

Sense and Sensibility



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JANE AUSTEN

Jane Austen was the seventh child of the parish rector in the town of Steventon, where she and her family resided until moving to Bath in 1801. Though her parents were members of the English gentry, they remained relatively poor. Modest to a fault about the value of her work, Jane Austen nevertheless produced some of the enduring masterpieces of English literature, including the novels *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*. Her novels were published anonymously until after her death, when her authorship became known. While it was not unheard of for women to publish under their own names in Austen's lifetime, it was still a rarity. Despite the fact that her books focus on the intricate rituals of courtship and marriage among the British middle class, Austen herself remained single throughout her life, preferring the life of a writer over that of a wife and hostess.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Austen's novels are famous for the way they seem to exist in a small, self-contained universe. There are almost no references in her work to the events of the larger world. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Austen's depiction of life in the tranquil English countryside takes place at the same time when England was fighting for its life against the threat of Napoleon, and all of Europe was embroiled in war and political chaos. No mention is ever made of the imminence of a French invasion in her novels. Napoleon was finally defeated by the British at Waterloo in 1815, two years before Austen's death.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Between the late 18th and early 19th centuries, English literature underwent a dramatic transition. The 18th century had seen the rise of the novel in the works of writers like Daniel Defoe (*Moll Flanders*) and Samuel Richardson (*Pamela*). These novels focused on broad social issues of morality and domestic manners. With the turn of the century and the rise of Romanticism, however, the novel began to explore human relationships with a greater degree of emotional complexity. Neither a Classicist nor a Romantic, Jane Austen is perhaps best thought of as a pioneering figure in the development of the novel, providing the bridge from the often didactic novels of an earlier era to the great works of psychological realism of the Victorian period by writer such as George Eliot and Thomas Hardy.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Sense and Sensibility*
- **When Written:** 1790s
- **Where Written:** Steventon, Hampshire, England
- **When Published:** 1811
- **Literary Period:** Classicism/Romanticism
- **Genre:** Novel of manners
- **Setting:** Late 18th century England, at various country estates and in London
- **Climax:** Edward unexpectedly shows up to Barton Cottage, tells Elinor that his engagement with Lucy has fallen through, and proposes to her.
- **Antagonist:** Willoughby is in a sense the antagonist to Marianne, as he is the main barrier to her happiness for much of the novel. For Elinor, Lucy Steele fulfills this role, blocking her hopes of marrying Edward for most of the novel.

EXTRA CREDIT

Jane Who? Austen originally published *Sense and Sensibility* under the pseudonym "A Lady." It was only published under her name after her death.

Elinor and Marianne. Austen originally wrote *Sense and Sensibility* as an epistolary novel, i.e. a novel told through a series of letters. This early version was entitled *Elinor and Marianne*. Some letters still remain in *Sense and Sensibility*, and Elinor and Marianne are still the novel's protagonists. But, Austen changed the novel's title to reflect the tendencies of character that each protagonist exemplifies.



PLOT SUMMARY

Henry Dashwood lived at Norland Park in Sussex, England, a property owned by his wealthy uncle. Henry had three daughters by his current wife and one son from a prior marriage. When his uncle died, Norland was left to Henry's son John and John's own son. This left Henry's three daughters without much of a fortune, and when he died, he asked John to look after his half-sisters. John, in response, plans to give his sisters 3000 pounds each, but his wife Fanny quickly persuades him not to do this, so that their own son will have that money. Henry's widow, Mrs. Dashwood, and her three daughters (the rational and self-controlled Elinor, the sensitive Marianne, and the young Margaret) stay at Norland for several months after Henry's death. Mrs. Dashwood despises Fanny, but Elinor becomes close with Fanny's brother, Edward Ferrars. Mrs.

Dashwood and Marianne think he and Elinor will marry. A relative of Mrs. Dashwood, Sir John Middleton, writes to her and offers her a place to live on his property, Barton Park. Mrs. Dashwood accepts the offer, and moves to a cottage on Sir John's property with her daughters. The Dashwoods meet Sir John and his wife, Lady Middleton, often attending dinners and balls at their home. They also meet Lady Middleton's mother, a kind but gossipy old woman named Mrs. Jennings, who enjoys predicting and encouraging budding romances. Another frequent guest at the Middletons' home is Colonel Brandon, a friend of Sir John and a 35 year-old bachelor. It quickly becomes apparent that Brandon loves Marianne, but Marianne thinks the idea of marrying a man so old and as lacking in taste as she thinks Brandon to be is ridiculous.

One day, The Dashwood sisters go out for a walk in the country. When it begins to rain suddenly, they run back toward their cottage, but Marianne trips and falls. A gentleman who happens to be passing by picked her up and gallantly carries her home. He introduces himself as Willoughby. Soon after, the Dashwoods see Willoughby again at dinner at Barton Park. Sir John tells Marianne that Willoughby is "very well worth catching," and she begins to grow fond of him. Willoughby often visits the Dashwood cottage and spends much time with Marianne. They share many of the same opinions and tastes in art, music, and literature. Mrs. Dashwood guesses that they might become engaged. Marianne and Willoughby grow closer and closer, as the Dashwoods continue to attend numerous social events at Barton Park. Margaret sees Marianne give Willoughby **a lock of her hair**, and assumes that they are engaged. One evening at Barton Park, Mrs. Jennings asks Elinor if she had any man whom she was fond of, and Margaret lets slip that Elinor is taken by someone whose name began with an F. The next day, a large group assembles at Barton Park to make an expedition to Colonel Brandon's brother-in-law's property. However, Brandon receives a letter and suddenly has to leave for London, cancelling the planned trip. Everyone decides to pass the day by driving around the country, and Willoughby and Marianne go off in one carriage to his aunt's property, Allenham, which he is likely to inherit, and they survey it together. Over the next few days, Willoughby continues to behave as though he is in love with Marianne.

However, one day Mrs. Dashwood, Elinor, and Margaret return from Barton Park to find Willoughby's carriage outside their cottage. When they go inside, Marianne is in tears and greatly upset. Willoughby informs them that he has to leave for London indefinitely on business. Elinor is slightly suspicious of Willoughby, as no one knows for sure whether he and Marianne are actually engaged. After Willoughby's departure, Marianne falls into extreme sadness. One day, she and Elinor go for a walk outside. They see a gentleman approaching and Marianne is sure it's Willoughby. When the man gets closer, though, they see that it's Edward Ferrars. Oddly, though,

Edward seems ill at ease and unhappy, rather than overjoyed to see Elinor. Marianne notices a ring on his hand with a lock of hair in it. Edward says it is Fanny's hair, though Elinor and Marianne both think it looks like Elinor's. Elinor imagines that he had secretly gotten it from her somehow. After about a week, Edward leaves, without proposing. Soon after, the Middletons host Lady Middleton's sister, Charlotte Palmer at Barton Park and introduce her and her husband to the Dashwoods. The Palmers know Willoughby and seem to think that Marianne and he are engaged, though Elinor is not so sure. After the Palmers depart, the Middletons have more guests: Anne and Lucy Steele, two young sisters and relatives of Mrs. Jennings. Elinor and Marianne do not particularly like the Steele sisters, who talk of nothing but their prospective boyfriends and romantic conquests. At one point, Sir John mentions that Elinor is in love with Edward Ferrars, and Anne responds that they know Edward well, though Lucy corrects her and says that they don't know him that well. As Lucy and Elinor are walking outside one day, Lucy asks if Elinor knows Edward's mother, Mrs. Ferrars. She explains that she is secretly engaged to Edward, and has been for four years. Because Lucy has no real fortune, they feared that Mrs. Ferrars, Edward's mother, would disapprove of the marriage. Lucy shows Elinor a letter from Edward and mentions that she had given him **a lock of hair**, which he keeps in a ring.

Elinor is shocked, but can't doubt the truth of Lucy's story. She wonders whether Edward had intentionally deceived her in encouraging her affections for him. Soon after this, Elinor takes the opportunity to ask Lucy more about her engagement after a party at Barton Park. Lucy says that she and Edward are in love, but likely will have to wait until Mrs. Ferrars died to marry. As January comes around, Mrs. Jennings invites Elinor and Marianne to stay with her in London. Elinor doesn't want to go, as she knows that Edward is going to be in London in February, but Marianne desperately wants to go so that she can perhaps see Willoughby. The two sisters leave Margaret and their mother behind at Barton to go stay in London for some time. As soon as they get to London, Marianne writes to Willoughby, but doesn't hear back from him. Instead, Colonel Brandon often pays visits to the Dashwood sisters. Marianne is anxious about not hearing from Willoughby, and unable to enjoy the social events they attend in the city. Elinor writes to her mother, begging her to ask Marianne clearly whether she is engaged to Willoughby or not. Finally, when Elinor and Marianne go to a party with Lady Middleton, they see Willoughby there. Willoughby is cold to Marianne and mostly ignores her. Marianne has to leave the party immediately, in despair. The next morning, a letter arrives from Willoughby, and after reading it Marianne is "almost choked by grief." In the letter Willoughby disavows any romantic attachment to her and tells her that he is engaged to someone else. Elinor and Marianne are both deeply shocked at Willoughby's sudden change of behavior, and Elinor tries to comfort her sister. She urges

Marianne to restrain her emotions, but Marianne responds that she can't pretend to be all right when she's miserable.

News of Willoughby's engagement to a wealthy Miss Grey spreads. Elinor learns that Marianne and Willoughby were never formally engaged, and that Willoughby only ever implied his love for her. Mrs. Jennings tries to cheer Marianne up, predicting that she will now marry Colonel Brandon. Having heard about the unfortunate news with Willoughby, Colonel Brandon pays a visit to Elinor one day, and passes along some news that he thinks might help Marianne. In order to explain, he has to tell Marianne about a woman named Eliza, whom he had been in love with a long time ago. Eliza and Brandon were deeply in love, but she was married against her will to Brandon's brother. Brandon and Eliza tried to elope, but were caught. Brandon then left the country to serve in the military, and during that time Eliza was seduced by numerous men and ended up divorcing Brandon's brother. When Colonel Brandon returned to the country, he found her confined to a house because of debt, dying of consumption. She had an illegitimate daughter, also named Eliza, whom he promised to take care of. Colonel Brandon had looked after this daughter as she grew up, but this past year she had disappeared after a trip with friends to Bath. While Brandon was at Barton Park, he received a letter that informed him that Eliza had been seduced by Willoughby, who had gotten her pregnant and then abandoned her. This was why Brandon had left Barton so suddenly. Elinor is shocked to learn this about Willoughby, but is grateful for Brandon's honesty. She tells Marianne the news, but it doesn't make her feel any better. Having formerly believed Willoughby to be an upstanding gentleman, she now mourns "the loss of Willoughby's character." Meanwhile, Colonel Brandon and Elinor talk often, and Elinor begins to value him as a friend. Mrs. Jennings concludes that Colonel Brandon will soon propose to Elinor.

Elinor finally persuades Marianne to leave the house, and they go with Mrs. Jennings to a jeweler, where they meet an obnoxious gentleman ordering a toothpick case. While at the store, Elinor also runs into her brother John, who has just arrived in town. The next day, he visits Elinor and Marianne, meeting Mrs. Jennings, Colonel Brandon, and the Middletons. He tells Elinor that he is sure Brandon is interested in her, and congratulates her. He also mentions that Mrs. Ferrars has arranged for Edward to marry a wealthy woman named Miss Morton. After John and Fanny get to know the Middletons, the Steeles, and Mrs. Jennings, they invite all them (as well as the Dashwood sisters) to a dinner, along with Mrs. Ferrars. Elinor is interested to finally meet Mrs. Ferrars, and Lucy is particularly anxious to see her possible future mother-in-law. At the dinner, Mrs. Ferrars is rude to Elinor, whom she evidently disliked, but—much to Lucy's delight—seems very fond of Lucy. Soon after this, Marianne and Elinor go to a party with Fanny and John. There, Elinor sees the gentleman from the jewelry store,

and learns that he was Edward's brother, Robert Ferrars.

About two weeks later, Mrs. Jennings tells Elinor that Lucy and Edward's secret engagement has become known. Fanny became hysterical when she learned of it, and kicked Lucy out of her home, where both the Steele sisters had been staying. The next day, John visits and reveals that when Mrs. Ferrars found out about Edward's secret engagement she disinherited and essentially disowned Edward. Nonetheless, Edward refused to break off the engagement. A few days later, Elinor encounters Lucy's sister Anne in Kensington Gardens. Anne says that Edward offered Lucy the chance to leave him, since he no longer has a substantial fortune, but she refused, so they were going ahead with the engagement. The next morning, Elinor receives a letter from Lucy saying that she and Edward are happy together in spite of everything and that he is going to become a priest and that, once they had an established living somewhere, they would marry.

After spending over two months in London, Marianne and Elinor finally make plans to go back to Barton Cottage, first stopping for a visit with the Palmers at their home, Cleveland. Before they leave, Colonel Brandon pays a visit and Mrs. Jennings overheard part of the conversation and thinks that Brandon is proposing to Elinor. In reality, he is telling her that he is going to offer Edward a living on his estate, Delaford. As this would allow Edward and Lucy to marry, Elinor is greatly distressed (which she hid from Brandon). Soon after Brandon leaves, Edward arrives, and Elinor tells him the news. He is immensely grateful, and leaves to thank Brandon. Mrs. Jennings returns and finally realizes that Brandon had not proposed to Elinor. Before leaving London, Elinor meets with John and Fanny, and learns that Robert Ferrars is now going to marry Miss Morton instead of Edward. Robert has received all the inheritance that was formerly going to go to Edward.

At the Palmer's home at Cleveland, Marianne comes down with a terrible cold. She is so sick that Mrs. Jennings thinks she was going to die, and Elinor sends Colonel Brandon to Barton to get Mrs. Dashwood. Marianne finally begins to recover. As Elinor sits by her sleeping sister, she hears a carriage outside. But it turns out to be Willoughby, not Barton. Elinor tells him to leave, but he insists on speaking to her. He begs to be allowed to explain his behavior. He says that when he first met the Dashwoods, he had no intentions of finding a wife, but simply enjoyed spending time with Marianne. He was "careless of her happiness," and didn't have any intention of "returning her affection." Yet he did fall in love with her. He had been expecting to inherit some wealth from his aunt Mrs. Smith, but after she learned about his affair with Eliza, she disinherited him. Now Willoughby was desperate for wealth, and a marriage with Marianne was entirely out of the question. So, he married Miss Grey for her money, even though he didn't really love her. It pained him to ignore Marianne in London, and when he received letters from her, Miss Grey became suspicious and

read them. She was upset and dictated a letter for Willoughby to send back. (So, the hurtful letter from Willoughby to Marianne was actually composed by Miss Grey.) Willoughby calls himself a fool and a scoundrel and apologizes profusely. Elinor largely forgives Willoughby and pities his situation. He leaves, and soon after Mrs. Dashwood and Colonel Brandon arrive.

Mrs. Dashwood delightedly tells Elinor that Brandon had told her on the journey to Cleveland that he is in love with Marianne, and that she approves of their marriage. Marianne recovers fully, and the Dashwoods return to Barton Cottage. On a long walk outside, Marianne tells Elinor that her illness has made her think back on her life, and she regrets her improper behavior with Willoughby, as well as her rude contempt for Mrs. Jennings, Fanny, John, the Steeles, and the Middletons. She resolves to dedicate her life from now on to her family and to keep her emotions in check. She says that she has gotten over Willoughby, and only wishes that she could know that he hadn't always been lying to her. Elinor takes this chance to tell her what Willoughby had recently revealed. Marianne receives this news relatively calmly, and tells Elinor to tell their mother. Soon after this, Elinor learns from a servant that Lucy and "Mr. Ferrars" have married. Elinor and Marianne are both greatly upset by this news.

Colonel Brandon is due to soon visit soon, and Elinor looks forward to his arrival. Just when she is expecting him, though, someone else arrives: Edward. He tells her that he hasn't married Lucy; his brother Robert has! Elinor cries tears of joy. Edward explains that he had foolishly become engaged to Lucy when he was too young and idle. They didn't really love each other, and she had left him for his wealthier brother. He now proposes to Elinor, who accepts, to the delight of her sisters and mother.

Mrs. Ferrars eventually forgives Edward, returns some of his inheritance to him, and reluctantly approves of his marriage to Elinor. Elinor and Edward settle at Delaford, where Elinor's sisters and mother often visit. Elinor, Edward, and Mrs. Dashwood all wish that Marianne would marry Colonel Brandon and indeed she gradually grows more and more fond of him. She changes her stubborn opinions about love and allows herself to learn to love Brandon. After they marry, Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters maintain close ties and a "strong family affection." Elinor and Marianne enjoy happy marriages as well as a close relationship with each other.

comfortable lives with good husbands, but is not as scheming as Mrs. Ferrars and is generally more interested in her daughters' happiness than in their financial fortunes.

John Dashwood – The half-brother of the Dashwood sisters. John likes to think of himself as kind and generous, but his behavior proves him to be actually rather greedy. He doesn't help his sisters, financially or otherwise, even after promising his dying father to help them. He is easily persuaded and even bossed around by his wife Fanny, and is greatly concerned with social status and prestige.

Fanny Dashwood – The wife of John Dashwood. Fanny is a greedy character. She doesn't want John to give any money to his sisters, so that her son can inherit it all, and she cleverly persuades him out of giving his sisters any money. A bit of a social climber, Fanny is more concerned with wealth and status than love or character. She tries to discourage the possible marriage between Edward and Elinor early in the novel and when she finds out about Edward's engagement to Lucy she becomes hysterical and throws Lucy out of her home.

Elinor Dashwood – The oldest of the three Dashwood sisters. Elinor exemplifies sense, from the novel's title. She is a rational thinker, who restrains her emotions, even when she suffers great hardship. Elinor is polite and always tries to say the right thing when around company. She often has to correct or apologize to people for Marianne, who is less concerned with manners and propriety. Elinor is a caring sister and tries to comfort Marianne when she is abandoned by Willoughby. She is in love with Edward, but tries to ignore or put aside these feelings for much of the novel, as she believes him to be taken by Lucy. At the end of the novel, Elinor finally lets some of her emotions out: when Edward tells her that he has not married Lucy, she bursts out into tears. After marrying Edward, Elinor settles down into a comfortable, happy life.

