's, nor my sister's sensibility. Who wants to be as visible as all that?

**ELINOR:** My sentiments exactly.

**EDWARD:** A quiet place with... loved ones. Doing quiet things, living intimate moments. Painting, reading, humble conversation, a nurturing fire.

**ELINOR:** A gentle happiness.

**EDWARD:** Yes. Precisely.

**MARIANNE:** Tell me, Mr. Ferras, do you like poetry?

*(Surprised, EDWARD and ELINOR look back at MARIANNE.)*

**EDWARD:** Why, er, yes.

**MARIANNE:** Then I have one for you to read to us!

**EDWARD:** Oh, no, I'm afraid I'm not a good reciter...

**MARIANNE:** It is one of William Cowper's. It very much reminds me of Elinor.

**EDWARD:** Well, yes, then I suppose...

*(MARIANNE thrusts the book into EDWARD's hands.)*

Er, yes. Quite.

*(EDWARD reads the poem hesitantly, awkwardly.)*

“Sweet stream that winds through yonder glade, Apt emblem of a virtuous maid  
Silent and chaste she steals along, Far from the world's gay busy throng:  
With gentle yet prevailing force,  
Intent upon her destined course;  
Graceful and useful all she does,  
Blessing and blest where'er she goes;  
Pure-bosom'd as that watery glass,  
And Heaven reflected in her face.”

**MARIANNE:** Come now, try that again, with more feeling...

**EDWARD:** I'm afraid that is the best I can do, Miss Marianne.

**MARIANNE:** Now I find that hard to believe...

**ELINOR:** Leave him alone. Not all of us like to be center stage.

**EDWARD:** Too true. But it *is* a lovely poem. Thank you for sharing it with us. And it did very much remind me of your sister. Did you not enjoy it as well, Miss Dashwood?

**ELINOR:** Very much so, Mr. Ferras.

*(Enter FANNY. It is very apparent that she does not approve of the blossoming feelings between EDWARD and ELINOR.)*

**FANNY:** Edward...

**EDWARD:** *(sighs)* Yes, Fanny?

**FANNY:** I have an urgent matter to discuss with you.

**EDWARD:** What is it?

**FANNY:** I had a letter from Mother yesterday. I would like to discuss its contents with you.

**EDWARD** Very well.

*(bowing)*

Miss Dashwood. Miss Marianne.

*(Exit EDWARD. FANNY gives a sour glance to the Dashwood sisters before she, too, exits.)*

**MARIANNE:** What a pity it is, Elinor, that Mr. Ferras should have no taste for drawing.

**ELINOR:** No taste for drawing? He did say he liked my painting.

**MARIANNE:** Oh, no, that is not what I mean.

**ELINOR:** Then what do you mean?

**MARIANNE:** By his own admission, he doesn't have much in the way of talent for it... if for anything. He could tell you that he liked it, but not much about *why* he liked it.

**ELINOR:** He liked my realism.

**MARIANNE:** Faint praise indeed!

**ELINOR:** Not in his mouth. Had he ever had the training, I think his hand could have had expertise in showing you what was truly in his heart. And this is the first time you have ever expressed any reservation about him. You have liked him well enough in the past.

**MARIANNE:** He is a good man, certainly.

**ELINOR:** What more could a person ask from a friend?

**MARIANNE:** A friend, nothing more. But from a husband? So much more!

**ELINOR:** Husband!

**MARIANNE:** Do not be coy with me. All of us have seen the feelings developing between you two.

**ELINOR:** Then it is much plainer to you than me. I assure you, he has not expressed any such intention.

**MARIANNE:** Well, as we saw with his poetry reading, expression is not exactly his expertise.

**ELINOR:** He would certainly have done more justice to simple and elegant prose. I thought so at the time; but you *would* give him Cowper.

**MARIANNE:** It would have broken my heart had I loved him, to hear him read with so little sensibility.

**ELINOR:** Love?

**MARIANNE:** Alas, it is true, you love him. Although I do not see why.

*(ELINOR goes back to her painting, disconcerted.)*

**ELINOR:** Of his sense and goodness no one can, I think, be in doubt. He is shy, so that often conceals the excellence of his understanding and his principles. He and I have been thrown together a good deal these past several months...

*(ELINOR puts down her paint brush, enraptured by the memories)*

I have seen a great deal of him. Have studied his sentiments. When he and I have had moments alone, his conversation has been unreserved and open. We have talked about literature and his opinions and tastes... his mind is well formed, we love the same books, he has a lively imagination. He is just, correct, delicate and... pure.

**MARIANNE:** Why, Elinor, are you getting *wistful*?

**ELINOR:** *(embarrassed)* You really are a silly girl.

**MARIANNE:** His looks... he is not what I would call handsome.

**ELINOR:** Truly? Well, I suppose at first, I did not find him striking. If not handsome then... well, he has this gentle expression in his eyes, which are... uncommonly good. I know him so well that I think he is certainly handsome.

**MARIANNE:** I shall very soon think him handsome, when you tell me that I am to call him brother.

**ELINOR:** Please, Marianne, stop...

**MARIANNE:** Why are you so afraid of your feelings for him?

**ELINOR:** I—I do not attempt to deny that I think very highly of him—that I esteem him—that I like him.

**MARIANNE:** *Esteem* him! *Like* him! Use those words again and I shall leave this room this instant!

**ELINOR:** *(laughs warmly)* I am certainly sorry my humble way of expression has offended your romantic standards.

**MARIANNE:** “Like” him, indeed...

**ELINOR:** Believe my feelings to be stronger than I have declared then... but believe only so far. There are so many impediments between me and Edward. There are many forces in this world ready to demolish such anxious hopes.

**MARIANNE:** Then I suppose we both must die old spinsters then. The more I know of the world, the more I am convinced that I shall never see a man whom I really love. I require so much! He must have all Edward's virtues... plus handsomeness and charm and wit and energy and...

**ELINOR:** Particular indeed.

*(ELINOR goes back to her painting.)*

**MARIANNE:** But I will say this, Elinor. If the love of my life were in my grasp... I would move heaven and hell to be with him. I would fight fiercely for my happiness.

*(MRS. DASHWOOD enters hurriedly with a letter waving in her hand.)*

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** John! Fanny!

**ELINOR:** Mother, what on earth...?

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** John! Fanny!

*(Enter EDWARD and FANNY.)*

**FANNY:** Honestly, Mrs. Dashwood, if I didn't already make myself clear on the subject, I would demand your evacuation all over again!

*(Enter JOHN.)*

**JOHN:** What is it now?

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Elinor has written our cousin Sir Middleton and accepted his offer to allow us to take over a cottage of his! I hope you are satisfied now!

