

"SENSE AND SENSIBILITY"

Screenplay by

Emma Thompson

Based on the novel by

Jane Austen

EXT. OPEN ROADS - NIGHT - TITLE SEQUENCE

A series of traveling shots. A well-dressed, pompous-looking individual (JOHN DASHWOOD, 35) is making an urgent journey on horseback. He looks anxious.

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 storybook 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 traveling 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. LAUNDRY - NORLAND PARK - DAY

A red-eyed MAID (BETSY) plunges a beautiful muslin frock into a vat of black dye.

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 into a chair and bursts into tears.

ELINOR

I shall start making inquiries 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

--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

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. BETSY is 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 play hostess.

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  
Mamma quite depends upon him. He is  
traveling 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 façade.

INT. NORLAND PARK - DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Everyone except MARGARET is present. EDWARD has just shaken

bands 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 - DAY

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 - DAY

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 - DAY

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

inquiries 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 - DAY

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 - DAY

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  
Vladivostok, and ends in...

ELINOR  
St Albans.

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 disheveled 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 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

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  
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

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. He is too sedate 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 ardour of the soul really be satisfied with such polite, concealed 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 unanswering  
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 under standing  
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 POV 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. It was less... successful than  
it might have been.

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.

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 redingote (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 bed room--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 girl I ever set eyes on! Cannot you get them married, Mrs Dashwood? You must not leave it too long!

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.

SIR JOHN

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.

Now he is pushing her into the carriage.

MRS JENNINGS

Of course she is fatigued!

SIR JOHN

Come along, Mother, we really must leave them to themselves.

MRS JENNINGS

You must get your maidservant to make you up some camphor--it is the best tonic for the staggers!

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's 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 left her heart behind in Sussex, eh?

MARIANNE flashes an unmistakable 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.

EXT. 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 basketwork. 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

An outdoor luncheon is in progress. COLONEL BRANDON is talking to MRS DASHWOOD. Occasionally he looks over towards MARIANNE, who is playing bilboquet 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 miles 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  
piano forte 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 them selves, 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, Miss 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 opens the parcel 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

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 walking 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!' It 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'm  
honoured of 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 inquire  
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)  
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 interest. 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 lookout 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  
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 Allenham--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 Shakespeare's sonnets?

Everyone answers at once.

MARIANNE/ELINOR/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  
'O, 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 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.

INT. BARTON PARK - DRAWING ROOM - EVE

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 curricle (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 traveling up especially.

ELINOR  
Thank you, Colonel, we shall be delighted.

At that moment, WILLOUGHBY's curricle 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 curricle, 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!

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, MARIANNE, 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--

MRS 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.  
WILLOUGH BY suddenly appears in his curricle. 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 curricle 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 curricle 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.

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 wants 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  
curricle 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 that cottage!

ELINOR

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

WILLOUGHBY

Especially 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 to 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 quarreled.

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. 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 the 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 inquiring--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 Christmas, 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, then returns to her packing.

EXT. BARTON COTTAGE - GARDEN GATE - DAY

MRS DASHWOOD and MARGARET are waving MRS JENNINGS's carriage off. MARIANNE waves back with such exuberance that 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 traveling 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 under standing, 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 pinionlike 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 inquire 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

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.

Luckily 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  
inquiry.

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 nor  
shake hands with me?

WILLOUGHBY looks extremely 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 nor  
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.

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... Certainly!

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

MRS JENNINGS's carriage stands outside. A livened 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 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--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 hustles 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--

The MAID comes back.

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  
propriatorially.

After a stiff 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 - BACK GARDEN - DAY

A tranquil afternoon...

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

LUCY is sitting with FANNY, who is doing some pointless  
basketwork. LUCY hands FANNY rushes.

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

Oh 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 respect ability.

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.

They rise. 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 debauch 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 juggles 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

ELINOR'S POV. MARIANNE is nowhere in sight. Storm clouds have gathered on the bill.

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: O, 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 Willoughby's 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! 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.

DR HARRIS is by MARIANNE's side. He turns to ELINOR.

DR 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.

DISSOLVE:

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.

DISSOLVE:

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.

DR 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.

DISSOLVE:

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.

DISSOLVE:

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 nor 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,  
companion able.

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.

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 inquired 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 - KITCHEN - DAY

MARGARET is standing on the kitchen 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 kitchen.

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.

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 forwards, 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 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 six pences 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.

THE END