Marianne Dashwood – While Elinor exemplifies sense, Marianne epitomizes sensibility. The middle Dashwood sister, she is romantic, emotional, and sentimental. She often lacks the restraint, prudence, and politeness of her older sister Elinor. She falls in love easily and quickly with Willoughby and, when he abandons her, she does not even try to restrain or moderate her sadness. She bursts into tears numerous times, whether in the privacy of her room or in public. In the end, Marianne has to temper her sensibility with some good sense. She abandons her childish, idealistic notions of love at first sight and allows herself to gradually develop affections for Colonel Brandon, who she ends up loving dearly and marries happily.

Edward Ferrars – Edward is a kind, honorable gentleman and the brother of Fanny. Early in the novel, he grows close to Elinor, even though he is secretly engaged to Lucy. In Marianne's opinion, he lacks taste and artistic sensibility, but Elinor admires and loves him. He prioritizes duty and responsibility over money, as is shown when he refuses to break off his engagement with Lucy even when it means losing



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Mrs. Dashwood – The mother of Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret. Mrs. Dashwood is a kind, caring mother, who looks out for her daughters and tries to see them into happy,

out on his inheritance. His relationship with Lucy is finally revealed at the end of the novel to be a mostly loveless one, and when their engagement fails, he is finally able to propose to Elinor, the woman he actually loves. Edward is content with a modest, comfortable life as a priest with a wife he loves; he has no lofty ambitions of wealth or social status (much to the chagrin of his mother Mrs. Ferrars).

Lady Middleton – Sir John's elegant but (in Elinor and Marianne's opinion) rather dull wife. She and her husband host many social events which Elinor and Marianne attend, but Lady Middleton does not particularly like the Dashwood sisters, since they don't flatter her or her children. By contrast, she is very fond of the Steeles, who do flatter her.

Mrs. Jennings – Lady Middleton's mother, with whom Elinor and Marianne stay in London. Mrs. Jennings is friendly and well-intentioned, but a bit overly fond of gossip. She is obsessed with predicting marriages and matching young couples. She often irritates Marianne by joking about her supposed engagement to Willoughby, but when she learns of how Willoughby used her, she is sympathetic and compassionate toward Marianne. For all her attempts to know all the romantic gossip, Mrs. Jennings is often mistaken and misinformed. For most of the novel, she thinks that Colonel Brandon is in love with Elinor, when he actually loves Marianne.

Colonel Brandon – A friend of Sir John, whom the Dashwood sisters meet at Barton Park. Brandon is a 35 year-old bachelor who has been in love once before, with a woman named Eliza who was married against her will to Brandon's brother. When he meets Marianne, he instantly falls in love with her, but she thinks he is far too old to marry and neglects his affections. For most of the novel, Brandon's love for Marianne is quite hopeless. Nonetheless, he is a persistent, good friend to Elinor and is compassionate when Marianne is hurt by Willoughby. In an extraordinary act of generosity, Brandon gives Edward a living on his property after Edward is disinherited by his mother. At the end of the novel, Marianne finally allows herself to grow fond of Brandon, and they end up marrying and settling down together happily.

John Willoughby – Willoughby is a charming gentleman who literally sweeps Marianne off her feet when he picks her up after she has fallen in a rainstorm. He shares Marianne's sensibility and artistic tastes, and the two quickly become very close. They appear to be falling in love together, but he suddenly abandons her and goes to London. When Marianne sees him there, he ignores her and claims that he was never romantically attached to her. As Elinor learns from Colonel Brandon, Willoughby has a history of seducing and abandoning women. Marianne is thus forced to reevaluate the character of the man she thought she knew and loved. When his aunt Mrs. Smith disinherits him, he is desperate for wealth so he marries Miss Grey for her money. Late in the novel, he finally offers Elinor an explanation of his behavior, saying that he hurt

Marianne unintentionally, regrets his foolish behavior, and really does love Marianne. Marianne and Elinor (and the reader) must then reevaluate Willoughby yet again, and his ultimate character is still somewhat ambiguous at the end of the novel.

Lucy Steele – Lucy is a clever, socially scheming, self-interested young woman. For much of the novel she is secretly engaged to Edward Ferrars and tells Elinor that she is truly in love with him. However, after he loses his inheritance and his brother Robert gains it, she is not exactly slow to ingratiate herself with Robert, whom she ends up marrying. In the end, Lucy gets what she wants—a wealthy husband who allows her to move up the social ladder through marriage. As the narrator says of her at the conclusion of the novel, she is a prime example of what someone can achieve when he or she is persistent, self-interested, and determined.

Mrs. Ferrars – The mother of Fanny, Edward, and Robert Ferrars. Mrs. Ferrars' primary concern is to make sure her sons marry wealthy women. She is more concerned with gaining wealth and social status through their marriages than with the happiness of her own children. Mrs. Ferrars is particularly rude to Elinor, but is fond of Lucy when she first meets her. However, she becomes furious when she learns of Lucy and Edward's engagement. She disinherits and practically disowns Edward for this engagement. Somewhat hypocritically, though, she easily forgives Robert for marrying Lucy at the end of the novel, mainly because Robert is her favorite son. While not a particularly admirable character, Mrs. Ferrars is a rare example of how women can exercise some power in 18th century society. As her family's matriarch, she determines the inheritance of her children, and thus has an enormous amount of power (though both her sons end up thwarting her wishes).

Eliza (Older) – A woman who was in love with Colonel Brandon, but was married against her will to Brandon's brother. She and Brandon tried to elope but were caught. Unhappy in her marriage, her life took a downward turn while Brandon served in the army abroad. She was seduced by numerous men, divorced Brandon's brother, and ended up confined to a house because of debt. Brandon finds her there dying of consumption and promises to take care of her illegitimate daughter, also named Eliza.

Robert Ferrars – Arrogant and conceited, he is the son of Mrs. Ferrars is the younger brother of Edward and Fanny. His mother favors him over his older brother, and she seems pleased to disinherit Edward and give that inheritance to Robert. Ironically, Robert ends up getting engaged to Lucy Steele, the same woman who's engagement to Edward caused him to be disinherited in the first place. Robert has none of his brothers sense or sensibility, and likes only to hear himself speak and be agreed with.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Henry Dashwood – The husband of Mrs. Dashwood and father of Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret, as well as (from a previous marriage) John Dashwood. On his deathbed, he asks John to look after his three half-sisters, who don't have substantial fortunes.

Margaret Dashwood – The youngest of the Dashwood sisters, Margaret is “good-humored,” but has even less sense than Marianne. She is a minor character in the novel, which focuses mostly on her two older sisters.

Sir John Middleton – A relative of Mrs. Dashwood, who invites her and her daughters to come live in a cottage on his property. Sir John hosts many dinners and parties at Barton Park, where Elinor and Marianne meet people like Mrs. Jennings, the Palmers, and the Steeles.

Mrs. Smith – Willoughby's aunt, who owns the property of Allenham, which Willoughby expects to inherit. After learning of his affair with Eliza, though, Mrs. Smith disinherits Willoughby.

Charlotte Palmer – The friendly sister of Lady Middleton, who attends many of the social events that Elinor and Marianne go to at Barton Park and in London. Marianne and Elinor stay with the Palmers at Cleveland before going back to Barton after their stay in London. There, Marianne falls dangerously ill.

Mr. Palmer – Mrs. Palmer's husband, who is normally rude to his wife and disagreeable to company. However, Elinor finds him to be a kind host when she and Marianne stay at the Palmers' home.

Anne Steele – Lucy's older sister, who often lacks the social intelligence and tact of Lucy—it is because of a slip of her tongue that the Ferrars family learns of Lucy's engagement with Edward. She irritates Elinor and Marianne by incessantly talking about her favorite “beaux” and romantic conquests.

Miss Grey – The wealthy woman that Willoughby marries for her money.

Eliza (Younger) – The daughter of Colonel Brandon's beloved Eliza, who is seduced by Willoughby. After he gets her pregnant, Willoughby completely abandons her, and Colonel Brandon has to take care of her.

Miss Morton – The wealthy woman Mrs. Ferrars tries unsuccessfully to engage Edward to. For a time, after Edward's engagement to Lucy is made public, Miss Morton is set to marry Robert Ferrars, though this engagement doesn't turn out either.

black and white.



LOVE AND MARRIAGE

The plot of *Sense and Sensibility* revolves around marriage. The novel begins with Elinor and Marianne as unmarried but eligible young women and only concludes when both of them settle into marriages. Engagements, possible matches, and marriages are the main concern of most the novel's characters and the subject of much of their conversation. Thus, love is also of central importance to the novel, as Marianne and Elinor fall in love and seek to marry the men they love.

However, marriage isn't all about love in the world of *Sense and Sensibility*. In fact, it's often more about wealth, uniting families, and gaining social standing. Moreover, it's often families and parents who attempt to decide engagements as much as any individual husband or wife. Mrs. Ferrars, for example, cares only about her sons marrying wealthy, upper-class women. She does not care whether Edward loves Lucy and cuts all ties with him when she learns of their engagement. For her, the decision of whom her sons will marry is as much hers as theirs, because their marriages are more about their whole family than about their own individual desires.

Marriage is an important part of the functioning of the high society in which Austen's characters live. It determines who will inherit family fortunes and properties, and is of particular importance to women, whose futures depend almost entirely on the prospects of the men they marry. Nonetheless, while people in the novel often marry for reasons other than love (Willoughby, for example, marries Miss Grey just for money), Elinor and Marianne ultimately do marry for love. For Marianne, though, this means redefining her notion of love and allowing herself to develop affections for Colonel Brandon, even though she did not love him at first sight. The novel also shows the importance of love through a consideration of family. The bonds between Elinor, Marianne, Margaret, and their mother stand strong through all the difficulties they endure and at the end of the novel they maintain a happily close relationship. Thus, while marriage may often be more a matter of economics than of love, the examples of Marianne and Elinor show that it doesn't necessarily have to be this way. And, insofar as marriage brings families together and creates new family units, it can create strong and lasting bonds of familial love.



CHARACTER, SENSE, AND SENSIBILITY

Both Austen's characters and her narrator spend a great deal of time thinking about people's character, trying to ascertain and distinguish someone's particular nature. Austen's omniscient narrator is generally able to pinpoint exactly what kind of person someone



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in

is with exact, often sharply ironic description. It is important for the novel to spend time introducing and describing characters before relating their actions, because—in the world of the novel—people’s inner character is essential for understanding their motives, actions, and desires.

Austen’s title offers one important way of understanding someone’s character, based on where they fall on a kind of spectrum between sense and sensibility. Elinor is on the side of sense, while Marianne can be classified as someone more given to sensibility. This means that Elinor is a rational thinker, who values reason and restraint. She doesn’t allow herself to be carried away by emotions, even when she learns of Lucy and Edward’s engagement. Marianne, by contrast, is a character of extreme emotions. As the narrator says, “Marianne could never love by halves.” She gives herself entirely to her feelings of love, happiness, or despair. Much of the novel demonstrates the follies of excessive sensibility like that of Marianne. It brings her to dangerous extremes of emotion and hysteria. Elinor, meanwhile, is generally admired for her good sense. However, in the end, it takes a bit of both sense and sensibility for each sister to achieve happiness. Elinor ends up giving into her powerful feelings of love for Edward, while Marianne abandons her overly idealistic conception of love and allows herself to gradually learn to love Colonel Brandon. For both sisters, sense and sensibility become not so much opposites as complementary parts of their characters.

The narrator—and by extension, often the reader—is generally able to know exactly what a person’s character is, where precisely they fall on the spectrum of sense and sensibility. But, the novel’s characters themselves often have a difficult time discerning someone’s true character. Willoughby is the prime example of this. Marianne builds up one idea of his noble character, only to be forced to revise her understanding of him when he abandons her for Miss Grey. But then she must reverse her understanding of his character once again after he explains himself to Elinor. Through Willoughby’s shocking, surprising behavior, the novel implicitly asks how well we know Willoughby, and even how well anyone can know another person. Nonetheless, surprises like Willoughby’s sudden abandoning of Marianne arise not because people are ultimately mysterious or have no particular character, but simply because their character has been insufficiently known. We are gradually able to understand Willoughby’s actions better after learning more about his character from Colonel Brandon and from Willoughby himself. In Austen’s world, a radical change of character alters our understanding of a particular person, but does not call into question our ability to understand that person. Character is ultimately knowable, even if not entirely known, and for the narrator of *Sense and Sensibility*, one’s actions and behavior are always explainable by someone’s inner character, their own mix of sense and sensibility, among other traits.



WOMEN IN SOCIETY

Set in the late 1700s, Austen’s novel takes place in a world where there are limited roles and opportunities for women in society. Austen’s female characters do not inherit property and cannot have careers. Their futures and fortunes depend almost exclusively on the men they marry and they are expected to be dutiful, upstanding ladies of society. But, Austen depicts her female characters as thoughtful, clever, ambitious, and sometimes scheming women. Even while living within a male-dominated world, characters like Lucy, Fanny, and Mrs. Ferrars are able to exert some power and agency. Lucy persistently and tenaciously chases after what she wants, even speaking of “conquests” of men, and eventually does find herself with a suitably wealthy husband in Robert Ferrars. Fanny, meanwhile, practically controls her husband, persuading him not to give any money to his half-sisters at the beginning of the novel and not to invite them to stay with them in London. And Mrs. Ferrars holds power insofar as she determines whether her sons inherit their family fortune and tries (mostly unsuccessfully) to determine their courses of action. Admittedly, these are not the novel’s most admirable characters, but they do illustrate how women can find some power and agency even within a sexist society that boxes women into limited gender roles. Other female characters, like Mrs. Jennings, also find ways of attaining some power, through orchestrating important social interactions like dances, dinners, and parties.

But despite these examples, women of the novel are often at the mercy of the male-dominated society in which they live. Eliza and her daughter (also named Eliza), who is abandoned by Willoughby, exemplify this. Without husbands, they are left in desperate situations. Elinor and Marianne are constantly confronting the threat of this kind of fate, should they be unable to find a husband. As Elinor tells Marianne, she should be thankful that her time with Willoughby did not leave her like Eliza. Only by marrying eligible men can both sisters get a guarantee of a stable, comfortable life. Austen’s novel thus presents the dangers and limited possibilities for women in a rigidly patriarchal society, while also showing how some women in such a society can still find ways of exercising certain forms of power and influence.



SOCIETY AND STRATEGY

Jane Austen is often described as a novelist of manners. Her works illustrate in great detail the workings, habits, customs, and manners of high English society in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This is a society that is dictated by a rigid social and economic hierarchy. People are not simply rich or poor: rather, there are very specific gradations of wealth and status. Most of the characters in *Sense and Sensibility* (especially including but not

limited to Lucy, Fanny, and Mrs. Ferrars) are obsessed with maintaining their family's place on the social ladder and potentially moving up the ladder through either marriage or simply associating with wealthier, higher class friends. These kinds of social dynamics are at play at the many events like dances, parties, dinners, and more casual gatherings where people can make acquaintances, develop friendships, and maybe even meet a future spouse. These events are governed by codes of behavior, manners, and proper speaking. Elinor, for example, always takes care to say the right thing, restrain her emotions, and not always say exactly what she is thinking while in the company of people like the Steeles, or even Mrs. Jennings. (Marianne, by contrast, is often unable to restrain herself, as shown by her angry outburst when Mrs. Ferrars insults Elinor's painting.)

The high society Austen depicts is a complex, dangerous landscape through which characters have to navigate strategically. Indeed, the novel is at times like a complicated game, with all the characters like players competing with each other in an attempt to maximize their happiness and end up with the best husband, the largest fortune, or the nicest mansion. Lucy certainly approaches her social life like a game she is determined to win. The clever strategy of the novel's characters is reflected in their witty conversations, artfully written letters, skillful persuasion, and meddling in others' affairs. Elinor and Marianne are to some degree exceptions to this pattern. While they also participate in the same societal circles as other characters, they are less ruthless than someone like Lucy. They look out for each other and their own interests, but are less concerned with rising in society and besting others in competition for "Beaux" than they are with finding their own happiness. In the end, this strategy of mostly minding their own business and staying (to some degree) out of the games everyone else plays works out well for the Dashwood sisters, as they are at last successful in finding happy, comfortable marriages.



WEALTH, CLASS, AND GREED

Austen's novel is a thorough portrait of English society, but only of a narrow slice of it—the privileged, wealthy upper class. All of the main characters in *Sense and Sensibility* are very well-off, but having plenty of money doesn't seem to stop them from worrying about finances. They are generally very concerned with money, to the point of greed. The novel opens with the issue of the inheritance of Norland and questions of money, as Fanny persuades her husband John not to give any money to the Dashwood sisters, even though he can easily afford to. John wants to think of himself as generous to his family, but is easily persuaded by Fanny to keep his fortune to himself.

The novel's wealthy characters have warped standards for what qualifies as a comfortable life. They worry over how many

maids or servants one needs to live comfortably, for example, not considering whether their maids or servants themselves can live "comfortably". For most of the novel's characters, concerns of wealth, money, and socio-economic class trump love when it comes to the institution of marriage. Mrs. Ferrars does not care whether Edward (or, for that matter, Robert) loves Lucy. She only cares about her sons entering into marriages that will advance their family's position in society. And Willoughby, despite his affections for Marianne, marries Miss Grey solely for money. Marianne and Elinor resist this greed and materialism to some extent, but not entirely. They are still concerned with the financial prospects of their respective husbands.