**FANNY:** Very satisfied, indeed! How soon can we have you out?

**EDWARD:** Is this true, Miss Dashwood?

**ELINOR:** Yes, Mr. Farras.

**FANNY:** Oh, dear brother, rejoice! The Dashwoods are moving on to a more—independent existence. We ought to wish them every happiness and then forget all about them.

*(to JOHN)*

Come, my dear Mr. Dashwood, I wish to celebrate.

**JOHN:** Yes, treasure.

*(Exit FANNY and JOHN.)*

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Marianne, where is Margaret? She hasn't heard a word of this. I hope she will not be heart broken.

**MARIANNE:** I should think not. That little imp had been threatening to run away if we could not get away from Fanny. Now we will just run away together.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** I can never keep up with that girl even when I can locate her. Will you come with me and...?

**MARIANNE:** Yes, mother. The last time I saw her, she was re-enacting *Hamlet* down by the fountain.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** She had better not pick anything from the gardens to make one of those flower crowns of hers again. She can be so dramatic.

**ELINOR:** I have no idea where she could have inherited such a quality from.

*(Exit MRS. DASHWOOD and MARIANNE. ELINOR and EDWARD don't quite know what to say to each other at first.)*

**EDWARD:** So it is happening. You are leaving Norland.

**ELINOR:** You have—you have been a dear friend to me.

**EDWARD:** And you to me.

**ELINOR:** Perhaps— perhaps you will visit us.

**EDWARD:** I would like that. Very much. However...

**ELINOR:** However?

**EDWARD:** Miss Dashwood, there is something I have not told you... I was not sure of my heart on the matter... I hope you will not think ill of me, but I feel I must... I must...

**ELINOR:** Go on.

**EDWARD:** I must follow what honor dictates, no matter how much it hurts me personally and...

**ELINOR:** Nothing has been promised.

**EDWARD:** Pardon me?

**ELINOR:** I understand how—how wide the gulf can be between a person's desires and a person's obligations. This new change—my family's difficult circumstances...

**EDWARD:** No, no, it is not that...

**ELINOR:** Whatever it is then, just know... you have said nothing to me, have promised nothing to me which I have construed to be inappropriate nor binding. You are as free as you ever were.

**EDWARD:** No. No, I am not free. I wish I were that.

**ELINOR:** What you are is a good man. And I will forever—I will forever admire you for that.

**EDWARD:** Thank you, Miss Dashwood. You are the sort of woman—well...

**ELINOR:** Yes?

**EDWARD:** You give me hope that humankind truly does have a better nature. I will miss you.

**ELINOR:** And I you.

*(EDWARD bows and exits, reluctantly. ELINOR does her best to restrain her emotion. Having pushed the emotion down, ELINOR sits back down to her painting.)*

## **SCENE TWO-**

*Stage hands dressed as SERVANTS disassemble Norland, taking away some pieces while adding some more humble pieces to transform the setting to Barton Cottage. As ELINOR continues to paint, MARGARET enters and looks over ELINOR's shoulder.*

**MARGARET:** You must think it is lovely to be able to paint a new landscape!

**ELINOR:** You can get your own pencils and join me on this one, if you wish.

**MARGARET:** Oh, I don't like to draw *landscapes*!

**ELINOR:** Yes, your taste tends to the... fantastic. Are you still working on that piece about... *Romeo and Juliet*, was it?

**MARGARET:** Oh no, not a relationship so typically boring as that! It was Caliban and Miranda!

**ELINOR:** Dear, I am not sure if you quite understand the context of...

**MARGARET:** But I am done with that one. The current one is of the three witches from *Macbeth*... I am having a hard time drawing newt eyes, but I love painting the witch's drooping skin!

**ELINOR:** Margaret, I am not sure how we are sisters.

**MARGARET:** I have another series I am working on as well. Fairy tales.

**ELINOR:** Oh, that sounds nice.

**MARGARET:** I want you to look at my Snow White piece and tell me what you think. It's just after she's eaten the apple and the hag is rejoicing ecstatically. Tell me if the shade of blue I used for Snow White's skin is realistic of some one who just choked to death.

**ELINOR:** But Snow White does not actually die, Margaret.

**MARGARET:** Maybe not in your version.

*(Enter MARIANNE, MRS. DASHWOOD, COLONEL BRANDON, SIR JACK, LADY MIDDLETON, and MRS. JENNINGS enter.)*

**MARIANNE:** Margaret, there you are! The Middleton children are outside, if you would like to...

**MARGARET:** Henry, John, William, Annamaria! Prepare yourselves for you all shall meet with the wrath of the Sycorax!

*(MARGARET exits in a dramatic fury.)*

**SIR JACK:** I adore that girl!

**LADY MIDDLETON:** Margaret distracts the children to give me a moment of peace... *that* is what I am grateful for.

**ELINOR:** Lady Middleton, we have some new cards, perhaps you would like to...

**LADY MIDDLETON:** No, thank you. I am going to sit in the corner, if you don't mind.

**ELINOR:** Oh, but we also have...

**LADY MIDDLETON:** Truly, not to offend, but I do need a moment.

*(LADY MIDDLETON sits in a corner, separate from everyone else.)*

**SIR JACK:** Well, Colonel Brandon, the Dashwoods have spruced up the place quite nicely since they have moved in, don't you agree?



**COLONEL BRANDON:** Indeed. A little heaven on earth.

**MARIANNE:** Heaven! Dear me, you have a modest idea of heaven.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** A modest heaven for a modest soul, Miss Marianne.

**MARIANNE:** If a soul is not allowed to be expansive even in its idea of heaven, then one has to question the vision of that soul, does one not?

**ELINOR:** Marianne...

**COLONEL BRANDON:** No, no, Miss Dashwood. In this Miss Marianne is right. I dare say, expand that soul of yours. Let it reach the farthest point of earth and then the highest point of heaven and then return and tell me what you find there.

**MARIANNE:** Why, Colonel Brandon, that is the most poetic thing I have heard you say since we moved here.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** I may be a modest soul, but I have experienced enough in my life to know the see the value the enthusiastic spirit. I would hate to ever see that spirit dim.

*(MARIANNE doesn't quite know what to say to this at first, marking COLONEL BRANDON in a way she never has before, but then she shakes it off.)*

**MARIANNE:** Experience, yes. At five and thirty you certainly have had *that*.

**ELINOR:** Marianne!

*(COLONEL BRANDON doesn't take offense at this, but rather laughs outright.)*

**COLONEL BRANDON:** That's right! Spirit!

**LADY MIDDLETON:** Miss Marianne, I hear that you play the piano forte quite impressively. Could you play for us? I think it would give people less excuse to talk.