At the end of the novel, when Elinor ends up with Edward, the man she loves, their story is not completely concluded until they secure financial security through Mrs. Ferrars' forgiveness of Edward. Even for this couple, money seems to be in some respects their ultimate, final concern. Perhaps the only character who really steps outside of the novel's society of greed is Colonel Brandon. In the novel's biggest gesture of generosity, he gives Edward the property of Delaford to live at. However, even this grand gesture is an act of generosity directed simply to an already privileged, wealthy individual. While Austen negatively depicts the extremes of greed that can be found in upper-class society, her characters never really get outside of their own limited social class and she does not go so far as to critique the wealthy society as a whole that almost exclusively populates her novel.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



LOCKS OF HAIR

Twice in the novel, young lovers exchange locks of hair as signs of their affections. Marianne gives Willoughby a lock of her hair, and Lucy gives Edward a lock of hers, which he keeps in a ring. These locks of hair are symbols of affection and intimacy. By keeping a loved one's hair, Willoughby and Edward keep a part of their beloved with them at all times, remaining in a sense close to their respective women even when they are separated. But if these locks of hair are symbols of close affection, they are also symbols of the unreliability of such feelings and the difficulty of reading romantic intentions. When Marianne and Elinor see Edward's ring, they both think that the hair is from Elinor, and mistakenly see it as proof of his attachment to her. And Marianne's hair given to Willoughby, a sign of permanent love, is returned to her after Willoughby abandons her. In the end, as tokens of affection, locks of hair are unreliable: in fact, both relationships

involving exchanges of hair fail (Edward and Lucy's, and Willoughby and Marianne's). The only real guarantee of a lasting love is marriage, sought desperately by most of the novel's characters. Unlike a lock of hair, a wedding ring may be the only true symbol of a permanent romantic relationship.




QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Classics edition of *Sense and Sensibility* published in 2003.

●● Elinor, this eldest daughter whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counselor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all, that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence. She had an excellent heart; - her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them: it was a knowledge which her mother had yet to learn, and which one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught.

Related Characters: Elinor Dashwood, Mrs. Dashwood

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 8

Explanation and Analysis

By the end of the first chapter, we already know quite a bit about several of the main characters in the novel. The narrator introduces us to these characters in a way that emphasizes their consistent, stable characters. We will not necessarily see such traits change over the course of the book: characters like Elinor are assumed to be already fully formed (and this, perhaps, is why less time is spent describing Margaret, the sister who, as a child, does not yet have a fully formed character). What can change, instead, is their realization concerning what others are *really* like.

Here, Elinor is shown to be the very definition of "sense" as alluded to in the title. While Mrs. Dashwood is flighty and scattered, Elinor is wiser than her age. Still, the narrator is quick to point out that Elinor's good sense does not mean that she is cold or unfeeling. Right from the start, we are meant to understand that having sense does not mean that one has no feelings, but rather that one knows how to manage them, preventing feelings from dictating how one lives.

●● Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever; but eager in every thing: her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. she was generous, amiable, interesting: she was everything but prudent. The resemblance between her and her mother was strikingly great.

Related Characters: Marianne Dashwood, Elinor Dashwood

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 8

Explanation and Analysis

After describing Elinor at length, the narrator turns to her sister Marianne. While Elinor had been described in terms of her prudence, and in terms of how different she is from her mother, here Marianne's similarities with her mother are emphasized. The narrator has seemed somewhat disapproving of Mrs. Dashwood's character, but Marianne is depicted more generously. It is not that she is less capable than her sister, or less able to know how to act reasonably - she is instead simply incapable of acting according to that knowledge. Although the adjectives used to describe Marianne are largely positive, the narrator emphasizes that Marianne is unable to be moderate in any of these elements.

●● Some mothers might have encouraged the intimacy from motives of interest, for Edward Ferrars was the eldest son of a man who had died very rich; and some might have repressed it from motives of prudence, for, except a trifling sum, the whole of his fortune depended on the will of his mother. But Mrs. Dashwood was alike uninfluenced by either consideration. It was enough for her that he appeared to be amiable, that he loved her daughter, and that Elinor returned the partiality. It was contrary to every doctrine of hers that difference of fortune should keep any couple asunder who were attracted by resemblance of disposition.

Related Characters: Mrs. Dashwood, Elinor Dashwood, Edward Ferrars

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis


A potential romantic interest is developing between Elinor and Edward Ferrars. Far more than in modern times, such a relationship in this milieu was not to be private and limited

to the two people involved: instead, it was to be quickly wrapped up in broader economic and social questions involving the entire family and even other members of the community. Here we learn that Edward Ferrars could potentially be rich, but his wealth will depend on his mother's wishes. Austen often describes marriage as a kind of strategic game, and here the strategy of a mother would depend on her appetite for risk.

Mrs. Dashwood, however, is described as lacking any sense of strategy in marrying off her daughters, instead preferring that love guide the way. In a way, Mrs. Dashwood is thus shown in a more positive light than other mothers who care about nothing other than climbing the social ladder. But this novel is also skeptical that love and "resemblance of disposition" *alone* is enough in arranging a marriage, which, after all, would be the main way by which a woman in particular could ensure stability at this time and place. Mrs. Dashwood's lack of prudence means that Elinor will be on her own in attempting to play the game of class-based social relationships.

☝ His eyes want all that spirit, that fire, which at once announce virtue and intelligence. And besides all this, I am afraid, mamma, he has no real taste. Music seems scarcely to attract him, and though he admires Elinor's drawings very much, it is not the admiration of a person who can understand their worth.

Related Characters: Marianne Dashwood (speaker), Edward Ferrars, Elinor Dashwood, Mrs. Dashwood

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 19

Explanation and Analysis

While Mrs. Dashwood is perfectly happy with the relationship between Elinor and Edward Ferrars, Marianne does not feel the same way. In this passage, she judges Edward according to her own hierarchy of taste and merit, and finds him deeply wanting. Marianne highly values knowledge of art and music, which she finds both inherently beautiful as well as telling in terms of the ability of a person to feel deeply and to appreciate beauty around him or her. For Marianne, though, it is not even enough for someone to be able to admire artistic ability in another, if he cannot espouse it himself.


The way Marianne describes Edward is nonetheless vague, from the "spirit" or "fire" that she would like to see in his

eyes to the "taste" that she associates with music and art. Marianne clearly holds an ideal of sensibility, but it is not entirely clear what Edward would need to do to prove that he is capable of true feeling, apart from the relatively superficial signs that she mentions to her mother.

Chapter 4 Quotes

☝☝ You know enough of him to do justice to his solid worth. But of his minuter propensities as you call them you have from peculiar circumstances been kept more ignorant than myself. He and I have been at times thrown a good deal together, while you have been engrossed on the most affectionate principle by my mother. I have seen a great deal of him, have studied his sentiments and heard his opinion on subjects of literature and taste; and, upon the whole, I venture to pronounce that his mind is well-informed, his enjoyment of books exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure. . . . At present, I know him so well, that I think him really handsome; or, at least, almost so.

Related Characters: Elinor Dashwood (speaker), Edward Ferrars, Marianne Dashwood, Mrs. Dashwood

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 22

Explanation and Analysis

Elinor's relationship with Edward Ferrars has progressed to such a point that she can reasonably expect that he will extend an offer of marriage to her. However, at this point nothing is yet certain or official. As she talks with Marianne about the pros and cons of marrying Edward, Elinor is wary of plunging headlong into the possibility of a new life with him. She prefers to remain at a slight distance from the situation, carefully considering why she believes she would be making the right decision in marrying him.

Elinor's balanced, cool judgments will of course be shocking to Marianne, but they also strike a typical reader, versed in the expectations of romance in love and marriage, as surprising in the apparent lack of feeling. It seems that Elinor is not at all implicated in the life of the man she describes, instead attempting to cast impartial judgment on his abilities and worth. However, we have been told from the beginning of the book that just because Elinor is able to remain dispassionate does not mean that she *lacks* feeling, but instead that she is able to direct and manage it. This passage is almost a caricature of "sense" as a character trait, and yet we are meant not to recoil from Elinor's judgments but to seek to understand her embrace of sense over

feeling.

Chapter 8 Quotes

☝ Mrs. Jennings was a widow with an ample jointure. She had only two daughters, both of whom she had lived to see respectably married, and she had now therefore nothing to do but to marry all the rest of the world. In the promotion of this object she was zealously active, as far as her ability reached; and missed no opportunity of projecting weddings among all the young people of her acquaintance.

Related Characters: Mrs. Jennings

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 38



Explanation and Analysis

As the mother of two daughters, Mrs. Jennings is in the position of having to be clever and strategic, not necessarily to encourage her children to move up the social ladder, but simply because women in this society cannot possess wealth themselves and so have little other opportunity to ensure their own stability other than marrying someone who will grant it to them. Mrs. Jennings has accomplished this task, but she has obviously taken a liking to the strategic games of society marriages - enough so that she takes pleasure in pursuing this game with others unrelated to her as well. Mrs. Jennings's character is portrayed as a bit silly and obsessive, and yet at the same time it is an understandable projection of the way marriage must take place in this society.

Chapter 10 Quotes

☝ Their taste was strikingly alike. The same books, the same passages were idolized by each—or if any difference appeared, any objection arose, it lasted no longer than till the force of her arguments and the brightness of her eyes could be displayed. He acquiesced in all her decisions, caught all her enthusiasm; and long before his visit concluded, they conversed with the familiarity of a long-established acquaintance.

Related Characters: Marianne Dashwood, John Willoughby

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 49


Explanation and Analysis

Marianne has been shown to be dissatisfied and impatient with the way Elinor has acted regarding Edward Ferrars, and with the sensible judgments on their compatibility or lack thereof that define how Elinor understands her relationships. Marianne's interactions with Willoughby could not be more different. Here, finally, she has the chance to measure what "taste" might mean in another; it turns out that sharing the same taste - books and passages "idolized," for instance - is, for Marianne, a sign of shared sensibility and thus of complete compatibility. She takes the fact that they feel the same way about such things to be indicative of strength of character, not simply of shared interests. Marianne holds the deeply romantic view of shared souls, believing in signs that two people can be meant for each other if they share certain feelings. She is so strident in this belief that she breaks with social custom in getting to know Willoughby much more quickly than is usually the case.

Chapter 11 Quotes

☝ Elinor could not be surprised at their attachment. She only wished that it were less openly shewn; and once or twice did venture to suggest the propriety of some self-command to Marianne. But Marianne abhorred all concealment where no real disgrace could attend unreserve; and to aim at the restraint of sentiments which were not in themselves illaudable, appeared to her not merely an unnecessary effort, but a disgraceful subjection of reason to common-place and mistaken notions. Willoughby thought the same; and their behaviour at all times, was an illustration of their opinions.

Related Characters: Marianne Dashwood, Elinor Dashwood, John Willoughby

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 54

Explanation and Analysis

Elinor might prefer for Marianne to be in love with Colonel Brandon, who adores her and for whom Elinor feels great compassion, since he has loved and lost before. Still, she is not one to judge Marianne's choice of suitor - she disapproves only of the way in which Marianne chooses to carry out this courtship. Here, the narrator makes another distinction between the characters of Marianne and Elinor, one that can be mapped onto the difference between sense and sensibility. For Marianne, attempting to conceal one's


feelings for another person, or even one's beliefs in general, is dishonest and disingenuous. If there is nothing wrong with how she feels about Willoughby, as she believes (and he does he as well), then there is no reason for her to hide how she feels about him.

Elinor, however, believes that such openness is not a positive trait in any circumstances, even if the reasons are justifiable. Since she can never know what might happen next or where things may go wrong, it is better, she finds, not to share everything with the world. Marriage, in particular, is such a bedrock of society and such an important means of stability for women that she considers it better to be prudent rather than to expose one's feelings immediately.

Chapter 16 Quotes

☝☝ Marianne would have thought herself very inexcusable had she been able to sleep at all the first night after parting from Willoughby. She would have been ashamed to look her family in the face the next morning, had she not risen from her bed in more need of repose than when she lay down in it. But the feelings which made such composure a disgrace, left her in no danger of incurring it. She was awake the whole night, and she wept the greatest part of it. She got up with a headache, was unable to talk, and unwilling to take any nourishment; giving pain every moment to her mother and sisters, and forbidding all attempt at consolation from either. Her sensibility was potent enough!

Related Characters: Marianne Dashwood, John Willoughby

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 83

Explanation and Analysis

The rest of the family is still not sure exactly what happened between Marianne and Willoughby, but it is certain that Marianne is desperately unhappy. We have already seen how important Marianne has felt it to be not to hide any of her true feelings - how she has considered this unpleasantly dishonest. At the very least, Marianne is consistent in her beliefs about character: now that her true feelings are no longer joy but despair, she similarly cannot imagine failing to reveal these sentiments around others. It is not just that Marianne is really physically suffering from her emotional unhappiness: as it seeps into every part of her daily life, she finds it necessary to ensure that her family recognizes how she is feeling.

The narrator does not parody or caricature Marianne's feelings or the way she shows them, but we are meant to look skeptically on her obvious displays of despair. Rather than critiquing sensibility entirely, this passage suggests that it is the exaggerated exhibition of sensibility that is to be smiled at, if not totally dismissed.

Chapter 19 Quotes

☝☝ Elinor sat down to her drawing-table as soon as he was out of the house, busily employed herself the whole day, neither sought nor avoided the mention of his name, appeared to interest herself almost as much as ever in the general concerns of the family, and if, by this conduct, she did not lessen her own grief, it was at least prevented from unnecessary increase, and her mother and sisters were spared much solicitude on her account. Such behaviour as this, so exactly the reverse of her own, appeared no more meritorious to Marianne, than her own had seemed faulty to her. The business of self-command she settled very easily;—with strong affections it was impossible, with calm ones it could have no merit.

Related Characters: Elinor Dashwood, Marianne Dashwood

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 102



Explanation and Analysis

This passage stands in sharp contrast to the way in which Marianne was depicted following her own final conversation with Willoughby and her own lover's departure. We know from this passage that Elinor is just as upset by the events as Marianne had been in her own case: she cannot "lessen her own grief" even as she tries to distract herself and involve herself in her family's affairs. At the same time, we see how Marianne mistakenly judges Elinor's actions based on her own understanding of the relationship between feelings and action. For Marianne, if one does not display grief or despair, it must be that those feelings do not exist - it must be, therefore, that Elinor never truly felt anything for Edward. Distanced from the interactions of the characters, we as readers are meant to grasp just how wrong Marianne is, even as we understand her mistake and may even find Elinor's behavior confusing ourselves.

Chapter 20 Quotes

☛☛ Elinor was again obliged to decline her invitation; and by changing the subject, put a stop to her entreaties. She thought it probable that as they lived in the same county, Mrs. Palmer might be able to give some more particular account of Willoughby's general character, than could be gathered from the Middletons' partial acquaintance with him; and she was eager to gain from any one, such a confirmation of his merits as might remove the possibility of fear from Marianne.

Related Characters: Elinor Dashwood, Charlotte Palmer, John Willoughby, Marianne Dashwood

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 110-111

Explanation and Analysis


Elinor has taken it upon herself to arrange her and her sisters' social affairs and invitations, since Marianne is too distraught over Willoughby and their mother is too flighty to be of much help. Here, she thinks strategically about which invitations to accept and which to avoid, as well as whom she might be in touch with in order to gain greater knowledge about Willoughby for Marianne's sake. In a society where friends might not see each other for weeks or months, and news traveled more slowly than it does today, people - especially women, who were less free to travel around alone - had to plan at greater length how to find out what they wished to know about people's characters and past lives.

Indeed, Elinor, while troubled by Marianne's feelings, takes the more pragmatic approach of attempting to figure out exactly what kind of a man Willoughby is, rather than of simply waiting for him as Marianne seems to be doing. Although Marianne might scorn Elinor's attitude towards romantic relationships, she remains unaware that her sister's practical, sensible mindset may well work in her favor.

Chapter 23 Quotes

☛☛ Her resentment of such behaviour, her indignation at having been its dupe, for a short time made her feel only for herself; but other ideas, other considerations, soon arose. Had Edward been intentionally deceiving her? Had he feigned a regard for her which he did not feel? Was his engagement to Lucy an engagement of the heart? No; whatever it might once have been, she could not believe it such at present. His affection was all her own. She could not be deceived in that. Her mother, sisters, Fanny, all had been conscious of his regard for her at Norland; it was not an illusion of her own vanity. He certainly loved her. What a softener of the heart was this persuasion! How much could it not tempt her to forgive!

Related Characters: Elinor Dashwood, Edward Ferrars, Lucy Steele

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 133

Explanation and Analysis

Elinor has learned from Lucy Steele that she and Edward Ferrars are engaged. Understandably unwilling to share the details of her own past with Edward, and committed to remaining calm and friendly to this woman rather than break with decorum and expose her true feelings, Elinor is nonetheless shocked by the news. In great inner turmoil, she returns to the conclusions that she had carefully, cautiously drawn based on what she had experienced with Edward.

At first, Elinor questions these conclusions: but her rational side soon returns, as she recognizes that his character is the same as it always was, and he could not have simply changed his personality so suddenly and briefly. As she returns to the confidence of Edward's love for her, her confusion and shock are somewhat assuaged. She still cannot understand how or why Edward is engaged, but she is confident that he does not love Lucy, and this knowledge - even though, in this world, it may well mean that he could marry Lucy anyway - helps to stabilize her feelings at a difficult moment.

Chapter 28 Quotes



☝☝ At that moment she first perceived him, and her whole countenance glowing with sudden delight, she would have moved towards him instantly, had not her sister caught hold of her.

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed, "he is there—he is there—Oh! why does he not look at me? why cannot I speak to him?"

"Pray, pray be composed," cried Elinor, "and do not betray what you feel to every body present. Perhaps he has not observed you yet."

This however was more than she could believe herself; and to be composed at such a moment was not only beyond the reach of Marianne, it was beyond her wish. She sat in an agony of impatience which affected every feature.

Related Characters: Marianne Dashwood, Elinor Dashwood (speaker), John Willoughby

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 167


Explanation and Analysis

Marianne and Elinor have arrived at Lady Middleton's party, and Marianne has caught a glimpse of Willoughby from the other side of the room. Even though Willoughby has failed to return Marianne's messages and to get in touch with her while the sisters are in London, Marianne doesn't think anything might be amiss, and is absolutely delighted to see him. Elinor, on the other hand, is more skeptical. Even if she believed that everything was ideal between Marianne and Willoughby, she would still believe it better for Marianne to reign in her emotions and to "keep composed," as she says, if only so as not to share everything she feels with everyone in the room.

It is even more important, in Elinor's eyes, that Marianne act with greater reserve, since Elinor is thinking more rationally regarding the couple's relationship, and is wary of what Willoughby's present situation might actually be. Once again, the book emphasizes that Marianne's embrace of sensibility is not simply because she has no ability to restrain herself, but because she believes earnestness or openness to be a positive good, such that she sees no reason to change her actions.