**MARIANNE:** Certainly.

*(MARIANNE goes and plays. COLONEL BRANDON sits near the piano forte to hear MARIANNE well. MRS. JENNINGS and SIR JACK sit near MRS. DASHWOOD and ELINOR.)*

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Now wasn't that an interesting exchange!

**SIR JACK:** Wasn't it!

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Are you thinking in the vein I am?

**SIR JACK:** I think I may be...

**LADY MIDDLETON:** Hush all of you! I am trying to contemplate the music!

**SIR JACK:** Yes, dear.

**LADY MIDDLETON:** And, Mother, whatever is going on in your head, I would appreciate it if you kept it to yourself. Give us some peace tonight for once.

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Come now, dear, come over with us and be more sociable...

**LADY MIDDLETON:** I am fine where I am. I have enough of the children every day without indulging

yours and Jack's games as well.

**SIR JACK:** *(lowering his voice and the others follow suit)* Mrs. Dashwood, what do you think of our Colonel Brandon as a possible son in law?

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** For Marianne you mean? Well, he is rich, is he not?

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Very rich.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Well, that does not hurt.

**ELINOR:** *Mother.*

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** But what I really want for my girls is love. Money is not an impediment, especially in a situation like ours, but love is paramount. However, I would not, of course, complain about the money.

**ELINOR:** I cannot believe I am hearing this... can we all strive for some propriety?

**MRS. JENNINGS:** I tried propriety on for size once... it was not a good fit.

*(MRS. JENNINGS and SIR JACK laugh. LADY MIDDLETON stares icily at them, so they restrain themselves.)*

**SIR JACK:** You will have to excuse my mother-in-law, Miss Dashwood. Having married off all of her own daughters, she yet seeks more poor souls to live vicariously through.

**MRS. JENNINGS:** And let us say that I have an eye for relationships. It has proved to be a veritable sixth sense. And my eye says that our Colonel Brandon and your Miss Marianne would make quite the couple...

**SIR JACK:** Yes, he is rich and she is handsome!

*(BOTH laugh again, and it is MARIANNE this time who shoots them an angry glare from over at the piano forte. BOTH lower their voices again.)*

**MRS. JENNINGS:** A perfect couple if you ask me!

**ELINOR:** Perhaps thirty-five and seventeen had better not to have any thing to do with matrimony together.

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Oh, nonsense. Why my husband was twenty years older than I was!

**LADY MIDDLETON:** Although that may have something to do with father not being around anymore.

**MRS. JENNINGS:** I thought you were not listening, dear.

**LADY MIDDLETON:** I was desperately making that attempt.

**MRS. JENNINGS:** It is for the best. He was always trying spoiling my fun.

**LADY MIDDLETON:** And you always ask why I sit in the corner.

*(MARIANNE has finished her piece. ALL applaud.)*

Well done, Miss Marianne.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** It is not faint praise to elicit a reaction from Lady Middleton. She is rather

expert herself.

**LADY MIDDLETON:** Maybe once. I don't play anymore.

**SIR JACK:** Oh, but she does! When she thinks no one is listening!

**LADY MIDDLETON:** Jack!

**SIR JACK:** Oh, darling, play that one piece... the lively one.

**LADY MIDDLETON:** I don't play lively pieces.

**SIR JACK:** Fine, fine, keep your secrets, but how about...

*(Eying COLONEL BRANDON and MARIANNE)*

Oh, yes, that *lush* one. Quite a—well, I would call it a *romantic* piece.

**LADY MIDDLETON:** Oh, all right.

*(LADY MIDDLETON sits to play. She is quite good. Noting the overt attention of MRS. JENNINGS and SIR JACK, MARIANNE sits away from them. COLONEL BRANDON sits next to her. Despite attempting to create some distance, the two of them are attracting a good deal of subtle and not so subtle attention.)*

**MARIANNE:** Sir Jack was not exaggerating. Lady Middleton is skilled.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** People can surprise you.

**MARIANNE:** I suppose so.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** You know, Miss Marianne, you have proven to be quite a talented musician yourself.

**MARIANNE:** I appreciate that, Colonel Brandon.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** You seem to enjoy culture of all sorts.

**MARIANNE:** That I do, sir. Anything that adds more life, more vivacity—more youth and joy to my existence!

**COLONEL BRANDON:** How I wish for some of that old magic to return into my life.

**MARIANNE:** Has your life become so somber?

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Not with the pleasant company that we have tonight.

**MARIANNE:** *(lowering her voice)* And you would not say such company has its drawbacks?

**COLONEL BRANDON:** I suppose all of us have drawbacks. Even you.

**MARIANNE:** You do not flatter so ably now.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Do you claim perfection, Miss Marianne?

**MARIANNE:** If I ever find my perfect love, he will see me so. And I will see such perfection in him.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Perhaps if you learn to lie to each other.

**MARIANNE:** Not a flatterer indeed!

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Miss Marianne, no one has more cause to see you in a flattering light than I do. Your buoyant, life giving eyes could light up a whole ballroom. However, as you say, I have had seen a few more years pass by than you, and—well, yes, I have had a few illusions shattered.

**MARIANNE:** Shattered by a woman, perhaps?

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Shattered by many people—a couple of them women, yes.

**MARIANNE:** Do you still pine for these women?

**COLONEL BRANDON:** I did once. But no longer.

**MARIANNE:** Your love is fickle thing then...

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Do you see purpose in me clinging to old phantoms of love?

**MARIANNE:** Love is a constant thing. I do not believe in second loves, but only and always the enduring first.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Then there would be no hope for me at all.

**MARIANNE:** At 35, do you expect there to still be hope for you in love?

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Call me a religious man who believes in new resurrections.

**MARIANNE:** For me, I hope for a love that endures in the first place. I don't look to magical second chances, but aim to cling to my first love until I die in his arms. It has been an interesting conversation, Colonel Brandon, but now my soul desires to sing.

*(MARIANNE goes to LADY MIDDLETON.)*

Lady Middleton, do you know More's "When Love is Kind"?

*(LADY MIDDLETON begins to play the introduction. MARIANNE smiles and then sings along with LADY MIDDLETON's playing.)*

When love is kind,  
Cheerful and free,  
Love's sure to find  
Welcome from me.  
But, when love brings  
Heartache and pang,  
Tears and such things,  
Love may go hang.  
If love can sigh  
O'er one alone,  
Well pleased am I  
To be that one.

But, should I see  
Love giv'n to roam  
To two or three,  
Then goodbye love.  
Love must in short  
Keep fond and true  
To good report And evil too.  
Else here I swear  
Young love may go,  
For all I care,  
To Jericho.  
When love is kind,  
Cheerful and free,  
Love's sure to find  
Welcome from me.  
But, when love brings  
Heartache and pang,  
Tears and such things,  
Love may go hang.