☝☝ Marianne, now looking dreadfully white, and unable to stand, sunk into her chair, and Elinor, expecting every moment to see her faint, tried to screen her from the observation of others, while reviving her with lavender water.

Related Characters: Marianne Dashwood, Elinor Dashwood

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 168

Explanation and Analysis

Willoughby has done all that he could to avoid Marianne, and finally speaks to her coldly: she is absolutely shocked and hurt. Immediately, Elinor steps into disaster mode. She knows that Marianne is not only stricken with grief, but will not be able to hide anything that she is feeling, and if she cannot help her sister to "revive," then the entire party will soon know or guess just what has happened between Marianne and Willoughby. While Marianne is so sensitive that she can only deal with her own feelings, Elinor is well aware of how serious it would be for all of London's social scene to know about their private lives. As young women who are relatively vulnerable, lacking fortune or even paternal care, the two sisters cannot afford to have society scorn them, and Elinor wants to avoid this at all costs.

☝☝ Elinor could no longer witness this torrent of unresisted grief in silence.

"Exert yourself, dear Marianne," she cried, "if you would not kill yourself and all who love you. Think of your mother; think of her misery while YOU suffer: for her sake you must exert yourself."

"I cannot, I cannot," cried Marianne; "leave me, leave me, if I distress you; leave me, hate me, forget me! but do not torture me so. Oh! how easy for those, who have no sorrow of their own to talk of exertion!"

Related Characters: Elinor Dashwood, Marianne Dashwood (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 176



Explanation and Analysis

Elinor and Marianne have read a letter from Willoughby to Marianne, which has claimed that he never meant to imply that his feelings for her were greater than friendship. Both the sisters are shocked by this evidently disingenuous letter. However, Marianne immediately returns to spasms of grief, unable to restrain herself, as usual. Elinor once again takes on the voice of reason. Here she asks Marianne to think of others, not simply of herself, in order to perhaps be better able to regain control over her own emotions.

As readers, privy to more knowledge than certain characters, we can well understand how stinging Marianne's response must be for Elinor. Marianne assumes that Elinor has never felt the same way for anyone, so she cannot possibly understand what Marianne is going through. Of course, Elinor knows almost exactly how Marianne feels, and it is almost more hurtful to have those feelings denied legitimacy by someone who assigns only coldness and lack of feelings to Elinor. Still, of course, it has been Elinor's choice to keep *everything* hidden regarding her emotions, so Marianne cannot be entirely faulted for assuming a consistency between her sister's feelings and behavior.

☝ "He had left the girl whose youth and innocence he had seduced, in a situation of the utmost distress, with no creditable home, no help, no friends, ignorant of his address! He had left her, promising to return; he neither returned, nor wrote, nor relieved her."
"This is beyond every thing!" exclaimed Elinor.
"His character is now before you; expensive, dissipated, and worse than both."

Related Characters: Colonel Brandon, Elinor Dashwood (speaker), Colonel Brandon, Eliza (Younger)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 198

Explanation and Analysis

Colonel Brandon has shared with Elinor a long story that, he believes, will make clear what Willoughby's character is truly like. The story seems to prove Willoughby's irresponsibility and indecency: it ends with him abandoning a girl, while pregnant, whom he had seduced. Elinor is of course shocked by this tale, especially as she realizes to an even greater extent how little she (or Marianne) had understood of Willoughby's true character. She is not confused as to what Willoughby is really like; instead, here as elsewhere, the book defines character as something consistent and stable - one might not fully know another person, but that is only because one has not learned all there is to be learned about the person, not because the person is inconsistent or overly complex.

Brandon finally is confident enough to make a sweeping statement about Willoughby's character by the end of his story, though he had begun apologetically, unwilling to smear someone's reputation rather than allow that reputation to come forth naturally. Now, though, Elinor can

be grateful to Brandon for exposing Willoughby's past to her, and for helping her to understand the root of Willoughby's actions regarding Marianne.

Chapter 35 Quotes

☝ I am very sure that conscience only kept Edward from Harley Street. And I really believe he *has* the most delicate conscience in the world; the most scrupulous in performing every engagement, however minute, and however it may make against his interest or pleasure. He is the most fearful of giving pain, of wounding expectation, and the most incapable of being selfish, of any body I ever saw.

Related Characters: Marianne Dashwood (speaker), Edward Ferrars

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 229

Explanation and Analysis


Elinor finds herself in an incredibly awkward situation: Lucy, Edward, and she are all in the same room, when Marianne - who is entirely unaware of Lucy's secret engagement with Edward, of course - walks in. This is a classic case of Marianne's sensibility prevailing over any sense of social decorum or subtlety. Even though she was never greatly in favor of Edward as Elinor's suitor, she continues to hint at Edward's feelings for Elinor, and lavishes praise on Edward as she does so. It is even more ironic that she keeps stressing Edward's inability to hurt another human being or to be selfish, as he has certainly hurt Elinor deeply - though, of course, Marianne has no idea of this. Elinor, however, also must learn the difficult lesson that being selfless and subtle can often complicate things more than ease them.

Chapter 37 Quotes

☝ "If such is your way of thinking," said Marianne, "if the loss of what is most valued is so easily to be made up by something else, your resolution, your self-command, are, perhaps, a little less to be wondered at.—They are brought more within my comprehension."

"I understand you.—You do not suppose that I have ever felt much.—For four months, Marianne, I have had all this hanging on my mind, without being at liberty to speak of it to a single creature; knowing that it would make you and my mother most unhappy whenever it were explained to you, yet unable to prepare you for it in the least."

Related Characters: Marianne Dashwood, Elinor Dashwood (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 247

Explanation and Analysis

The news of Edward's engagement has become public, which gives Elinor the opportunity to speak of what she had been forced for so long to keep secret. Initially, Marianne is simply surprised that Elinor didn't share such a secret with her, but she continues to believe that Elinor's calm and composure is merely a sign that Elinor never cared much for Edward to begin with. The "loss" of Edward cannot, she imagine, be a great one for her sister.

For the first time, however, Elinor begins to disabuse Marianne of such a notion. She explains that it has been deeply difficult to have had to keep such a secret for so long, unable to share some of the burden with anyone. As she prepares to make Marianne understand that she, too, feels and suffers just as keenly as someone who shows it more, Elinor too must learn to adopt a bit of sensibility into her more rational nature. Only by exposing some of what she truly feels will Marianne ever understand that Elinor is not the cold-hearted woman she thought she was.

Explanation and Analysis

Mrs. Ferrars is absolutely hysterical upon learning of her son Edward's engagement with Lucy Steele, and here Marianne and Elinor learn, through John Dashwood, just how far Mrs. Ferrars will go to try to convince Edward to act according to her wishes. In close detail, John Dashwood describes exactly which financial and social rewards she dangles in front of her son, as well as the economic punishments that will ensue if Edward persists in marrying Lucy.

Mrs. Ferrars is acting according to her own understanding of what is proper for a particular social class. Lucy is far below Edward in both rank and income, so while her marriage to Edward would represent a step up for her (and a way to gain greater stability, of course), for Edward it can only represent a social failure. Mrs. Ferrars, however, takes something that is socially common at this time - a concern for class differences - and takes it to its absolute, absurd extreme. Edward, meanwhile, may no longer be in love with Lucy, but his sense of honor prevents him from breaking his engagement with her. Society of course respects honor as well, which is why some people will respect Edward's choice; for others, however, the economic and social clash represented by their engagement is simply too much to stand, so Mrs. Ferrars can only be in the right.

☛ All that Mrs. Ferrars could say to make him put an end to the engagement, assisted too as you may well suppose by my arguments, and Fanny's entreaties, was of no avail. Duty, affection, every thing was disregarded. I never thought Edward so stubborn, so unfeeling before. His mother explained to him her liberal designs, in case of his marrying Miss Morton; told him she would settle on him the Norfolk estate, which, clear of land-tax, brings in a good thousand a-year; offered even, when matters grew desperate, to make it twelve hundred; and in opposition to this, if he still persisted in this low connection, represented to him the certain penury that must attend the match. His own two thousand pounds she protested should be his all; she would never see him again; and so far would she be from affording him the smallest assistance, that if he were to enter into any profession with a view of better support, she would do all in her power to prevent him advancing in it.

Related Characters: John Dashwood (speaker), Edward Ferrars, Fanny Dashwood, Mrs. Ferrars, Miss Morton

Related Themes:     

Page Number: 249-250

Chapter 42 Quotes

☛ Marianne entered the house with a heart swelling with emotion from the consciousness of being only eighty miles from Barton, and not thirty from Combe Magna; and before she had been five minutes within its walls, while the others were busily helping Charlotte to show her child to the housekeeper, she quitted it again, stealing away through the winding shrubberies, now just beginning to be in beauty, to gain a distant eminence; where, from its Grecian temple, her eye, wandering over a wide tract of country to the south-east, could fondly rest on the farthest ridge of hills in the horizon, and fancy that from their summits Combe Magna might be seen. In such moments of precious, invaluable misery, she rejoiced in tears of agony to be at Cleveland; and as she returned by a different circuit to the house, feeling all the happy privilege of country liberty, of wandering from place to place in free and luxurious solitude, she resolved to spend almost every hour of every day while she remained with the Palmers, in the indulgence of such solitary rambles.

Related Characters: Marianne Dashwood, Charlotte Palmer

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 283-284



Explanation and Analysis

Marianne and Elinor have left London to arrive at Cleveland, which for Marianne is symbolically significant because of how close the estate lies both to her family's home and to Willoughby's own estate. The way Marianne acts toward this house almost personifies it: she treats it as possessing the same levels of charm and attraction as a person. Marianne is enraptured by beautiful landscapes and impressive vistas, and she is perfectly happy to wander in solitude, enjoying the emotional fullness of being in the country. Her embrace of country life is reminiscent of the Romantic poets that she so loves to read and recite: she seeks in these landscapes the kind of sensibility that she often finds too lacking in real life, even if that same strength of emotion has prompted great pain for her already.

Chapter 45 Quotes

☛☛ Willoughby, he, whom only half an hour ago she had abhorred as the most worthless of men, Willoughby, in spite of all his faults, excited a degree of commiseration for the sufferings produced by them, which made her think of him as now separated for ever from her family, with a tenderness, a regret, rather in proportion, as she soon acknowledged within herself—to his wishes than to his merits. She felt that his influence over her mind was heightened by circumstances which ought not in reason to have weight; by that person of uncommon attraction, that open, affectionate, and lively manner which it was no merit to possess; and by that still ardent love for Marianne, which it was not even innocent to indulge.

Related Characters: John Willoughby, Elinor Dashwood, Marianne Dashwood

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 311

Explanation and Analysis

After Willoughby has shared his long story with Elinor, she finds herself once again having to reevaluate his character, having to reevaluate the significance of his prior actions - and, in particular, the relationship between his behavior and his true feelings for Marianne. She is initially wary of feeling any pity for a man who caused her sister such pain, and whom she knows to have made a great deal of mistakes in



his life. However, she is now confident that Willoughby can never be with Marianne: he is "separated for ever from her family."

Elinor regretfully admits to herself that she is allowing her own sensibility to win out to a certain extent over her sense: her judgment of Willoughby is softened by her knowledge that he still deeply loves Marianne. Still, she has come to recognize that she finally understands his character better than she ever has. She and Marianne were privy only to an aspect of it while he and Marianne were courting, and Colonel Brandon exposed a greater, though incomplete, part of it: now his character lies open to be judged and understood as well-intentioned and fundamentally good but also deeply weak.

Chapter 46 Quotes

☛☛ As they approached Barton, indeed, and entered on scenes of which every field and every tree brought some peculiar, some painful recollection, she grew silent and thoughtful, and turning away her face from their notice, sat earnestly gazing through the window. But here, Elinor could neither wonder nor blame; and when she saw, as she assisted Marianne from the carriage, that she had been crying, she saw only an emotion too natural in itself to raise any thing less tender than pity, and in its unobtrusiveness entitled to praise. In the whole of her subsequent manner, she traced the direction of a mind awakened to reasonable exertion; for no sooner had they entered their common sitting-room, than Marianne turned her eyes around it with a look of resolute firmness, as if determined at once to accustom herself to the sight of every object with which the remembrance of Willoughby could be connected.

Related Characters: Elinor Dashwood, Marianne Dashwood, John Willoughby

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 319



Explanation and Analysis

Marianne has finally recovered enough from her illness to travel with Elinor and their mother back home to Barton. Marianne hasn't been here since she and Willoughby were in the midst of a happy courtship, and now everything she sees reminds her of Willoughby. Still, it is obvious that Marianne has grown up a great deal in the time since she left. Her "resolute firmness" is certainly something new, as she comes to terms with the fact that she will have to suffer the recollection of Willoughby for some time yet.

The novel is clear in pointing out that Marianne's character does not undergo a complete revolution. She is still quite susceptible to emotional exaggeration, and she cannot entirely reign in her emotions: she cries much of the way home, for instance. But we are meant to see that significant life experiences can work some changes on people, so that within the character traits that define them a certain measure of development is actually possible.

☛ Elinor could sit it no longer. She almost ran out of the room, and as soon as the door was closed, burst into tears of joy, which at first she thought would never cease. Edward, who had till then looked any where, rather than at her, saw her hurry away, and perhaps saw—or even heard, her emotion; for immediately afterwards he fell into a reverie, which no remarks, no inquiries, no affectionate address of Mrs. Dashwood could penetrate, and at last, without saying a word, quitted the room, and walked out towards the village—leaving the others in the greatest astonishment and perplexity on a change in his situation, so wonderful and so sudden;—a perplexity which they had no means of lessening but by their own conjectures.

Related Characters: Mrs. Dashwood, Edward Ferrars, Elinor Dashwood

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 335

Explanation and Analysis

Edward has just shared with the Dashwood family that he has not married Lucy: instead, it is his brother Robert who is now married to her. As soon as she hears this news, Elinor - for the first time in the novel - cannot restrain her own joy. We have recently seen Marianne adopt some of her sister's sense, and now the opposite is taking place, as Elinor seems to have been affected by her sister's sensibility. Of course, some things never change: Elinor still finds it necessary to hide her tears from the company of others, even as it is most likely obvious to Edward how she has reacted.

Just as Marianne's experiences have shown her that sense can be a positive trait, Elinor's emotional outpouring now proves itself to be advantageous, as it seems to show Edward how Elinor truly feels about him, without her having to loudly proclaim her love for him. As the book draws to a close, the polar nodes of sense and sensibility are shown to be less opposites than alternative choices in a certain situation, choices that can be balanced between each other in deciding how to react.

☛ That Lucy had certainly meant to deceive, to go off with a flourish of malice against him in her message by Thomas, was perfectly clear to Elinor; and Edward himself, now thoroughly enlightened on her character, had no scruple in believing her capable of the utmost meanness of wanton ill-nature.

Related Characters: Lucy Steele, Elinor Dashwood, Edward Ferrars

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 341

Explanation and Analysis

As Edward tells Elinor of his childhood infatuation with Lucy, a relationship that went on far longer than it should, she begins to understand better why Edward acted the way he did. As Edward grows in Elinor's esteem, Lucy falls correspondingly. Elinor had always been careful to remain kind and friendly to Lucy, even though she never lost her feelings for Lucy's fiancé, but now she recognizes that Lucy was constantly scheming and was far more conniving than she believed. In some ways, Lucy's behavior makes sense for a woman in a vulnerable social situation, determined to climb her way up in the world. But the novel is unequivocal about condemning the sneaky, deceptive way in which Lucy, for instance, does so. With Lucy's character now firmly in the open, Elinor can take solace in the fact that she need not feel sorry that she can now be with Edward.

☛ One question after this only remained undecided, between them, one difficulty only was to be overcome. They were brought together by mutual affection, with the warmest approbation of their real friends; their intimate knowledge of each other seemed to make their happiness certain—and they only wanted something to live upon. Edward had two thousand pounds, and Elinor one, which, with Delaford living, was all that they could call their own; for it was impossible that Mrs. Dashwood should advance anything; and they were neither of them quite enough in love to think that three hundred and fifty pounds a-year would supply them with the comforts of life.

Related Characters: Edward Ferrars, Elinor Dashwood, Mrs. Dashwood

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 343

Explanation and Analysis

Edward knows that he cannot expect much of an income from his mother, since she is most likely still angry at him about his former engagement to Lucy. As readers, we are meant to look down upon Lucy's openly social-climbing behavior - and yet the novel does not embrace love and romance as wholeheartedly as that tone might suggest. After all, while the narrator has sought to portray the poles of sense and sensibility as relatively balanced options, the scales have always been tilted towards the side of sense.

In a society in which marriage is not just a declaration of

love but a contract that can be enormously significant in terms of social and economic status and mobility, it is not something to be treated lightly, according to the novel. Nor is an emphasis on practical matters like income to be considered anti-romantic: indeed, love and mutual affection is only possible, the novel argues, when there is a strong base of stability undergirding it. Financial stability, then, is valued even as full-throated greed is looked down upon, and love is able to coexist with an interest in material comforts rather than remain as a sphere apart.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

The narrator describes the Dashwood family, who lived at Norland Park in Sussex, England. The owner of the property was a single man and he invited his nephew Mr. Henry Dashwood to live with him at Norland. Henry had a son by a previous marriage and three daughters by his current wife.

Henry Dashwood's son, John Dashwood, had a substantial fortune from his mother's family, which he increased through marriage. Thus, Norland Park was of more importance to John's half-sisters, who had less secure fortunes, than it was to him. Nonetheless, when the owner of Norland died, he left his property to John and John's young son.

Henry Dashwood passed away only a year later, and on his deathbed asked John to look out for and help his daughters. The narrator says that John lacked the "strong feelings" of the rest of his family, but was nonetheless deeply moved by Henry's dying request. John promised "to do everything in his power to make them comfortable."

John decided to give his sisters 3000 pounds each, and was pleased with his own generosity. Right after Henry's funeral, John's wife moved into Norland Park immediately without giving Henry's wife Mrs. Dashwood any notice. John's wife Fanny "had never been a favourite with any of her husband's family," and now her "ungracious behaviour" did nothing to change this.

Mrs. Dashwood was offended by John's wife Fanny and thought of moving out, but her eldest daughter Elinor persuaded her not to. The narrator says that Elinor "possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment" in addition to "an excellent heart." Elinor's younger sister Marianne was similarly "sensible and clever," but was "eager in everything" and lacked a sense of moderation.

Marianne and her mother indulged in extreme grief and unhappiness at the recent turn of events: "they gave themselves up wholly to their sorrow." Elinor, by contrast had more moderation in her behavior. The youngest of the three daughters, Margaret, was "good-humoured" and "well-disposed." She had some of Marianne's romantic sensibility but without her modicum of sense.

The opening of the novel establishes the importance of ties established through family and marriage.



The novel is immediately interested in questions of wealth, property, and inheritance. As women, the Dashwood sisters cannot make their own fortunes and must rely on inheriting or marrying into wealth.



John agrees to help his sisters out of familial love. The narrator is very precise about John's character. He lacks the same "strong feelings" of the rest of his family, but can still be deeply moved in extreme circumstances.



Marriage unites families, which—as with Fanny and Mrs. Dashwood—can lead to a clash between very different characters. In her greedy eagerness to move into her new estate, Fanny disregards the feelings of her mother-in-law.



Mrs. Dashwood tends to be impulsive and make decisions based on her feelings. Fortunately, she is counterbalanced by her prudent daughter Elinor. Marianne is clever like Elinor, but lacks moderation in her feelings, like her mother.



Marianne and Mrs. Dashwood, exemplifying the trait of sensibility, indulge fully in their feelings of grief, whereas Elinor moderates her sorrow with good sense. Margaret's character is precisely defined in relation to her sisters. She is more on the side of sensibility than sense.



CHAPTER 2

John's wife Fanny became the mistress of Norland, and Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters became mere guests. Mrs. Dashwood actually liked remaining at Norland, where everything reminded her of her former happiness with her late husband, because she enjoyed getting carried away in her own sorrow.

Fanny disapproved of John's plan to give his sisters 3000 pounds. She asked him to reconsider and said that he was taking money away from their own child. She thought that John owed his half-sisters nothing because they weren't really his sisters.

John told his wife that he couldn't disobey his father's dying request, but Fanny said that he hadn't stipulated that John had to give his sisters money. She persuaded him to reduce his gift from 3000 to 1500 pounds. She said that the three daughters had a sizable fortune already from their parents, and John agreed that it would perhaps be more sensible to give Mrs. Dashwood one hundred pounds a year.

Fanny worried that under such an arrangement Mrs. Dashwood would live for a long time and they would end up losing a great deal of money. She cautioned John against agreeing to such an annuity. John agreed that annuities were unwise and thought he might simply give his sisters an occasional gift of some money.

Fanny said she thought Henry probably didn't even intend for him to give his sisters money, but only wanted him to look out for them in a general way. She convinced him that his sisters really didn't need any money from him and already had enough for a comfortable life. John quickly changed his mind and decided to give his sisters nothing other than some occasional "neighbourly acts" of kindness.

Mrs. Dashwood actually finds a kind of pleasure in indulging in her feelings of grief. She tends to express feelings to their utmost degree, whether happiness or sadness.



Already very wealthy, Fanny is too greedy to consider helping out her (somewhat) less fortunate sisters-in-law.



Fanny cleverly begins to persuade John to gradually drop his plan of generosity. She operates strategically in order to maximize wealth for her and her immediate family.



Under Fanny's influence, John prioritizes his own wealth over his love for and duty to his family. Fanny's manipulative power over John is now becoming clear, as he has quickly changed his mind from giving his sisters 3000 pounds to giving them occasional gifts.



Fanny is a clever, strategic manipulator, driven mostly by greed and desire for wealth. Through artful persuasion, she is able to exercise some power over her husband. John succumbs to his greed, and goes back on the promise he made out of love to his dying father.



CHAPTER 3

Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters stayed at Norland for several months while they tried to find a new home. Elinor prudently rejected some possible homes that Mrs. Dashwood liked, but that were too expensive for them. Mrs. Dashwood had learned of John's promise to his father, and so was confident that he would help her and her daughters financially.

Mrs. Dashwood judges homes by how much she likes them, whereas Elinor has more sense and considers what they can actually afford.



The more Mrs. Dashwood learned of Fanny's character, the more she disliked her. However, she didn't mind living at Norland that much, because of a "growing attachment" between Elinor and Fanny's brother, Edward Ferrars. The narrator notes that some mothers might have been worried about Edward's fortune, which depended entirely on inheriting from the will of his mother, but Mrs. Dashwood's only concern was that Elinor and Edward were fond of each other.

Edward's family wanted him to seek some kind of distinguished career, but he simply desired "domestic comfort" and quiet. Mrs. Dashwood didn't take much notice of Edward when he first arrived at Norland, but then Elinor mentioned how different he was from Fanny. She told her mother she'd like or esteem Edward, but Mrs. Dashwood said she couldn't like him but only love him.

Mrs. Dashwood thought that Edward and Elinor would certainly be married before long. She told this to Marianne, who lamented that Edward lacked any taste in music, art, or books. She conceded, though, that Elinor didn't have the same feelings as she did, and so perhaps Elinor could be happy with Edward. Marianne then despaired of ever finding a husband, but her mother assured her she would.

CHAPTER 4

Marianne told Elinor that she thought Edward had no taste, but Elinor objected, saying he had "an innate propriety and simplicity of taste," and indubitable "sense and goodness." Marianne apologized for possibly offending her sister and said that she would be happy to have Edward as a brother.

Elinor was shocked that Marianne would speak so certainly of this marriage, but admitted that she esteemed Edward. Marianne called her cold for using such an unemotional word. Elinor told her sister that there were more things to consider than Edward's affection for her, specifically his financial independence and whether he could marry someone who, like Elinor, did not possess a large fortune.

Marianne was certain that Elinor and Edward would be engaged, though Elinor herself was unsure. When Fanny learned of Edward's possible affection for Elinor, she did not like it at all and warned him that he had to "marry well."

The more time Mrs. Dashwood spends with Fanny, the better she comes to understand (and despise) her precise character. Mrs. Dashwood is more concerned with the happiness of Elinor than her fortune, and so is enthusiastic about the possible match between her and Edward, whereas other mothers would have been more concerned about money issues.



Edward defies his family's desires for more wealth and more social prestige. Instead, he simply wants quiet happiness. The more restrained Elinor expresses esteem for Edward, whereas Mrs. Dashwood can only operate in terms of extremes, and says that she loves him.



As soon as a character in the novel learns of a romantic attachment, his or her thoughts turn immediately to the prospects of marriage. Marianne places great importance on matters of taste and sensibility in men, whereas Elinor can admire Edward's more restrained character.



Elinor is attracted to Edward's propriety and good sense, whereas Marianne could never marry someone without her specific notion of taste. Marianne assumes that Edward and Elinor are headed for marriage.



Elinor is prudent and cautious. She doesn't want to speak of a marriage with Edward until it is certain. To Marianne, her restraint appears cold and unfeeling. Elinor reminds her sister that marriage is often a matter of financial issues as much as it is of love.



Fanny strategically reminds Edward to "marry well" in front of the Dashwoods, hoping to prevent Edward's marriage to Elinor. She wants him to marry someone wealthier.



A relative of Mrs. Dashwood, named Sir John Middleton, wrote to her with a proposal. He had a cottage on his property, Barton Park, where she and her daughters would be welcome to live. This property was a great distance from Norland, and Mrs. Dashwood immediately accepted the offer. Elinor did not particularly want to leave Norland but thought it made good sense, so did not object to her mother's plan.

Elinor has sentimental attachments to Norland and does not want to leave Edward just as they are beginning to grow fond of each other, but she knows that it makes good sense for her family to move, so she rationally prioritizes what is best for her family over her own feelings and desires.



CHAPTER 5

Mrs. Dashwood announced her planned move to everyone at Norland. Edward was dismayed to learn that they would be going so far from Norland. Mrs. Dashwood invited Edward to visit them at Barton, not wanting to break up any possible match between him and Elinor.

Mrs. Dashwood invites Edward specifically in the hopes that he may grow closer to Elinor and propose to her. She is trying to strategize to promote their marriage, while Fanny does her best to prevent it.



Mrs. Dashwood sent her furniture to her new cottage and took the opportunity to sell her old carriage, which she didn't use. She would have kept it because of its sentimental value, but Elinor's good sense prevailed and they sold it. Servants and maids were sent ahead of time to prepare the cottage for the Dashwoods' arrival.

Mrs. Dashwood is again inclined to make decisions based on sentiment and emotion, but Elinor's reason triumphs. The Dashwoods are moving to a small cottage, but still live a very privileged life, with servants and maids.



This would have been a good time for John to help his sisters as he had promised his father he would, but Fanny persuaded him that letting them stay at Norland for so long was help enough. Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters were sad to leave Norland. Marianne, in particular, walked about the house and exclaimed aloud to it, "Dear, dear Norland!"

Fanny continues to manipulate and exercise control over her husband, driven by greed. She began by simply asking him to lessen his planned gift to his sisters, but in the end gets him not to give his sisters anything at all. Marianne dramatically bids farewell to Norland



CHAPTER 6

The cottage at Barton was "poor and small," but comfortable. Mrs. Dashwood liked the cottage, because although it needed some work and additions, she liked to add to and improve the property. She said that the cottage was too small, but that they could nonetheless be "tolerably comfortable" there. Sir John Middleton came to say hello to the Dashwoods and was very friendly. He invited them to visit him and his wife at Barton Park.

From the wealthy perspective of the Dashwoods, the cottage is "poor and small", though they are still living near the very top of the socio-economic ladder. With their move to Barton, the Dashwoods begin a phase of their lives full of social engagements, from meetings and house visits to dinners and dances.



When the Dashwoods visited and met Lady Middleton, they saw that she was elegant and had good manners, but was cold and reserved. Sir John, though, was "very chatty," and Lady Middleton's young son offered a safe topic of conversation. The narrator says that children are often useful at formal visits for providing an easy topic of conversation.

Lady Middleton's character is immediately exactly defined, as is Sir John's. The narrator pokes fun at the manners and habits of high society by noting how useful small children are for providing a topic of empty small talk.



CHAPTER 7

The Middletons were different “in temper and outward behavior,” but both had a similar lack of “talent and taste.” Sir John loved to have guests at his house, and so often held parties and balls. He was fond of the Dashwood sisters because they were “young, pretty, and unaffected,” and in his opinion being unaffected was all that a girl should be.

The Dashwoods went to dinner at Barton Park, where they were joined by Lady Middleton’s mother, Mrs. Jennings, who was “a good-humoured, merry, fat, elderly woman, who talked a great deal, seemed very happy, and rather vulgar.” She teased the Dashwood sisters about leaving “their hearts behind them” at Norland.

Also at the dinner was Colonel Brandon, a friend of Sir John, who was “silent and grave.” He was handsome and gentlemanly, but, at 35, old for a bachelor. The narrator says that Lady Middleton’s boring character made Colonel Brandon and Sir John seem interesting by comparison.

After dinner, Marianne played piano and sang. Everyone applauded, but Colonel Brandon “heard her without being in raptures.” He paid her attention, but showed no pleasure in the music. Marianne thought that he had outgrown “all acuteness of feeling and every exquisite power of enjoyment.”

CHAPTER 8

Mrs. Jennings was a widow with two married daughters, who now had “nothing to do but to marry all the rest of the world.” She quickly realized that Colonel Brandon was in love with Marianne and thought this would be an excellent match. Marianne, though, thought that this would be a ridiculous match, because of Colonel Brandon’s age. She told Elinor and her mother, “thirty-five has nothing to do with matrimony.”

Elinor told Marianne that it would be fine for Colonel Brandon to marry a 27 year-old woman, but Marianne said that a woman of that age could “never hope to feel or inspire affection again,” and that she would think of any marriage with a woman that old as nothing but “a compact of convenience,” and “a commercial exchange.”

The narrator continues to specify the particular character of the Middletons. Sir John enjoys hosting the many events that are important for aristocratic society. Sir John has a limited idea of the possibilities of a woman’s character.



Mrs. Jennings is characterized as good-humored and happy, but somewhat vulgar. She is always interested in teasing her younger companions about matters of love and marriage.



Again, the narrator gives a short, precise description of each new character that enters the novel. At 35, Brandon is a bit old for a bachelor, which makes it more difficult for him to find a wife.



Colonel Brandon shows no evidence of the romantic sensibility that Marianne thinks is so important. He is too reserved for her taste and doesn’t overtly display any real pleasure in her music.



Mrs. Jennings is obsessed with marriage. Now that her own daughters are married, she enjoys meddling in the romantic affairs of her younger acquaintances. Marianne cannot consider Colonel Brandon as a suitable husband because of his age and his lack of artistic taste.



Marianne is stubborn in her romanticized idea of real marriage as being about love, not a mere “commercial exchange.” However, many of the novel’s characters view marriage as precisely an exchange of family wealth.



Alone with her mother at their cottage, Marianne told her that she worried Edward might be sick, because he had not yet visited them at Barton. Mrs. Dashwood, though, was not expecting Edward to visit anytime soon. Marianne was exasperated at Elinor's lack of sadness or melancholy at being separated from Edward and at his not coming to visit.

The budding romance and potential marriage between Elinor and Edward seems to be in doubt now. Marianne cannot believe that Elinor is not more demonstrably sad and emotional, as she would certainly be in such a situation.



CHAPTER 9

The Dashwoods settled into Barton Cottage comfortably, and the three sisters would often take long country walks outside. They were on one such pleasant walk when, all of a sudden, it began to rain. The sisters started running back toward their cottage, but Marianne tripped and fell. A gentleman who happened to be passing by stopped, picked her up, and carried her home. He came into the cottage and was handsome, graceful, and elegant.

This mysterious, handsome gentleman suddenly enters the novel, introducing a new possible husband to the Dashwoods' world. The gentleman immediately displays his graceful, elegant nature through his kind, gallant behavior.



The gentleman introduced himself as Willoughby, and offered to visit the cottage the next day, then left. All the Dashwoods admired him, and Marianne in particular was fond of him. The next day, Sir John visited the Dashwoods and said that he knew Willoughby. He offered to invite Willoughby along with the Dashwoods to dinner at Barton Park.

Being rescued in a storm fulfills Marianne's desire for romanticism, and she grows immediately fond of the charming Willoughby. Sir John strategically invites Willoughby to dinner to better acquaint Willoughby and the Dashwoods.



Sir John said that Willoughby was staying nearby with a relative and told Marianne that he was "very well worth catching." Marianne eagerly asked about Willoughby's spirit, and Sir John said that he was "as good a sort of fellow. . . as ever lived." He spoke of the Dashwood sisters making "conquests" of men like Willoughby, and this phrasing upset Mrs. Dashwood.

Sir John's thoughts immediately turn to a possible marriage. He views romantic relationships strategically as "conquests." Marianne first wants to know about Willoughby's spirit, which is more important to her than other aspects of his character.



CHAPTER 10

When Willoughby paid his visit to the cottage, Marianne learned that he was fond of music and dancing, which made her like him even more. They quickly learned that they shared many of the same tastes and preferences in music and literature. After Willoughby left, Elinor teased Marianne about learning Willoughby's opinion on "almost every matter of importance" in one morning.

Marianne and Willoughby share a love for more artistic pursuits and pleasures like music and dancing. Her love for Willoughby is borne out of their shared sensibility.



Willoughby seemed to be as fond of Marianne as she was of him, and he continued to visit the cottage often. He and Marianne would, read, talk, and sing together. For Marianne, he had "all the sensibility and spirit which Edward had unfortunately wanted." Mrs. Dashwood began to hope that the two might marry and thought the marriage very likely.

Willoughby's sensibility and spirit is even clearer when considered in relation to Edward's more restrained character. Mrs. Dashwood is already thinking of marriage between Marianne and Willoughby.



Elinor gradually now realized that Colonel Brandon also liked Marianne, and, as Marianne and Willoughby grew closer, she felt bad for him, since she admired his serious, but mild manners and reserve.

Colonel Brandon's love for Marianne appears to be hopeless. Elinor pities him because she shares his manners and sense, in contrast to Marianne and Willoughby.



One day, Willoughby and Marianne were discussing Colonel Brandon and Elinor defended him. Marianne teased Elinor at how concerned she seemed with Colonel Brandon. She said that she did not dislike Brandon, but thought he had “neither genius, taste, nor spirit.” Willoughby said that he was not very fond of Colonel Brandon, but nonetheless thought his character was “irreproachable.”

Willoughby, Marianne, and Elinor disagree and argue over the specificities of Brandon's particular character. Marianne and Willoughby place great importance on matters of taste and spirit.



CHAPTER 11

Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters soon found themselves busy with many social engagements at Barton Park. Marianne and Willoughby became closer and closer, and Elinor had to advise Marianne to restrain herself and not be so obvious in public about her love for him. Mrs. Dashwood was very pleased with the budding relationship.

The society that the Dashwoods live in is centered around special events and engagements. Elinor tries to instill some of her restraint and sense in Marianne, who is quickly falling deeply in love with Willoughby.



In contrast to Marianne, Elinor was not feeling happy. She still missed Norland, and was fed up with the boringness of Lady Middleton and Mrs. Jennings. She enjoyed spending time only with Colonel Brandon, and developed compassion for him and his hopeless love for Marianne. Colonel Brandon asked Elinor whether Marianne believed in “second attachments,” which she generally did not.

Elinor and Colonel Brandon bond through their shared sense and restrained emotion. Brandon's affections for Marianne seem hopeless, because her romanticized notion of love does not include marrying an old bachelor who has already loved and lost before.



CHAPTER 12

As Marianne was walking one morning with Elinor, she told her sister that Willoughby had given her a horse. Marianne was very excited about the gift, but Elinor was worried about the added cost of hiring a servant to care for the horse, and also wondered whether it was proper for Marianne to accept such a gift from a man she only met so recently.

Marianne is carried away by her feelings of love for Willoughby, and does not consider the practicalities or possible impropriety of accepting a horse from Willoughby.