*(Lights go to black.)*

### **SCENE THREE-**

*All furniture is taken away by the SERVANTS. Everyone exits except for ELINOR, MARIANNE and MARGARET, who all don shawls, bonnets, etc. They are all now taking a walk together in the glorious outdoors.*

**MARGARET:** There is that lovely estate!

*(ELINOR smiles and sits. She begins to draw it in a sketch pad she brought along. MARGARET looks over her shoulder.)*

**MARIANNE:** It does so remind me of Norland.

**MARGARET:** Make sure to draw us into the picture!

**MARIANNE:** Elinor doesn't draw *people*.

**ELINOR:** I *have* drawn people. I like portrait drawing. It is, well, it is not my strong suit. But there is one I did that I am rather pleased wi--

*(ELINOR trails off, catching herself.)*

**MARIANNE:** Yes?

**ELINOR:** Never mind.

**MARIANNE:** Wait. Now wait. You have a *secret* portrait!

**ELINOR:** I do not.

**MARIANNE:** You do!

**ELINOR:** I— I am embarrassed of my portrait drawing.

**MARIANNE:** Embarrassed of your skill, or embarrassed of *subject*? May I ask, whom did you draw?

**ELINOR:** He was not a drawing...

**MARIANNE:** You took the time to *paint* this person! This person is a *he*!

**ELINOR:** Now, now, please, stop...

**MARIANNE:** I believe I know exactly who you painted.

*(MARGARET, sensing ELINOR's desperation, steps in.)*

**MARGARET:** Who lives in that house, Marianne? Or is it abandoned? *Haunted* even?!

**MARIANNE:** It's called Allenham. I have been told it is inhabited by a sad, quiet old woman named Mrs. Smith.

**ELINOR:** So perhaps haunted, after all.

**MARIANNE:** A ghost, indeed. She never had children, never married, had few friends, all of whom are now dead. What few extended relatives she has rarely visit her. She just kept on living... alone. Exactly the kind of life I could never bare.

**ELINOR:** Perhaps she has learned to love the quiet.

**MARIANNE:** No one truly loves the quiet.

**ELINOR:** I do.

**MARIANNE:** Not all the time. Not forever.

**ELINOR:** No. I suppose not. Not forever.

*(looking to the sky)*

It's going to rain. We'd better get home.

**MARIANNE:** Elinor, wait. I have not heard you say his name for ages.

**ELINOR:** Whose name?

**MARIANNE:** Can you not even say it?

**ELINOR:** I really do not know what you are talking about.

**MARIANNE:** Why has he not visited us yet?

**ELINOR:** To whom you are referring to?

**MARIANNE:** Edward! We all knew it, we all saw it, we all understood it.

**ELINOR:** Evidently not all of us, if Mr. Ferrars and I were not informed. Your imagination absolutely can carry you away to the wildest notions, my dear. Always dramatically looking for hidden meanings that are not there...

**MARIANNE:** Except you *do* keep hidden portraits, don't you? Your behavior since we have left Norland has been unaccountable. How cold, how composed were yours and Edward's last adieus.

**MARGARET:** Can we go into the house? Does she have tours?

**MARIANNE:** No, she does not have tours. She is a very private person.

*(to ELINOR)*

Which I am sure has created great loneliness in her life.

**ELINOR:** Marianne, will you please let it alone?

**MARIANNE:** When we said farewell to Edward he made no distinction between you and me. He played the good, affectionate brother to us both...

**ELINOR:** And you expected something more?

**MARIANNE:** For you, yes. I expected more out of *you*, as well.

**ELINOR:** I am sorry we do not all meet your high expectations.

**MARIANNE:** When we left Edward and Norland, you did not cry as I did. You did not shed a tear for old lives... nor old loves.

**ELINOR:** I can adapt to and appreciate other places and people.

**MARIANNE:** Even now your self-command is invariable. When are you ever dejected or melancholy?

**ELINOR:** The storm is about to break on us. We need to go home.

**MARIANNE:** Go home, if you wish. I am staying out in the rain. I am not afraid of good Mother Earth's passions!

**ELINOR:** Be sensible!

**MARIANNE:** No. Certainly not.

**MARGARET:** Can I stay out as well?

**MARIANNE:** Of course!

**ELINOR:** Marianne, Margaret...

**MARIANNE:** Tell Mother we will be back soon.

**ELINOR:** No, wait...

**MARIANNE:** Let us be off, Margaret, like Banshees on the Moors!

**MARGARET:** Banshees! I like the sound of that!

*(MARIANNE and MARGARET exit, wailing like Banshees.)*

**ELINOR:** Marianne and Margaret, get back here! I am not going to—oh dear. Well, at the very least be careful!

*(ELINOR looks around, feeling suddenly alone. She wraps her shawl around her, tucks away her sketchbook and, braving the coming storm, exits. SFX: The sounds and indications of the storm increase. A **lighting** indication of a slight passage of time as MARIANNE and MARGARET re-enter, running, yelling joyfully, and enthusiastic. Their skin and clothes are now damp.)*

**MARIANNE:** Is there a felicity in the world superior to this? Margaret, we will dance and revel in this rain for at least another...

**MARGARET:** ...two hours!

**MARIANNE:** Two hours it is then!

*(MARIANNE suddenly slips and falls, twisting her ankle.)*

**MARGARET:** Marianne!

**MARIANNE:** Oh... ow, erm, that's painful.

**MARGARET:** Did you break it...

**MARIANNE:** It's certainly sprained, at least.

*(SFX: They hear a distant shot.)*

**MARGARET:** What was that?

**MARIANNE:** Some hunter, I suppose...

*(SFX: The sound of hunting dogs.)*

**MARGARET:** Let us hope he is not hunting maidens...

**MARIANNE:** Urmgh, ah...

**MARGARET:** This is bad, isn't it?

*(MARIANNE begins to cry in pain...)*

Oh, don't cry... if you cry, then I'll cry, and then how am I to see enough to carry you?

**MARIANNE:** As capable as you are, Margaret, I'm certain you won't be able to carry me.

**MARGARET:** Maybe I can drag you then.



*(Seeing some one in the distance...)*

Oh, look! Over here, over here... help!

*(Enter WILLOUGHBY.)*

**WILLOUGHBY:** Are you all right?

**MARIANNE:** *(struck by his handsomeness)* I— I--

**MARGARET:** We were wailing like banshees!

**MARIANNE:** Margaret...

**MARGARET:** We were wailing and then we were running in the rain, we even did a little dance, and then we plunged down the hill—I was winning because I am a fast runner—and then—pow! Marianne tumbled down to the ground like Jack and Jill! But without the Jack. Unless you want to be her Jack.

**MARIANNE:** Margaret!

**WILLOUGHBY:** I am afraid I refuse to be a Jack, despite my parents efforts to the contrary. But I do well with tumblers.

*(WILLOUGHBY lifts MARIANNE in his arms.)*

**MARIANNE:** Oh!

*(Meets WILLOUGHBY's gaze)*

Oh.

**MARGARET:** But your rifle!

**WILLOUGHBY:** Well, yes, leave it there then... I will come back for it.

**MARGARET:** I can take it!

**WILLOUGHBY:** Oh no, we have already had tumblings, let us not add gunshots to our list of mishaps.

**MARGARET:** Drat.

**WILLOUGHBY:** Are you far from here, Miss... Miss...?

*(MARIANNE is still a little stunned.)*

**MARGARET:** Her name is Marianne Dashwood. And I am Margaret Dashwood.

**WILLOUGHBY:** A pleasure. Is it far?

**MARGARET:** Not too far.

**WILLOUGHBY:** Well, I'll need a few stops along the way, but I think I can manage it. Although I am certainly no Hercules.

**MARGARET:** You could have fooled us.

**MARIANNE:** Well, sir, if you are not a Jack, and you are not a Hercules, who exactly are you?

**WILLOUGHBY:** My dear stranger, today I am your guardian angel. My name is Willoughby.

*(Exit WILLOUGHBY, MARIANNE and Margaret.)*

**SCENE FOUR-**

*Barton Cottage. Enter ELINOR and MRS. DASHWOOD. ELINOR is checking worriedly out a window, while MRS. DASHWOOD is occupied and unworried. SFX: The sounds of intense rain and wind is heard.*

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Elinor, stop fretting yourself. They are more than capable of taking care of the themselves. *Especially* those two.

**ELINOR:** I'm going out to search for them. Wait... I see them. But...

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** What is it?

**ELINOR:** It looks like Marianne is hurt. There is a man with them.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Marianne is hurt? Goodness. Wait, did you say a *man*? Goodness!

**ELINOR:** Mother, get the door, I am grabbing some blankets.

*(ELINOR exits. MRS. DASHWOOD rushes and ushers in MARIANNE, WILLOUGHBY, and MARGARET, all three of them soaked.)*

**WILLOUGHBY:** I am sorry for the dramatic appearance, but where may I put her, madame?

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Erm, on the chaise lounge, on the chaise lounge!

**WILLOUGHBY:** Are you all right, Miss Marianne?

**MARIANNE:** I— yes, yes, I think so.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** What happened?

**MARGARET:** We were wailing like Banshees! Wailing! And *then*...

**MARIANNE:** All right, Margaret, that is enough.

**WILLOUGHBY:** Mrs. Dashwood, I assume?

*(ELINOR re-enters with blankets.)*

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** You assume correctly, sir.

**WILLOUGHBY:** I am John Willoughby.

**MARGARET:** How is it that we know so many Johns and Jacks?

**WILLOUGHBY:** That is why I go by Willoughby.

**ELINOR:** Rather— informal.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Mrs. Dashwood, your daughter has twisted her ankle. She was rather in dire straights when I happened upon them.

**MARGARET:** And he had a gun!

**ELINOR:** *What?*

**WILLOUGHBY:** Erm, I had been hunting. Naturally, I left the rifle behind.

**MARGARET:** I volunteered to carry it. I could have, too!

**MARIANNE:** Margaret, enough!

**MARGARET:** Since when were you the scolding one? That is normally Elinor's occupation.

**ELINOR:** She is right, Margaret. Shush.

**WILLOUGHBY:** Miss Marianne, how is your ankle?

**MARIANNE:** I... honestly, I haven't given a second thought to the thing for some time. Let me see.

*(assessing her ankle)*

Yes, it still hurts.

*(WILLOUGHBY laughs.)*

**WILLOUGHBY:** Well then, may I call back tomorrow to see how you are doing?

**MARIANNE:** Well... erm...

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Yes, yes, please come back!

*(beat. Less eager.)*

Of course, only if it is not inconvenient.

**WILLOUGHBY:** I do not live my life regarding convenience or inconvenience. I follow the wind to where it takes me, and today I am grateful it led me here among all of you.

**MARGARET:** Yes, the wind! Wailing!

**ELINOR:** Margaret. Decorum.

**WILLOUGHBY:** Miss Marianne, I am afraid you may not be back on your feet for some time. Which is a shame since it will be some time before you can dance.

**MARIANNE:** Do you like to dance?

**WILLOUGHBY:** Very much so. I will ask you to be my partner, once you heal. Would you like that?

**MARIANNE:** Yes. Oh... yes, very much.

**WILLOUGHBY:** May I bring you something tomorrow to help pass away the time since dancing, in the rain or otherwise, is now officially off the checklist?

**MARIANNE:** Oh, Mr. Willoughby, you mustn't think...

**WILLOUGHBY:** You do not have to hide behind “decorum” with me, Miss Marianne. You will find that I am a free spirit myself.

**MARIANNE:** Truly?

**WILLOUGHBY:** What would you have me bring, m'lady?

**MARIANNE:** Do you have any volumes of poetry?

**WILLOUGHBY:** Would that new fellow Lord Byron suffice?

**MARIANNE:** He certainly would.

**MARGARET:** And you must read it to her! She likes it when they read it to her!

**ELINOR:** Yet I must warn you, Mr. Willoughby, Marianne can have rather... high standards about expression.

**WILLOUGHBY:** I hope not to be a disappointment in that regard. I was the lead in a number of plays during my school days.

**MARIANNE:** Truly!

**WILLOUGHBY:** Tomorrow it is then. I will return with Lord Byron to keep us company. Thank you all. It was such a delight to meet every one of you. And rest yourself, Miss Marianne, so that you may give me that promised dance... in the rain or otherwise.

*(Exit WILLOUGHBY.)*

**MARIANNE:** I think I just found the perfect man.

*(Blackout.)*

## **SCENE FIVE-**

*ELINOR appears alone, sketching in a single pool of light, as all else is dark around her. She raises the sketch to reveal that she has been drawing EDWARD. A light on EDWARD suddenly appears behind her.*

**EDWARD:** Not a very good likeness.

**ELINOR:** Edward! I mean, Mr. Ferrars.

**EDWARD:** You never did understand me well enough to do me justice.

**ELINOR:** What are you...

**EDWARD:** You fancied that I cared for you.

**ELINOR:** I... No...

**EDWARD:** Poor Elinor. Deluded Elinor.

**ELINOR:** I... I was never under any such delusion. I was your friend, you were mine. That was all.

**EDWARD:** No, no, you wanted to be so much more than mere friends. A woman's heart, a thing of fancies and wild imagination.