Elinor told Marianne that the horse would be an inconvenience to their mother, so Marianne agreed to decline the gift the next time she saw Willoughby. She kept her promise, but Willoughby insisted that the horse was still hers and promised to keep it for her until she was ready to accept it.

Elinor is able to reason with her sister and get her to decline the gift. Willoughby insists on giving Marianne the horse, though, evidence of his love for her.



Margaret overheard this conversation between Willoughby and Marianne and guessed that they were engaged. She told this to Elinor, but Elinor was not so certain. Margaret said that she saw Willoughby cut **a lock of Marianne's hair** to keep. Elinor could not deny that it seemed likely Willoughby and Marianne would get engaged, but was less quick to jump to conclusions than her sister.

One evening at Barton Park, Mrs. Jennings asked Elinor which man was her "particular favourite." To Elinor's dismay, Margaret made it known that there was indeed someone who Elinor had her eye on. Elinor denied it, but Margaret told everyone that the man's name started with an F. Elinor was thankful when conversation shifted, and the group started to form plans to visit the property of Colonel Brandon's brother-in-law the next day.

CHAPTER 13

The next day, everyone assembled at Barton Park for the trip. As they were having breakfast, some letters came in, including one for Colonel Brandon. As soon as he read it, he announced that he had to leave immediately for London, and had to cancel their trip to his brother-in-law's property.

Everyone was surprised and asked what had happened, but Colonel Brandon would give no details and insisted on leaving immediately. Marianne and Willoughby agreed to each other that Brandon was someone unable to "bear a party of pleasure."

Colonel Brandon left, and Mrs. Jennings announced that she knew what had happened with him. She said that she was certain the letter had to do with Miss Williams, Colonel Brandon's daughter. Since they could no longer do their planned trip, Sir John suggested that everyone go driving around in the country. Marianne and Willoughby happily got into a carriage by themselves and went to his nearby home at Allenhurst, owned by his aunt Mrs. Smith.

That night, Sir John and Lady Middleton hosted a dance at Barton Park. Mrs. Jennings told Marianne she knew where she and Willoughby had gone earlier that day. Elinor was disturbed by the impropriety of Marianne's trip with Willoughby and urged her to show more discretion. Marianne apologized, but excitedly described Allenhurst, where she imagined she might live with Willoughby.

Characters in the novel are often overhearing conversations in order to learn and strategize about the shifting romantic attachments of their high society. Despite the lock of hair, a symbol of Marianne's abiding love for Willoughby, Elinor sensibly does not want to assume an engagement too soon.



Mrs. Jennings is eager to gossip and learn more about her young companions' marriage prospects. The sensible Elinor would like to keep her own love life private, but the less prudent Margaret doesn't hesitate to hint at Elinor's love for Edward Ferrars.



Among this wealthy company, the abrupt canceling of a social event is a major shock.



Marianne and Willoughby dislike Brandon's lack of good cheer and pleasure, and are irritated by his sensible seriousness.



Mrs. Jennings jumps at the chance to gossip and meddle in others' affairs. Marianne and Willoughby's trip together to the home he plans to inherit strongly suggests that he is considering marrying Marianne, though the precise nature of their relationship is still uncertain.



The Middletons' dance offers an opportunity for everyone to meet, gossip, and learn about the goings-on (especially romantic ones) of their limited society. Compelled by notions of proper behavior, Elinor is upset by Marianne's impulsive trip to Allenhurst with Willoughby.



CHAPTER 14

For the next few days, Mrs. Jennings was worried about Colonel Brandon and wondered what news could have caused him to leave so quickly, guessing and conjecturing all sorts of things. Meanwhile, Willoughby's behavior toward Marianne continued to suggest that he was attached to her, though it was still ambiguous what exactly the status of their relationship was.

To Marianne, Willoughby's actions clearly meant that he loved her. One day, when Mrs. Dashwood spoke of altering and improving Barton Cottage, Willoughby adamantly insisted that nothing be changed about it. Along with this demonstrated interest in the future of the Dashwood home, Willoughby continued to behave in a way that "declared at once his affection and happiness."

As Willoughby and Marianne continue their relationship, Marianne is carried away by her love and doesn't stop to consider or clarify exactly what Willoughby's intentions are, as her prudent older sister might have done.



Willoughby's interest in the future of Barton Cottage suggests that he intends to be around the Dashwood family long into the future. But in the society of the time, all of Willoughby's love and affectionate behavior means nothing without a guarantee of marriage.



CHAPTER 15

One day, Mrs. Dashwood, Elinor, and Margaret went to visit Lady Middleton, leaving Marianne at home. When they got back, they saw Willoughby's carriage outside. But when they entered the cottage, they saw Marianne run to her room crying and found Willoughby looking sad. Willoughby informed them that he had to go to London indefinitely on business.

Mrs. Dashwood invited him to visit Barton Cottage often, but Willoughby was evasive. He said he had to leave, and took off quickly, leaving Elinor and her mother uneasy. Mrs. Dashwood guessed that Willoughby's aunt Mrs. Smith was displeased with the growing relationship between Marianne and him and so made him go to London.

Elinor wasn't entirely convinced by this, and remained suspicious of Willoughby. She wanted proof of his engagement to Marianne, even though Mrs. Dashwood was sure they were engaged. Mrs. Dashwood could not believe that Elinor doubted the engagement. Marianne was depressed and emotionally fragile for the rest of the day.

Marianne is unable to control her emotions and runs out of the room crying, because of Willoughby's imminent departure.



As she invited Edward to visit often, Mrs. Dashwood invites Willoughby, hoping to maintain his connection to Marianne. She guesses that Mrs. Smith disapproves of the relationship because Marianne is not wealthy enough for Willoughby to marry.



Driven more by sense than by emotion, Elinor is skeptical of Willoughby, who has never explicitly stated his intentions. Mrs. Dashwood and Marianne, by contrast, assume that Willoughby will propose to her. Marianne cannot restrain her sadness at Willoughby's departure.



CHAPTER 16

Marianne stayed up all night, troubled over Willoughby's sudden departure. The next day, she was still clearly upset and would talk to no one, indulging in her extreme feelings of sadness. Within a few days, Marianne's attitude "sunk... into a calmer melancholy."

Just as her mother did when Henry died, Marianne indulges in her grief and sadness. When she feels an emotion, she goes to the extreme of that emotion, whether it be joy or melancholy.



Elinor was uneasy, as no letters came from Willoughby. She asked her mother to ask Marianne whether or not she was engaged to Willoughby, so that they could know for sure. But Mrs. Dashwood felt that this would be insensitive, and refused. Elinor argued, but her “common sense, common care, common prudence” were all for naught against her mother’s “romantic delicacy.”

One day, Elinor and Marianne went out for a walk. They saw a man approaching on a horse and Marianne excitedly exclaimed that it had to be Willoughby. But, when the man came closer, they saw that he was actually Edward Ferrars. He, Elinor, and Marianne walked back to the cottage, where Edward was welcomed gladly.

To the surprise of Marianne, Edward did not seem particularly excited or joyous to see everyone. She was further perturbed when she learned that he had been in the area for two weeks without coming to see Elinor. Marianne asked how Norland was, and sentimentally described the house and its land.

Edward asked how the Dashwoods were enjoying Barton, and Marianne said that the Middletons were unpleasant. Elinor chastised her for her impoliteness, and said that the Middletons had been very nice to them. Elinor continued to talk with Edward, somewhat annoyed by his cold demeanor, but restraining herself from displaying any “resentment or displeasure.”

CHAPTER 17

Edward gradually grew warmer toward the Dashwoods, but Mrs. Dashwood still sensed some coldness on his part. She attributed this to something to do with Edward’s mother, and asked Edward what Mrs. Ferrars’ plans were for him. Edward said he had no grand career plans and no wish to be distinguished.

Marianne agreed with Edward’s (lack of) plans, saying that grandeur has nothing to do with happiness. But Elinor said that wealth had much to do with happiness. Marianne disagreed, saying that one only needed enough money to be comfortable, and Elinor laughed, because Marianne’s idea of a comfortable living was a very wealthy one.

Elinor sensibly wants to know for sure whether Willoughby and Marianne are engaged. Mrs. Dashwood, though, prioritizes being sensitive to Marianne’s emotions. Her “romantic delicacy,” for once trumps Elinor’s good sense.



The surprise arrival of Edward promises to possibly change the Dashwoods’ romantic plans and strategy, as the relationship between Edward and Elinor may yet have some hope.



The romantic Marianne cannot understand why Edward is not showing more emotion. Her romanticism is displayed by her sentimental description of Norland and its surrounding land.



Elinor is more mindful of polite manners than Marianne. Even the restrained Elinor is somewhat troubled by Edward’s lack of happiness upon seeing her again. This does not bode well for their potential romantic relationship.



Mrs. Dashwood assumes that Edward’s bad mood is because of his mother, who wants him to attain some kind of wealth, excellence, or social prestige. Edward, however, has no interest in strategizing his way through high society.



Marianne’s idea of a moderate, comfortable living is warped. She lives a sheltered life in very wealthy society, with extremely high standards of living.



All three Dashwood daughters agreed that they would love more wealth and imagined how they would use more money if they had it. Edward joked that Marianne would spend all her money on music and books, saying that he remembered her character well. Everyone talked about each other's particular character, with Marianne calling Edward reserved and lacking in gaiety, while Elinor called Marianne steadfast.

Even though the Dashwoods are, in the grand scheme of things, a wealthy family, one never has enough money, and they all would desire more. Edward jokes about Marianne's artistic sensibility, and everyone tries to pinpoint each other's particular character.



CHAPTER 18

Elinor couldn't help but notice Edward's seeming unhappiness. The next morning at breakfast, Marianne left Edward and Elinor by themselves, attempting to give them time to catch up, but Edward almost immediately left to go check on his horses. When he returned, he admired the surrounding country, though told Marianne that he had "no knowledge in the picturesque," and wouldn't be able to describe the landscape as she would like.

Marianne tries to arrange for Edward and Elinor to have some possibly romantic time alone, but her attempt is in vain. Edward again jokes with Marianne about her romantic sensibility and fondness for the picturesque, which he doesn't share.



Marianne saw a ring on Edward's finger that had a **lock of hair** in it. She asked if it was Fanny's hair. Edward blushed and, after a long pause, said that it was. Elinor thought it looked like some of her own hair. Edward seemed embarrassed the rest of the morning. Later that day, Sir John and Mrs. Jennings visited to meet Edward. Upon discovering that his name started with an F, they suspected he was the person Margaret had mentioned Elinor was fond of.

Elinor thinks that Edward has kept a lock of her hair as a reminder of his love for her. Eager for gossip, Sir John and Mrs. Jennings are happy to find out who Elinor's mysterious beloved actually is.



Sir John and Mrs. Jennings invited everyone to a dance at Barton Park. Since Willoughby wouldn't be there, Marianne cried out, "Impossible! Who is to dance?" Sir John said he wished Willoughby was around and Edward asked who Willoughby was, which made Marianne blush, giving away her feelings for him.

Marianne's outburst makes her feelings for Willoughby abundantly clear. Sir John again delights in bringing people together at his home for a grand social event.



CHAPTER 19

Edward stayed for a week at the Dashwood's cottage, and then said he had to go. Elinor assumed that his gloomy mood was due to his mother, who was displeased with his behavior. The morning of Edward's departure, Mrs. Dashwood suggested that he would be happier if he had a profession to keep him busy. Edward agreed, and lamented that he had "no necessary business."

Like her mother, Elinor assumes that Edward's mood is due to his mother's expectations of excellence and wealth for him, which he has no desire to fulfill.



Elinor felt sad when Edward left, but didn't allow her emotions to show, in great contrast to how Marianne had behaved when Willoughby had left. Marianne was dismayed that Elinor did not appear more troubled.

Elinor is able to restrain her emotions, unlike her sister. To Marianne, Elinor's restraint is troubling and makes her question the degree of Elinor's feelings for Edward.



One morning, Sir John and Lady Middleton, along with Mrs. Jennings came to Barton Cottage along with a gentleman and a lady they introduced as the Palmers. Mrs. Palmer, Lady Middleton's sister, was younger than Lady Middleton and "totally unlike her in every respect." She was pretty and kind. Mr. Palmer, on the other hand, was serious-looking and appeared to have more sense than his wife.

Everyone sat and talked, as Mr. Palmer read a newspaper, not paying much attention to the conversation. Mrs. Jennings told the Dashwoods that Mrs. Palmer was expecting a child. Sir John invited the Dashwoods to come to Barton Park the next day. The Dashwoods attempted to find some excuse not to go, but in the end "were obliged to yield."

CHAPTER 20

The next day, Mrs. Palmer was happy to see the Dashwood sisters at Barton Park and invited Elinor and Marianne to come stay with her and her husband in London. They declined the invitation. Sir John joked with Marianne about Willoughby and complimented her on her taste in men.

As everyone talked, Mr. Palmer was rude and aloof. Mrs. Palmer was very pleasant, though, and invited Elinor and Marianne to visit them over Christmas. The two sisters again politely declined. Elinor asked if Mrs. Palmer knew Willoughby. She said she knew of him, and said she was glad that Willoughby was going to marry Marianne.

Elinor said that she did not know for certain that they were engaged, but Mrs. Palmer said she was sure of it and that everyone in town was talking about the engagement. She said that she had heard of it from Colonel Brandon. She described Colonel Brandon as charming, but "so grave and so dull."

Elinor asked what Mrs. Palmer knew about Willoughby, and she said that he was generally well thought of. She then told Elinor more about Colonel Brandon, whom she had known for a long time. She told Elinor that she thought Colonel Brandon had desired to marry her. She said she was happier with Mr. Palmer.

Sir John and Lady Middleton operate as social mediators for the Dashwoods, introducing them to new acquaintances and friends. As soon as the Palmers are introduced, their particular natures are specified.



Sir John continues to host many social events, wanting to bring people together. The Dashwoods are somewhat tired of the society they have entered into, but are obliged by politeness and propriety to accept Sir John's invitation.



Sir John assumes that Marianne and Willoughby are still romantically attached, and enjoys teasing her about the relationship.



Elinor and Marianne continue to politely decline invitations to participate more in wealthy society, content to remain at home with their family. As Mrs. Palmer's assumption of Marianne and Willoughby's engagement shows, news of their relationship seems to have spread.



Once again, Elinor tries to exercise good sense and doesn't want to assume anything about Willoughby's actual intentions. Colonel Brandon's character, rather admirable to Elinor, is boring to Mrs. Palmer.



Elinor is eager to learn more about Willoughby's character. Whether Mrs. Palmer's gossip about Brandon is true or not, it is clear that he has been unsuccessful in finding a happy marriage.



CHAPTER 21

The Palmers went back to their home at Cleveland the next day. Before long, though, Sir John and Mrs. Jennings had more guests to introduce to the Dashwood: Anne and Lucy Steele, two young women, both relatives of Mrs. Jennings. They were fashionable, well-mannered, and fond of Lady Middleton's young children.

Elinor and Marianne went to Barton Park to meet the Steeles. They both found "nothing to admire" in the older Steele sister, Anne, but thought the younger one, Lucy, to be beautiful. Elinor thought that their good manners showed they had some good sense, though she was annoyed by their fawning over Lady Middleton's children.

While embracing one of the children, Lucy accidentally scratched her just slightly with her hairpin and the child cried hysterically. Anne said, "It might have been a very sad accident," but Marianne thought it was really nothing to be concerned about. The Steele sisters talked about how fond they were of the Middletons, and the Dashwood sisters agreed politely.

The Steeles asked Elinor and Marianne about Norland and whether they had "a great many smart beaux there." Elinor politely said that she did not know what they meant by "beaux." Throughout the conversation, Anne Steele was rather vulgar and forward. Elinor was not particularly fond of the Steeles, but got to know them better, as Sir John often encouraged their spending time together.

Sir John told the Steeles about Willoughby and Marianne, and the Steeles congratulated Elinor on her sister's engagement. Sir John joked with Elinor in front of the Steeles about her man with the name beginning with F, and eventually told them that it was Edward Ferrars. Anne Steele said that they knew Edward, but Lucy corrected her and said they didn't know him well. Elinor was curious but could find out no more about how the Steeles knew Edward.

CHAPTER 22

Marianne particularly disliked the Steeles for their impertinence and vulgarity. Elinor, meanwhile, found the younger Steele sister, Lucy, occasionally agreeable as a companion. One day, while Elinor and Lucy were walking together to Barton Cottage, Lucy asked Elinor whether she knew Edward's mother, Mrs. Ferrars.

Sir John is never long without guests or visiting friends, and is always eager to introduce the Dashwoods to all of his societal acquaintances.



Elinor and Marianne quickly attempt to decipher the character of the Steele sisters. Their excessive fawning over Lady Middleton's children is a strategic attempt to ingratiate themselves with Lady Middleton.



Marianne and Elinor agree politely that they are fond of the Middletons' company, but Lucy and Anne seem to be over the top in their fondness and concern for the Middleton children, eager to gain the Middletons as friends.



The Steele sisters are obsessed with meeting and gossiping about potential husbands. Their way of talking about "beaux" irritates the Dashwoods somewhat, as Elinor gets to know Anne's vulgar character better.



Nearly everyone continues to act as though Willoughby and Marianne are certainly engaged. Sir John continues to enjoy gossiping and meddling in others' affairs, telling the Steeles about Elinor's affection for Edward.



Now that the Dashwood sisters have some sense of the Steele sisters, they are able to form opinions on them. Marianne has some esteem for Lucy, who is more tactful and mindful of manners than her sister Anne.



Elinor answered that she did not know Mrs. Ferrars. Lucy apologized for the “impertinently curious” question, saying that she was in an uncomfortable situation she did not want to trouble Elinor with. Finally, she admitted to Elinor that she was engaged to Edward.

Lucy is trying to navigate delicately through a difficult social situation, and finally feels the need to tell Elinor the enormous secret of her engagement to Edward.



Elinor was shocked, but tried not to show her amazement. Lucy said that it was a secret engagement, that only she, Edward, and Anne knew about. She said she and Edward had been engaged for four years. Elinor tried to keep her distress to herself and continue talking politely. She asked if they were speaking of the same Edward Ferrars. (They were.)

Elinor struggles to restrain her shock and distress and behave properly even though she has just learned terrible news that ruins her plans of possibly marrying Edward. (By contrast, Marianne would hardly be able to maintain any composure in a similar situation.)



Lucy asked Elinor to keep the secret of the engagement. Because Lucy did not have a fortune, she feared Mrs. Ferrars would not approve of Edward marrying her. She told Elinor that Edward had been staying with the Steeles before he came to visit the Dashwoods, and was in low spirits because he had to keep his engagement secret.

Mrs. Ferrars' main concern in Edward's future marriage is that he marry someone with a sizable fortune. Unlike Mrs. Dashwood, she prioritizes wealth over her children's happiness in marriage.



Lucy showed Elinor a letter from Edward and Elinor recognized Edward's handwriting. Lucy mentioned that she had given Edward **a lock of hair** that he kept in a ring, and Elinor could have no doubts that Lucy really was engaged to the same Edward she loved. At this point, they arrived at the cottage and had to end their conversation, to the relief of the distressed Elinor.

Elinor now has proof of Lucy's engagement, and can barely contain her emotion. Now she realizes that the lock of hair she thought was a symbol of her bond with Edward is actually a symbol of his relationship with Lucy.



CHAPTER 23

Unable to doubt the truth of Lucy's story, Elinor wondered whether Edward had been intentionally leading her on and deceiving her. She thought perhaps he had become engaged to Lucy rashly and didn't really love her as he loved Elinor.

Elinor now must question and reevaluate the intentions and character of the man she thought she knew.



Thinking of Edward's difficult position with his mother, Elinor wept “for him, more than for herself.” She kept the news secret from her sisters and mother and behaved so that none of them would have guessed that she had just “suffered the extinction of all her dearest hopes.”

Elinor is so compassionate that she is sad for Edward more than for herself. Unlike Marianne or her mother, she is able to keep her pain inside and not display her emotions in an obvious manner.



Elinor wanted to speak to Lucy again soon, to determine if she really loved Edward. But the next few times she saw Lucy at various social engagements, she didn't have a chance to speak with her in private. One night, though, Elinor was invited to dinner at Barton Park with just Lady Middleton, Mrs. Jennings, and the Steeles.

Elinor wants to see if Lucy and Edward's engagement is borne out of actual love, and strategizes to find a time and place to talk to her in private. The dinner at Barton Park offers just such an opportunity.



Elinor and her sisters went to Barton Park, and after dinner Elinor offered to help Lucy with weaving something for one of Lady Middleton's children. Meanwhile, Marianne played piano, and this music offered enough cover for Elinor to talk quietly with Lucy about Edward.

Elinor cleverly offers to help Lucy with her weaving so that she will have a chance to discuss her secret engagement privately.



CHAPTER 24

Elinor broached the subject of Edward with Lucy, who worried she had offended Elinor. Elinor said she hadn't, even though Lucy said that Elinor had seemed upset when she heard about the engagement. Lucy said that she and Edward had to wait to marry, because Edward had little money and depended on inheriting money from his mother.

Elinor keeps her real thoughts and emotions to herself, wanting to appear sympathetic and not offended to Lucy. Lucy's marriage to Edward relies not only upon their love for each other but upon Edward's attaining a fortune through inheritance.



Elinor said that Lucy was fortunate that Edward still loved her after four years, since the "reciprocal attachment" would fail for many people in a similar situation. Lucy said that Edward's love for her had been constant. She said that she worried Mrs. Ferrars would disinherit Edward if she married him, so they had to wait until Mrs. Ferrars died.

Elinor's compliment is actually a disguised attempt to test whether Lucy and Edward really do still love each other. Lucy says that she and Edward love each other, but their marriage is delayed because of Mrs. Ferrars' desire for a wealthy daughter-in-law.



Lucy told Elinor that Edward desired to become a priest and she asked Elinor to ask if John Dashwood would allow Edward to live at Norland. Then, he would have enough of a living to marry Lucy. Elinor said she wasn't sure that she would have much influence over John.

Lucy attempts to use her new acquaintance to her benefit, asking if Elinor might help her appeal to John. Elinor is being truthful when she says she wouldn't have much influence over John, but declining also serves her own interest in keeping Edward unmarried.



Lucy asked Elinor for advice, but Elinor declined, saying that Lucy had to make her own decisions. She asked if Elinor would be in London over the winter, and Elinor said she would not. Their conversation concluded, and Elinor was sure that Edward was stuck in a loveless engagement and that Lucy was merely self-interested, not really in love with Edward.

Lucy puts Elinor in a very awkward position, and Elinor must find a polite reason to decline to give advice to her romantic rival. Elinor concludes from her conversation that Lucy is only interested in Edward in order to advance her own fortune.



From that time on, Elinor never spoke about Edward again with Lucy, although Lucy took every opportunity to tell Elinor happily whenever she got a letter from Edward. Though originally planning only a short stay at Barton Park, the Steele sisters ended up staying there for almost two months.

Having gotten the information she desired, Elinor no longer has a need to speak with Lucy more. Lucy's letting Elinor know of every letter she receives from Edward is perhaps a deliberate attempt to remind Elinor that Edward is hers.



CHAPTER 25

As January came around, Mrs. Jennings invited Elinor and Marianne to come stay with her in London. Elinor declined, saying she couldn't leave her mother, but Mrs. Jennings insisted, and told her she would "get one of you at least well married before I have done with you."

Elinor realized that Marianne would like to be in London so that she might be able to see Willoughby again, so she softened her resolve not to go, and said that it was up to her mother. Mrs. Jennings went to Mrs. Dashwood, who thought it would be good for Marianne and Elinor to go stay with Mrs. Jennings.

Elinor, Marianne, and Mrs. Dashwood discussed the proposed trip together. Elinor was reluctant to go, but Marianne wanted to go very much, even without Elinor. Elinor saw how much Marianne desired to go, and, knowing that Edward would be in London in February, hoped that they would be gone before then, so she wouldn't risk running into him.

Trying to persuade Elinor to go, Mrs. Dashwood hinted that she might be able to spend time with Edward and the Ferrars family. Elinor said that she was indifferent toward the Ferrars family, which shocked Marianne. The Dashwoods finally decided to accept Mrs. Jennings' invitation. Elinor was slightly dissatisfied, but Marianne was ecstatically happy.

CHAPTER 26

Elinor was surprised to find herself in Mrs. Jennings' carriage, on the way to London, when she had been staunchly opposed to the journey a few days ago. Her objections had all been overcome by "that happy ardour of youth which Marianne and her mother equally shared."

Elinor wondered what would happen between Willoughby and Marianne, reflecting on how much more hopeful Marianne's situation was than her own with Edward. They arrived at Mrs. Jennings' place in London, which was "handsome, and handsomely fitted up."

Elinor and Marianne started to write some letters as soon as they arrived in London. Elinor told Marianne she should delay hers, as she was already sending one to their mother. But Marianne told Elinor she was not writing to their mother. Elinor guessed she was writing to Willoughby.

While well-intentioned, Mrs. Jennings takes an interest in meddling in the Dashwood sisters' romantic affairs, trying to scheme for each of their marriages.



Elinor does not want to go to London, but relents in her objections because she knows her sister desperately wants to see her beloved Willoughby.



Elinor tries to plan her trip so that she won't run into Edward among London high society. She is continually considerate toward her sister, thinking of Marianne's desires, not only her own.



Forced to keep her real feelings about Edward to herself, because she must keep the secret of Lucy and Edward's engagement, Elinor can only say that she is indifferent toward the Ferrars family. Marianne finds Elinor's apparent lack of feeling disturbing.



Mrs. Dashwood and Marianne's "happy ardour" have overcome Elinor's moderate objections to the London trip.



Having mostly lost her hope of marrying Edward, Elinor turns her mind to Marianne's romantic prospects, thinking that Marianne's situation with Willoughby is still hopeful.



Elinor first assumes that Marianne is writing to their mother, but she is more concerned with getting in touch with her beloved Willoughby than her mother.



Someone came to the door of Mrs. Jennings' apartment, and Marianne exclaimed, "Oh, Elinor, it is Willoughby, indeed it is!" But when the door opened, it turned out to be Colonel Brandon. Shocked and disappointed, Marianne left the room. Brandon asked if she was ill, and Elinor made up that she was tired and probably had a headache.

Marianne can't hold back her excitement when she thinks Willoughby has come, or her disappointment when she learns he hasn't. Elinor has to cover for her and provide a polite excuse for Marianne leaving the room when Colonel Brandon arrives.



Mrs. Jennings talked with Brandon and Elinor and joked to Colonel Brandon, "I do not know what you and Mr. Willoughby will do between you" with Marianne. After Colonel Brandon left, Elinor and Marianne went to bed early. The next day, Mrs. Palmer came to visit.

Mrs. Jennings enjoys teasing her younger acquaintances about their romantic lives. Staying in London allows Elinor and Marianne to continue to participate in society, as friends visit Mrs. Jennings' home.



After this, Marianne and Elinor went out into town. When they returned, Marianne excitedly looked to see if there was a letter for her, but there was not. Elinor worried about what was going on with Marianne and Willoughby, since their apparent engagement was "so doubtful, so mysterious." Marianne continued to wait expectantly for Willoughby to come pay a visit.

Marianne cannot help but show her extreme anxiety and worry about Willoughby. Elinor is now prudently worried about Marianne, because she had no actual guarantee of an engagement.



CHAPTER 27

The next morning, Mrs. Jennings commented on the bad weather, and Marianne cheered up immediately, thinking that Willoughby might have been kept in the country by the weather. Elinor guessed that Marianne would probably now write to Willoughby at his country home.

Marianne continues to be entirely concerned with her relationship (or lack thereof) with Willoughby. She is so transparent that Elinor can guess exactly what she will do.



Mrs. Jennings was a kind, good hostess to the sisters, and Elinor began to become comfortable with her stay in London. Colonel Brandon visited them often, and Elinor noted that he had a "continued regard for her sister," which worried her. About a week after they had come to London, Marianne came back to the apartment to find Willoughby's card on a table, proof that he had stopped by while she was out in town.

While Mrs. Jennings often gossips and teases, she is still a kind person and a good host. Colonel Brandon is persistent in his apparently hopeless love for Marianne, who only has eyes for Willoughby.



The next day, Marianne stayed at home, waiting for Willoughby's visit, but he never came. Nor did any letter come for Marianne. Elinor asked if she was expecting a letter, and hinted that Marianne was hiding something from her. Marianne denied it, saying she had "nothing to tell."

Marianne does her best to arrange for a meeting with Willoughby, not wanting to leave home in case he should visit.



Marianne and Elinor were invited to go to dinner with Lady Middleton and Sir John, and accepted the invitation. When the night of the dinner came, though, Marianne was not in the mood to go, as she still had not heard from Willoughby. They went to the dinner nonetheless, along with Colonel Brandon, Mrs. Jennings, and the Palmers.

Marianne does not want to participate in social events, because she cannot restrain or conceal her sadness and anxiety regarding Willoughby. Nonetheless, she goes with Elinor to the dinner as a matter of politeness.



At the dinner, Marianne was unwilling to dance, and complained. Mrs. Jennings said she knew why Marianne was upset, and said that it was odd of Willoughby not to come to the dinner, when he had been invited. Marianne was hurt by this revelation, and Elinor resolved to write to their mother about the dubious relationship between Willoughby and Marianne.

Marianne cannot put forward a happy appearance or dance when she is feeling sad inside. Elinor wisely decides to take action and ask her mother to clarify how things stand between Marianne and Willoughby.



The next day, Elinor wrote to her mother, while Marianne paced anxiously around the apartment. Colonel Brandon came to the door, and talked with Elinor. He asked when Marianne and Willoughby were to be married, and said that their engagement was “universally talked of.” He asked if the engagement was “absolutely resolved upon.”

The engagement between Marianne and Willoughby is still widely talked about among the cloistered aristocratic society, even though Elinor knows it is actually very much in doubt.



Knowing Brandon’s feelings for Marianne, Elinor debated what it was proper for her to say, and ended up telling him that she did not know the terms of the engagement, but that she was sure of the “mutual affection” between Marianne and Willoughby. Brandon wished Marianne happiness with Willoughby and left. Elinor felt uncomfortable.

Elinor takes care to say the right thing to Brandon, as it is in her nature to be tactful and polite. She doesn’t want to falsely guarantee the engagement, but also doesn’t want to give Brandon false hopes of his own regarding Marianne.



CHAPTER 28

For the next three or four days, Willoughby neither came to see Marianne nor wrote her. Elinor and Marianne went to a party with Lady Middleton. Marianne was in a bad mood, as usual, but then she saw Willoughby across the room. She almost ran directly to him, but Elinor told her to stay composed in public.

Marianne continues to let her emotions color her behavior. At another society event, she finally sees Willoughby and Elinor must implore her to try to maintain some composure.



Willoughby saw Marianne and Elinor and came over. He greeted Elinor, but ignored Marianne. Elinor was shocked, and Marianne burst out, “Good God! Willoughby, what is the meaning of this?” Willoughby seemed to be “struggling for composure.” Marianne asked if he had received her letters, but he didn’t reply. Finally, he said that he had received her letters and then left hurriedly.

Willoughby’s cold behavior is not only hurtful, but shocking to both the Dashwood sisters, for whom it seems wildly out of his character. Marianne cannot restrain herself and bursts out, asking Willoughby what is going on. Marianne and Willoughby’s romance seems to be in serious doubt.



Marianne turned pale, and Elinor tried to advise her to maintain composure. They told Lady Middleton that Marianne was unwell, and they left the party. Marianne “was in a silent agony,” as they went back home. Elinor thought that Willoughby must have had “a thorough change of sentiment,” and felt sympathetically for her miserable sister.

The sensitive Marianne can hardly handle Willoughby’s cruel behavior, and Elinor and she have to excuse themselves from the crowd of the party. Elinor thinks Willoughby has had a “change of sentiment,” though it also appears he’s had some change of character.



CHAPTER 29

Early the next morning, Elinor found Marianne writing a letter, but she would not say what she was writing. Elinor wanted to soothe her sister, but Marianne didn't want her to talk to her at all. Marianne ate nothing at breakfast, when a letter was brought in for her. She ran to her room to read it. Unaware of what had happened with Willoughby, Mrs. Jennings joked to Elinor about Marianne and asked when she was to be married.

Elinor answered that Marianne and Willoughby were not going to be married, and told Mrs. Jennings not to spread that rumor. Elinor went to her room to see what Willoughby had written to Marianne. She found Marianne lying on her bed, "almost choked by grief." Elinor tried to comfort Marianne but cried herself. Marianne gave several letters to Elinor to read.

The first letter was from Willoughby, which said that he enjoyed his time with the Dashwoods, but felt no more than esteem for Marianne and her family. He was in fact already engaged to someone else. He had sent back all of Marianne's letters to her, along with the **lock of hair** she had given him.

Elinor was astonished and angry. Mrs. Jennings was ready to go out into town, and Elinor had to excuse Marianne and herself from going with her, saying that Marianne was not feeling well. She returned to Marianne, and told her she wished she could do something to comfort her.

Marianne continued to sob, and Elinor urged her to keep her composure. Marianne said that Elinor had no idea how she felt, unaware of what had happened with Edward. Marianne insisted that nothing could take away her misery. Elinor learned that Marianne and Willoughby had never been formally engaged, and that he had only ever implied his love for her.

Elinor read the letters Marianne had sent to Willoughby. First, an excited one telling him that she was in London. Then, a concerned one asking when they might be able to see each other. Finally, there was an angry letter that she had written after seeing him at the dance. The highly emotional letters were "full of affection and confidence."

Elinor thought it was improper that Marianne had written such letters when she and Willoughby were not even engaged. Marianne said that she felt "as solemnly engaged to him, as if the strictest covenant had bound us to each other." She said that Willoughby had felt the same, but something must have changed him.

Elinor is sympathetic toward her dear sister, but Marianne tries to keep her romantic affairs to herself. Mrs. Jennings is trying to have some good-natured fun, but, unbeknownst to her, her joke could not be more poorly timed.



Elinor does her best to stop the rumor of Marianne's engagement to Willoughby from spreading throughout society anymore. Marianne has been thrown into such extreme sadness that she can hardly communicate with her sister.



Willoughby now denies any affection for Marianne. Without a formal engagement, all his earlier love can be easily denied. The returned lock of hair symbolizes the end of Marianne and Willoughby's romance.



Elinor again politely uses Marianne's health as an excuse to save her sister from having to go out in public in such a state. She is a caring sister, trying to do whatever she can to help Marianne.



Elinor tries to get Marianne to restrain her emotions, but Marianne is characteristically unable to. Ironically, she thinks Elinor is much happier with Edward, when in reality Elinor is simply better at disguising her sadness.



The letters show Marianne's romantic sensibility, full of affection and emotion, in great contrast to the cold, heartless letter that Willoughby sent her in reply.



Elinor would prudently wait until an engagement was guaranteed to act as Marianne had, whereas Marianne let her feelings guide her and treated Willoughby as if they were already engaged.



Marianne refused to believe that Willoughby was “capable of such cruelty,” and thought that people had spread rumors about her, ruining her reputation to him. Elinor begged Marianne not to show her unhappiness so demonstrably to everyone, but Marianne said she could not appear happy when she was actually miserable.

Rereading Willoughby’s heartless letter, Marianne called him “barbarously insolent” and asked whether anything could justify his behavior. She asked if they could go home to their mother immediately, but Elinor said that they owed it to Mrs. Jennings not to leave so suddenly, as it would be impolite. Marianne lay down again, and was hysterical for a while, before calming down and lying “quiet and motionless.”

Marianne struggles to maintain her noble idea of Willoughby after his recent behavior. Elinor again tries to get Marianne to moderate her sadness to some degree, and not to appear so demonstrably distressed to other people.



Marianne goes back and forth now as to what she thinks of Willoughby’s character. She wants to go back to her loving mother, but Elinor knows that it would be rude to leave Mrs. Jennings so suddenly. Marianne continues to indulge in an extreme, hysterical sadness.