**ELINOR:** I have never been "wild" about anything, sir.

**EDWARD:** You can say that to them out there. Not here.

**ELINOR:** Edward would never treat me like this.

**EDWARD:** I suppose not. But I am not Edward, am I? I am some one much more frightening.

**ELINOR:** No. Nothing can frighten me.

**EDWARD:** Is that so? You have protected yourself completely then?

**ELINOR:** From the likes of you, yes.

**EDWARD:** Or the likes of *you*.

**ELINOR:** Yes.

**EDWARD:** Goodbye, Elinor.

**ELINOR:** I do not care for goodbyes.

**EDWARD:** Goodbye.

**ELINOR:** I do not care about goodbyes.

**EDWARD:** Goodbye.

*(EDWARD exits. ELINOR breaks and turns around wildly.)*

**ELINOR:** Edward!

*(The lights come back up suddenly and ELINOR is back at her home. She regains her calm. MARIANNE and WILLOUGHBY are singing the song "The Water is Wide" as a duet while LADY MIDDLETON is playing the piano forte. Also present are MRS. DASHWOOD, SIR JACK, and MRS. JENNINGS, who are all sitting together. ELINOR goes and sits by them. COLONEL BRANDON is separate from all of them, introspective and a little despondent.)*

**MARIANNE and WILLOUGHBY:**

"The water is wide, I can-not cross o'er.

And neither have I wings to fly.

Give me a boat that can carry two,

And both shall row, my love and I.

A ship there is and she sails the seas.

She's loaded deep, as deep can be;

But not as deep as the love I'm in  
And I know not if I sink or swim.”

**LADY MIDDLETON:** You are both quite excellent.

**WILLOUGHBY:** That is very gracious, Lady Middleton. Life is a song and I aim to sing it at every opportunity!

**MARIANNE:** My sentiments exactly!

**MRS. JENNINGS:** (*aside, to SIR JACK*) It seems as if their sentiments are always aligning... they are a perpetual eclipse.

**SIR JACK:** (*confidentially, looking over to COLONEL BRANDON*) Yes, and it appears that it is poor ol' Colonel Brandon who is to have the light cut off from him.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** (*joining the conversation*) Well, yes. I highly approve of Colonel Brandon, but the age difference was always a problem, was it not?

**ELINOR:** (*also joining, somewhat reluctantly so*) Are you not the one who told me that you did not mind the age difference, Mother?

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Well, that was before Willoughby.

(*to Mrs. Jennings*)

Did you know that Willoughby is to inherit that sad, lonely woman's estate at Allenham?

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Mr. Willoughby comes up every year. The only visitor I have ever seen her receive. The rest of her relatives know that Willoughby is the favorite, so they do not bother showing up!

**SIR JACK:** (*to ELINOR*) I thought *you* said the age was an impediment, Miss Dashwood.

**ELINOR:** I... I suppose I feel sorry for him. But I must admit that Willoughby and Marianne are cut out of the same cloth. And he has almost become part of the family these past couple of months.

**SIR JACK:** Yes, yes, he is very well worth catching, I can tell you, Miss Dashwood; in addition to the prospect of Allenham Court, he has a pretty little estate of his own, in Somershire besides. If I were you, I would not give him up so easily to my younger sister, in spite of all this tumbling down hills.

**ELINOR:** Oh no, Sir Middleton...

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Can you imagine? A passionate man like Mr. Willoughby with our calm, rational Elinor? She must have a different match!

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Elinor, is already spoken for.

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Is she now?

**ELINOR:** I am no such thing.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** There is this lovely young man back in...

**ELINOR:** Mother.

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Well, if you want to keep it a secret dear, I understand.

**ELINOR:** There is no secret to keep. My family has some wild notions of romances that never existed, Mrs. Jennings.

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Well then who is this imaginary suitor then? No response from anyone? I will unearth this mystery man sooner or later. I am a patient detective.

**SIR JACK:** Miss Marianne cannot expect to have all the men to herself. Brandon will be jealous, if she does not take care.

**MRS. JENNINGS:** (glancing at Marianne and Willoughby, who are engrossed with each other) I am rather certain that Colonel Brandon is the last person on Miss Marianne's mind.

*(ALL FOUR of them look to COLONEL BRANDON, who is obviously making the same conclusion.)*

**SIR JACK:** Poor Brandon... he is quite smitten. And he is very well worth setting a cap at, in spite of all this tumbling about and spraining of ankles.

**ELINOR:** I will go talk to him.

*(ELINOR goes to COLONEL BRANDON.)*

You are quiet tonight, Colonel.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** I— I do not mean to attract attention. What you all must think...

**ELINOR:** Do you care what we think?

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Is that not what your sister wants? A man who does not care for the opinion of those around him? Neither of them seems to mind making a spectacle, certainly.

**ELINOR:** Yes, they are both rather romantic that way.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** And I would not rob them of that sort of passion.

**ELINOR:** That is good of you to say.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Would it surprise you to hear that I was once considered quite the romantic?

**ELINOR:** Truly? A sensible man like you?

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Sensible! That was a quality I learned, not inherited.

**ELINOR:** Was that a sad education?

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Do I seem so melancholy to you? I do not mean to project it, I am so sorry.

**ELINOR:** Perhaps... perhaps one sad soul understands another.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Is your heart set on a lost lover as well then?

**ELINOR:** I... well...

**COLONEL BRANDON:** You are not the sort to tell me even if it were so, are you?

**ELINOR:** No.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** You Dashwood women... I admire your constant hearts. Your sister, I

understand, does not approve of second attachments.

**ELINOR:** As I said, her opinions are all decidedly romantic.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Rather, she considers second attachments impossible to exist.

**ELINOR:** Just how she contrives it without reflecting that her own father had two subsequent wives, I am at a loss. A few years will settle her opinions on the reasonable basis of common sense and observation; and then they may be more easy to define and justify than they now are, by anybody but herself.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** There is something so amiable in the prejudices of a young mind. I cannot say that it would make me happy to see her shed her wild joy.

**ELINOR:** I cannot agree with you there. There are... inconveniences attending such feelings as Marianne's.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** And there are inconveniences in losing such feelings.

**ELINOR:** Her systems have the sad tendency of setting propriety at naught. A better acquaintance with the world is just what I look forward to as her greatest possible advantage.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** The "world." Would you be so cruel to thrust her on such a cold, unfriendly place?

**ELINOR:** Cold, unfriendly. Yes, but it can also teach us where to set our expectations, where not to set our hearts.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Perhaps. Or perhaps such a course as you suggest would just freeze our hearts, instead of breaking them. A total change of sentiments—please, do not desire that for your sister. For when the romantic refinements of a young mind are obliged to give way, how often they are succeeded by opinions that threaten to destroy one's happiness.

**ELINOR:** You... you speak from experience?

**COLONEL BRANDON:** I once knew a lady who in temper and mind greatly resembled your sister, who thought and judged like her, but from just such a confrontation with the "world," as you are describing stumbled upon a series of unfortunate circumstances and...

*(Suddenly MARGARET enters.)*

**MARGARET:** I have a message!

**ELINOR:** Margaret, how many times must we explain that...

**MARGARET:** No, truly! A young boy came to me—I thought he was a little thief at first so I punched him in the gut, which I admit was a mistake, and I did apologize—but once he could breathe again he said he had an urgent message he was supposed to deliver to Colonel Brandon.

*(brandishing the message)*

And here it is!

*(COLONEL BRANDON retrieves the message from MARGARET.)*

**COLONEL BRANDON:** Thank you, Margaret.



*(COLONEL BRANDON begins to read the letter.)*

**SIR JACK:** Brandon, what is going on?

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Yes, please, do not leave us in such suspense.

**COLONEL BRANDON:** My... my own loss is great in being obliged to leave so agreeable a party, but I must go.

**MRS. JENNINGS:** What happened?

**COLONEL BRANDON:** I must go!

*(Exit COLONEL BRANDON.)*

**WILLOUGHBY:** There are some people who cannot bear a party of pleasure. Colonel Brandon is one of them. I dare say he invented the trick of the letter to get out of it.

**MARIANNE:** I have no doubt of it.

**ELINOR:** That is most unpleasant of you both to say. It could be some serious trouble and here you are jeering at him for it.

**MARIANNE:** In either case, he was not adding much to the party, was he?

**MRS. JENNINGS:** I can guess what this business is about.

**MARIANNE:** Can you, ma'am?

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Yes, it is about Miss Williams, I am sure.

**MARIANNE:** And who is this Miss Williams?

**MRS. JENNINGS:** What! You do not know who Miss Williams is? I am sure you must have heard of her before. She is a relation of the Colonel's, my dear; a very near relation.

*(Darting a look to MARGARET, then confidentially to the adults)*

It is said that she is his natural daughter.

**ELINOR:** Truly, I do not see how this is any of our business.

**WILLOUGHBY:** I agree!

**ELINOR:** You do?

**WILLOUGHBY:** Why, yes. In fact, I do not much like speaking of him at all. Brandon is just the sort of man whom every body speaks well of, and nobody cares about; whom all are delighted to see, and nobody remembers to talk to.

**MARIANNE:** That is exactly what I think of him.

**ELINOR:** That is untrue. I was just speaking to him.

**WILLOUGHBY:** Yes, but because you are the sort to take pity on the unloved. It is a noble quality in you, Elinor, but it does not count much towards a man's *actual* value.

**ELINOR:** Well. Perhaps censure from you then counts for *actual* praise, for you are prejudiced and unjust.

**WILLOUGHBY:** *Well.* In defense of your protege even you can be saucy.

**ELINOR:** My protege, as you call him, is a sensible man; and sense will always be admirable to me.

**MARIANNE**” Then perhaps *you* ought to marry him!

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Now that is not a bad idea, actually.

**MARGARET:** She can't marry him. She's already in love with...

*(ELINOR shoots MARGARET an intimidating look.)*

...erm, a man of mystery and danger. He is a spy, in fact.

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Oh, come now. We are all friends here.

**MARGARET:** His surname starts with “F.”

**MRS. JENNINGS:** I will take that clue gladly. Thank you, my dear.

**ELINOR:** Colonel Brandon has seen a good deal of the world; has been abroad, has read, has a thinking mind. I have found him capable of giving me much information on various subjects; and he has always answered my enquiries with readiness of good breeding and good nature.

**MARIANNE:** That is to say he has told you that in the East Indies the climate is hot, and the mosquitoes bothersome. He has neither genius, taste, nor spirit. His understanding has no brilliance, his feelings no ardour, and his voice no expression.

**ELINOR:** You do not know him enough to make any such judgments, you spoiled, selfish thing!

*(ALL are stunned by this.)*

**MRS. JENNINGS:** Well now, this is a side of our quiet little Miss Dashwood we have not seen.

**MARIANNE:** How can you say that to me, Elinor? Have you no feeling?

**ELINOR:** Not everyone takes cue by *your* feelings, Marianne.

**WILLOUGHBY:** I do. In fact, I take particular interest in Miss Marianne's feelings and it seems to me that you are the one who has been unkind. As for Colonel Brandon, you shall find me to be as stubborn as you can be artful. I have three unanswerable reasons for disliking Colonel Brandon: he has threatened me with rain when I wanted it to be fine; he has found fault with the handling of my curricule; and I cannot persuade him to buy my brown mare. If it will be any satisfaction to you, however, to be told that I believe him to be otherwise irreproachable, I am ready to confess it. And in return for an acknowledgement, you cannot deny me the privilege of disliking him as much as ever.

*(There is a tense moment and then ALL exit.)*

**SCENE SIX-**

*The lights raise to bring us back to Barton where we find ELINOR and MRS. DASHWOOD.*

**ELINOR:** Mother, we cannot let Marianne take walks by herself anymore.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Are you afraid she will perform an encore of her tumbling?

**ELINOR:** No... well, yes, with her history that is a concern, certainly. But that is not what I am talking about.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** You would have as much luck preventing Marianne from her walks as preventing a bird from flying.

**ELINOR:** She has been meeting secretly with Willoughby.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** What do you mean?

**ELINOR:** They have been going to Allenham when Mrs. Smith is gone. Margaret followed them the other day and told me.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Well, certainly I will talk to her about then, but that is hardly reason to...

**ELINOR:** Mother, they were unchaperoned.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Which, again, I will talk to her about, but—well, Elinor, you know what it is like to be in love.

**ELINOR:** Mother, I am concerned.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Willoughby has become a dear to all of us. You are showing quite the distrusting nature towards a man who has earned nothing but approbation from all those around him. You had rather take evil upon credit than good.

**ELINOR:** Does it not concern you, Mother, that they are concealing these excursions from us?

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** My dear child, do you accuse Willoughby and Marianne of concealment and secrecy? Anyway, those two are engaged!

**ELINOR:** I have not heard of this.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Well, they have not announced it to anyone yet, but—can you doubt it? Has not his behavior to Marianne and to all of us, for at least a fortnight, declared that he loved and considered her his future wife? What more proof of their affection do you want?

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

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** You must think wretchedly of Willoughby indeed! Has he been acting a part with your sister all this time? Anyone with eyes to see knows that he loves her.

**ELINOR:** Even love gives way to stronger forces, Mother.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Do you believe there is any stronger force than love?

**ELINOR:** Oh, yes, Mother. There are many forces in this world that can rip us from even the most fervent kind of love.

*(Suddenly MARIANNE enters weeping and in near hysterics. Upon seeing MRS. DASHWOOD and ELINOR, she stops, stunned.)*

Marianne! What happened?

**MARIANNE:** I... ohhh, I...

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** What is wrong, darling?

**WILLOUGHBY:** *(O.S.)* Marianne, wait!

*(WILLOUGHBY suddenly enters and stops upon seeing ELINOR and MRS. DASHWOOD. Although not as wildly so, it is apparent that WILLOUGHBY is distraught as well.)*

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Willoughby?

*(MARIANNE exits towards her room.)*

Marianne!

**ELINOR:** Willoughby.

**WILLOUGHBY:** I...

*(MARGARET enters.)*

**MARGARET:** Why is Marianne crying? Is she ill?

**WILLOUGHBY:** No. But we are both suffering under a very heavy disappointment.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Disappointment!

**WILLOUGHBY:** I am afraid I must take my leave of you, my friends.

**MARGARET:** Willoughby, you are leaving?

**WILLOUGHBY:** Mrs. Smith exercised the privilege of riches upon a poor dependent cousin, by sending me on business to London.

**MARGARET:** London! Well, maybe we can go with you! I want to see the Tower where they chopped off all the heads.

**ELINOR:** Shush, Margaret. We are not going to London.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** And you are going right now?

**WILLOUGHBY:** Almost this moment.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** I do not understand...

**WILLOUGHBY:** Mrs. Smith must be obliged.

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Her business will not detail you from us for long, I hope.

**ELINOR:** Mother...

**MRS. DASHWOOD:** Well, he must not be long, I am sure of it!

**WILLOUGHBY:** You are very kind, but I have no idea of returning to Devonshire immediately.

**MARGARET:** But we are your friends!

**WILLOUGHBY:** You are too good, but—my engagements are at present—are of such a nature—that—I dare not flatter myself...

*(pained pause)*

This is folly! I will not torment myself any longer by remaining among friends whose society it is now impossible for me to enjoy!

*(WILLOUGHBY exits. MRS. DASHWOOD and MARGARET look at each other completely stunned, while ELINOR looks concerned, but unsurprised.)*

## SCENE SEVEN-

*The servants take off the furniture and we are now outdoors. MARIANNE, reading, sits aside from ELINOR and MARGARET, who are both painting. MARIANNE begins to quote Byron "When We Two Parted" from her reading.*

**MARIANNE:** "When we two parted

In silence and tears,

Half broken-hearted

To sever for years..."

**MARGARET:** *(this dialogue is intermittently on top of the poem; whispering to ELINOR)* She is reciting poetry again...

**ELINOR:** She is welcome to recite poetry to us.

**MARGARET:** I am sick of broken hearted verses of weeping maidens! Unless there is some duel as a consequence, it is all useless to me.

**ELINOR:** Leave her be, Margaret.

**MARIANNE:**...Pale grew thy cheek and cold,

Colder thy kiss;

Truly that hour foretold

Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning

Sunk chill on my brow—  
It felt like the warning.  
Of what I feel now.  
Thy vows are all broken,  
And light is thy fame:  
I hear thy name spoken,  
And share in its shame...

**MARGARET:** But it's all that new fellow Byron! She's *always* reading him!

**ELINOR:** Do you take issue with Lord Byron?

**MARGARET:** All verse and no characters... I need some one to get stabbed! Or at least strangled.

**MARIANNE:** ...They name thee before me,

A knell to mine ear;  
A shudder comes o'er me—  
Why wert thou so dear?  
They know not I knew thee,  
Who knew thee too well:  
Long, long shall I rue thee,  
Too deeply to tell...

**MARGARET:** But the least she could manage is some variation. Perhaps Shakespeare. If she wants to be a tragic figure, go for Ophelia! Her broken heart had style.

**ELINOR:** Margaret, I am certain you do not want Marianne drowning in a pond.

**MARGARET:** If you one is going to be dramatic, she ought to be *dramatic*! Make an amusing time of it. If she could strew flowers in her hair and splash about a bit, I would be satisfied.

**ELINOR:** We all deal with grief in different ways. Respect Marianne's.

**MARIANNE:** ...In secret we met—

In silence I grieve,  
That thy heart could forget,  
Thy spirit deceive.  
If I should meet thee  
After long years,  
How should I greet thee?  
With silence and tears.

**ELINOR:** Very well read, my dear.

**MARIANNE:** “Well read.” Not exactly what I was going for.

**ELINOR:** I... I know.

**MARIANNE:** Sometimes I wonder if that great calm of yours is ever stirred at all, Elinor.

**ELINOR:** *(looking over at MARGARET's painting)* Margaret, I know it is Autumn, but it looks like the leaves in your painting are on fire.

**MARGARET:** That is because, in the painting, they *are* on fire.

**ELINOR:** Oh.

**MARIANNE:** Norland was always so beautiful in Autumn.

**ELINOR:** It is beautiful here as well...

**MARIANNE:** No, not like Norland.

*(overwrought, but sincere)*

Oh! With what transporting sensations have I formerly seen them fall! How have I delighted, as I walked, to see them driven in showers about me by the wind! What feelings they have, the season, the air altogether inspired! Now there is no one left there who has the nature to regard them. They are only seen as a nuisance, swept hastily off, and driven as much as possible from sight.

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

**MARIANNE:** No. My feelings are not often shared, nor understood. But there was some one who once did...

*(MARIANNE trails off and walks a bit off.)*

**MARGARET:** That part about the leaves was nice. Still, a mild drowning would be appreciated.

*(MARGARET looks up from her painting, seeing something that interests her.)*

Whose horse is that? He's headed towards us.

**MARIANNE:** It is he; it is indeed—I know it is!

**ELINOR:** Indeed, Marianne, I think you are mistaken. It is not Willoughby. The person is not tall enough for Willoughby and has not his air.

**MARIANNE:** He has, he has, I am sure he has. His air, his coat, his horse. I knew he would come!

**MARGARET:** You are wrong, too, Marianne. He strikes me as an assassin. Maybe a thief. Should we tell Mother to hide the silver?

**ELINOR:** Look, he is dismounting. Those leaves are covering his face, I cannot tell whether...

**MARIANNE:** I am utterly certain that...

**MARGARET:** He is not attractive enough to be Willoughby. Willoughby is slender and muscled... this fellow is a little too... twiggy.

**MARIANNE:** See, he is emerging from the trees and... oh.

**MARGARET:** Oh.

**ELINOR:** Oh!

*(Enter EDWARD.)*

**EDWARD:** Good afternoon.

**ELINOR:** Edward.

***END ACT ONE.***

***43 PAGES IN ACT 2***