CHAPTER 30

Mrs. Jennings came back home and checked on Marianne. She had heard of Willoughby’s upcoming engagement to a Miss Grey, and tried to comfort Marianne by saying that she would have no trouble finding another good husband. At dinner that night, Marianne was “looking most wretchedly,” but remained calm.

Mrs. Jennings was very kind to Marianne, and Elinor returned the politeness. When Marianne left the table, Mrs. Jennings lamented that Willoughby had used Marianne, but said that he evidently cared only about money, as Miss Grey was very rich. Mrs. Jennings asked if there was anything she could do to cheer up Marianne, but Elinor said she would simply try to get her to go to sleep early.

Elinor admitted to Mrs. Jennings that Willoughby had broken no formal engagement with Marianne, but Mrs. Jennings would have none of her defending Willoughby. She said that his behavior implied an engagement. But she said, optimistically, that now Marianne would likely marry Colonel Brandon, which would be a good match.

After Elinor went to check on Marianne and tried to persuade her to go to bed, Colonel Brandon arrived, having heard about Willoughby’s engagement. He asked Elinor how Marianne was doing, and Elinor told him he could imagine how upset she was, as he knew “her disposition.”

Mrs. Jennings tries to cheer Marianne up with thoughts of a future husband, as Marianne tries to retain a calm outward appearance, despite her emotionally turbulent state.



Unlike Marianne, Elinor takes care to return Mrs. Jennings’ kindness and polite behavior. Mrs. Jennings explains Willoughby’s behavior through Miss Grey’s wealth, thinking that Willoughby simply prioritized money over love (not uncommon in this environment).



Elinor tries to maintain an impartial view of the situation, but Mrs. Jennings is entirely on Marianne’s side. Never without marriage gossip for long, she now eagerly awaits a match between Marianne and Brandon.



Brandon comes to check on Marianne, displaying his considerate, kind character. Elinor tells him that he can imagine how the sensitive, emotional Marianne is handling this difficult situation.



CHAPTER 31

The next day, Marianne was still miserable. She talked with Elinor, sometimes thinking that Willoughby was innocent and sometimes feeling that he was cruel and guilty. She tried to avoid Mrs. Jennings, telling Elinor, “all that she wants is gossip,” even though Mrs. Jennings was attempting to be kind.

Mrs. Jennings brought Marianne a letter, telling her it would cheer her up. Marianne imagined it might be from Willoughby, but was disappointed when it turned out to be from her mother. She cried, feeling that Mrs. Jennings had been cruel in getting her hopes up.

Mrs. Dashwood had written to Marianne after Elinor had written to her. In the letter, Mrs. Dashwood asked Marianne to be more open about her engagement with Willoughby and talked as if they were surely to be married. This upset Marianne and made her miss her mother and wish to be back home with her. Her mother “was dearer to her than ever.”

Mrs. Jennings left and Elinor began writing a letter to her mother. Then, Colonel Brandon came to the door. He said that he had come across Mrs. Jennings on the street and she had told him to visit Marianne and Elinor. He talked with Elinor alone and told her that he had something to tell her that might help her and Marianne.

In order to explain, Brandon had to go back to when he suddenly left Barton Park. He said that Marianne reminded him very much of someone he knew named Eliza, who had “the same warmth of heart, the same eagerness of fancy and spirits.” Eliza and Brandon were deeply in love, but she was married “against her inclination” to Brandon’s brother, who didn’t even love her.

Brandon and Eliza tried to elope, but were caught. Eliza “resigned herself at first to all the misery of her situation.” Brandon left the country for three years to serve in the army. When he returned, he tried to find Eliza, who had divorced his brother, been seduced by several men, and was in a desperate situation. He finally found her in a house where she was confined for debt, as she was dying of consumption.

Marianne is unsure of how to think of Willoughby, since his recent behavior is so out of line with what she thought his character was. She is irritated with Mrs. Jennings and the gossipy society she represents, even as Mrs. Jennings attempts to be kind and sympathetic.



Marianne is still emotionally sensitive and is unable to hold back her tears. She still hopes for more explanation from Willoughby for his out-of-character coldness.



Mrs. Dashwood’s ill-timed letter reminds Marianne of her former hopes about Willoughby. Marianne misses her mother and wants the support of her loving family all together at Barton.



Colonel Brandon continues to show his kind character, as well his enduring affection for Marianne, by visiting again.



Brandon’s story about Eliza offers another example of a loving relationship that did not progress to a happy marriage. A successful marriage in the world of the novel requires more than just love.



Eliza’s fate shows what can happen to a vulnerable woman in this society, when she does not have family or a husband to help her.



Brandon was clearly pained as he told this story, but continued on. Eliza had a daughter, also named Eliza, whom she entrusted to Brandon. Brandon looked out for her and put her in school. After she went with some friends to Bath recently, though, she disappeared. While at Barton, Brandon had received a letter informing him that Eliza had been seduced by Willoughby and then abandoned after she became pregnant. This was why he had left so suddenly.

This story shows that Willoughby has a history of seducing and abandoning women. He may not be quite the noble gentleman Marianne thought he was.



Elinor was shocked that Willoughby had done this, and Brandon told her, "His character is now before you." Brandon told Elinor that he had been worried that Willoughby was using Marianne as he had used the younger Eliza. He had seen Willoughby recently, and challenged him to a duel, but both "returned unwounded." Brandon left, and Elinor was "full of compassion and esteem for him," for telling her about Willoughby.

Brandon has told Elinor this story to show her Willoughby's true character. His attempted duel with Willoughby evidences his own virtuous character.



CHAPTER 32

Elinor told Marianne what she had learned from Colonel Brandon, but it didn't cheer her up. Marianne was sad at "the loss of Willoughby's character," now that she knew him to be dishonest. Mrs. Dashwood, having learned of the news from Elinor, wrote letters back to Elinor and Marianne, expressing her concern and sympathy for Marianne.

Marianne is as sad at losing her ideal notion of Willoughby as a good person as she was at losing her relationship with him. Mrs. Dashwood, a loving and caring mother, extends her sympathy for her daughter.



Mrs. Dashwood recommended that Elinor and Marianne not shorten their stay with Mrs. Jennings, as everything at Barton would likely remind Marianne of Willoughby, and she thought Marianne might find something to distract her and occupy her time in London. Additionally, John Dashwood was coming to London soon, and she wanted her daughters to see him.

Mrs. Dashwood is worried that all the reminders of Willoughby at Barton might be too much for the sensitive Marianne. She wants her daughters to spend time with their brother because he is family, but perhaps also so that they can possibly benefit from his social acquaintances.



Marianne wanted to go home to "the personal sympathy of her mother," but obeyed her mother's wishes. She thought that staying in London would at last be good for Elinor. Elinor, though, didn't want to be in London where she might encounter Edward, but thought that staying would be good for Marianne.

Marianne misses her caring mother. Each sister imagines that the other wants to stay in London. Although neither actually wants to be in London, each agrees to stay out of concern for the other.



Elinor did her best to keep anyone from mentioning Willoughby's name around Marianne. Sir John was shocked when he heard about what happened, as he had always thought Willoughby was "a good-natured fellow." Mrs. Palmer was upset on Marianne's account, and said Willoughby was "good-for-nothing."

Elinor tries to help Marianne by preventing their friends and acquaintances from mentioning Willoughby in her company. Sir John is shocked because he too thought well of Willoughby. Mrs. Palmer is quick to change her opinion of Willoughby's character.



Colonel Brandon often made “delicate, unobtrusive enquiries” about Marianne to Elinor, who began to value him as a friend. Mrs. Jennings noticed them spending time together and began to think that Brandon would propose not to Marianne, but to Elinor.

Colonel Brandon again displays his kind character and concern for Marianne. Always trying to pick up on romantic gossip, Mrs. Jennings comically misinterprets Brandon's behavior.



Early in February, Willoughby married Miss Grey, and Elinor informed Marianne. Marianne tried to control her emotions, but couldn't help crying. Around this time, the Steeles came to London, and Elinor “was sorry to see them.”

Willoughby's marriage is the final blow to any unlikely hopes Marianne might have had about him. Elinor and Marianne are in no mood to spend time in the company of the Steeles.



Lucy and Anne came to talk with Elinor and Mrs. Jennings, speaking of their beaux and romantic conquests. Marianne left the room when the Steeles arrived, and Elinor apologized on her behalf, saying that Marianne wasn't feeling well and had been having “nervous head-aches.”

Lucy and Anne are much the same as the last time the Dashwoods saw them. Marianne is unable to pretend to be cheerful, and so Elinor must politely make excuses for her, as usual.



CHAPTER 33

Elinor finally persuaded Marianne to go out with her and Mrs. Jennings one morning. They went to a jeweler, where they saw a rude gentleman giving orders for a toothpick case to be made. The gentleman stared at Marianne and Elinor briefly, though Marianne did not notice, as she was lost in her thoughts.

Elinor quickly pinpoints the gentleman's character as rather rude. Marianne, though, is still too carried away by her feelings and thoughts to really notice.



Elinor walked up to the counter in the jewelry store, and was surprised to see her brother, John Dashwood. He said that he had arrived in London two days ago, but hadn't had time yet to pay his sisters a visit. He promised to visit the next day, and looked forward to meeting the Middletons and Mrs. Jennings, who Elinor politely said were kind and friendly.

John looks forward to meeting Mrs. Jennings and the Middletons through the mutual acquaintance of his sisters, despite the fact that he has let down his sisters so profoundly (a fact he doesn't even seem to remember).



The next day, John visited his sisters, though Fanny was unable to join him. John was kind and polite to Mrs. Jennings and his sisters. Colonel Brandon arrived, and John looked at him curiously, as if “he only wanted to know him to be rich, to be equally civil to *him*.”

John is polite, but appears snobbish, as if he wants to know how wealthy Colonel Brandon is before he forms an opinion of him.



Elinor walked with John to the Middletons' home, and on the way he asked her about Colonel Brandon. He asked what Brandon's fortune was like, and then congratulated Elinor on the prospect of marrying him. He was certain that Brandon liked her. Elinor denied this. John was sure of it, though, and though he wished Brandon had more money, he was still pleased with the match.

John is interested in Colonel Brandon's finances because he thinks that Brandon is interested in marrying Elinor and he wants his sister to marry into a decent fortune, for her benefit but also for his own.



John mentioned that Edward Ferrars was to be married soon, as his mother had matched him up with a Miss Morton, a very wealthy woman. He began talking of finances, and said that his income was not as much “as many people suppose.” He had recently purchased a property, and wished he had more money, as Norland was expensive to maintain.

Mrs. Ferrars has arranged a match for Edward based only on Miss Morton’s wealth, unaware that he has already entered into an engagement because of love. John himself is very wealthy, but still desires more money.



John described his plans for a green-house at Norland, which required the removal of a number of trees on the property, which Elinor and Marianne had been fond of. Elinor “kept her concern and censure to herself.” John congratulated Elinor on having Mrs. Jennings as a friend, because of her “exceeding good income.” He hinted that she might even leave some money to Elinor in her will.

In order to construct the greenhouse, John has removed the trees that Elinor and Marianne had valued. Marianne would likely not be able to restrain her outrage at this violation of taste, as Elinor does. John is interested in Mrs. Jennings’ friendship mainly because of her money.



John asked Elinor what was wrong with Marianne. Elinor said that she had “a nervous complaint.” John said that Fanny used to think Marianne would marry before Elinor but now he was worried whether Marianne would find a good husband. He again said that he thought it was likely Brandon would marry Elinor.

Elinor makes a polite excuse for Marianne’s depression and extreme emotions. John’s main concern for his sisters is that they are able to find good husbands (which would also eliminate any potential for them to be dependent on him).



John and Elinor made it to the Middletons, where “abundance of civilities passed on all sides.” John was delighted with Lady Middleton and Sir John, and was eager of introducing Fanny to them. He said that Fanny had been worried that Mrs. Jennings and Lady Middleton were not worth associating with, as Mrs. Jennings’ husband had gotten his money “in a low way,” but now he could “carry her a most satisfactory account of both.”

John is delighted to expand his circle of upper-class social acquaintances. Fanny and John are mostly interested in socializing as a means of social climbing. It is not enough for one to be wealthy to earn their esteem: one must acquire money in the proper manner, not “in a low way.”



CHAPTER 34

Fanny had Mrs. Jennings and Lady Middleton to her home the next day along with the Dashwood sisters, and liked both of the new acquaintances. Lady Middleton liked Fanny, as well, and the two were attracted by “a kind of cold hearted selfishness on both sides.” Mrs. Jennings, on the other hand, did not like Fanny.

Lady Middleton and Fanny are both self-interested and want to gain aristocratic friends and acquaintances. So, they get along well with each other.



Lucy came to join the group, and talked with Elinor about how anxious she was to see Edward in town. Not wanting their relationship to become known, the two had not yet met up in London, though Edward had arrived with John and Fanny. Shortly after this, Elinor found Edward’s card left at Mrs. Jennings’ home twice. He had come to visit, and she was glad that she hadn’t been there to see him both times.

Lucy and Edward must take care to keep their engagement secret from their tight-knit community in London. Elinor, meanwhile, is doing her best to avoid running into Edward.



John and Fanny invited Elinor, Marianne, Mrs. Jennings, the Steeles, and the Middletons to dinner. Mrs. Ferrars was supposed to attend, and Elinor was eager to see what she was like, though she was worried Edward might be there, too. Lucy was extremely excited for the dinner and for the opportunity to get to know Edward's family.

Before the dinner, Lucy told Elinor that Edward would not be able to attend, much to Elinor's relief. At the dinner, Elinor and Lucy finally met Mrs. Ferrars, "a little, thin woman, upright, even to formality, in her figure, and serious, even to sourness, in her aspect."

Mrs. Ferrars appeared to dislike Elinor, but Elinor did not care much, since she knew Mrs. Ferrars wouldn't be her mother-in-law. She appeared to be very fond of Lucy, unaware that Edward and she were engaged. Lucy was very happy that Mrs. Ferrars liked her.

After dinner, people talked about whether John's son Harry or Lady Middleton's son William was taller. Elinor and Marianne were rather bored by this, and Marianne offended everyone by saying that she had no opinion on the matter. John saw some painted screens that Elinor had done and showed them around.

Colonel Brandon admired the paintings. Mrs. Ferrars looked at them and upon hearing that Elinor had painted them, she dismissed them "without regarding them at all." She instead began talking about Miss Morton's painting. Marianne was irritated at this slight to her sister, and she spoke up, asking who cared about Miss Morton.

Marianne's outburst offended John, Fanny, and Mrs. Ferrars. Colonel Brandon, though, seemed to admire Marianne's protective affection for her sister. Marianne couldn't help but bursting out into tears and Colonel Brandon went to comfort her. John whispered to Brandon that Marianne's nervous condition was a pity and that she used to be very pretty but now was not.

CHAPTER 35

Elinor had seen enough of Mrs. Ferrars to get a sense of her character and was almost happy that she wasn't engaged to Edward, because it meant she wouldn't have to worry about his mother. The next time Lucy saw Elinor at Mrs. Jennings' apartment, she gushed about how happy she was that Mrs. Ferrars was so fond of her. Lucy said she enjoyed meeting both Mrs. Ferrars and Fanny.

This dinner offers Lucy and Elinor both a chance to meet Mrs. Ferrars, the mysterious mother of the man they have both loved. Lucy is excited for the opportunity to get closer to Edward's family and earn their good will.



Mrs. Ferrars' overly serious, sour appearance mimics her overly serious inner character.



Now that she has no plans to marry Edward, Elinor doesn't have to worry about scheming to earn Mrs. Ferrars' affection. Lucy, however, does, and is happy to find that Mrs. Ferrars seems to like her.



As Elinor and Marianne are not particularly interested in advancing in society or gaining Mrs. Ferrars' favor, they are bored by the vapid small-talk of the party.



Mrs. Ferrars continues her dislike of Elinor, and Marianne stands up for her sister, unable to restrain her irritation for the sake of good manners.



While most of the members of the dinner party are offended by Marianne's inappropriate remark, Colonel Brandon admires Marianne's care for her sister. Marianne is once again unable to contain her emotions. John pities her, but he only seems concerned about how Marianne's condition will affect her marriage prospects.



Elinor has now formed a good enough judgment of Mrs. Ferrars' character to dislike her thoroughly. Lucy enjoys meeting the Ferrars because they seem to like her, and because this bodes well for her hopes of marrying into their wealthy family.



Lucy thanked Elinor for her friendship. Elinor didn't say much in response. Now that Lucy had a reason to go visit Fanny, she was sure she could spend time there with Edward. She continued to talk about how much Mrs. Ferrars appeared to like her, and was interrupted only by the chance arrival of none other than Edward.

All seems to be going well for Lucy's schemes to marry into the Ferrars family. She keeps talking excitedly until someone arrives to interrupt her, to the relief of Elinor—at least, until she sees who it is.



It was extremely awkward for the three of them to be alone together. Lucy said practically nothing, and Elinor was forced to try to make polite conversation. After talking for a bit, she left to go get Marianne. Marianne was overjoyed to see Edward, unaware of the tension between him, Lucy, and Elinor.

It takes all of Elinor's social savvy to retain her composure and make conversation in this intensely awkward situation.



Marianne suggested that Edward take her and Elinor back to Barton in a couple weeks. Edward mumbled something that no one could hear, but Marianne continued in her enthusiasm, asking why Edward had not been at the recent dinner and complimenting his character, saying that he was “the most fearful of giving pain, of wounding expectation, and the most incapable of being selfish.”

Marianne, who is unaware of Lucy and Edward's engagement, navigates this social situation entirely wrong, hinting at Edward's relationship with Elinor and complimenting his character in front of the person he has recently hurt.



Edward left, and Lucy shortly after him. Marianne said to Elinor that it was odd Lucy stayed when it was clear she wasn't wanted around. But Elinor said that it made sense for Lucy to stay, since she and Edward were friends. Elinor was distressed by having to keep Edward and Lucy's engagement a secret from Marianne.

Elinor is troubled by having to keep a secret from her sister, with whom she is so close, and behave in other people's company as if Edward is not already engaged to Lucy.



CHAPTER 36

A few days later, Mrs. Palmer gave birth to a son. Because of this, Mrs. Jennings spent much time with the Palmers, and Elinor and Marianne often accompanied her, which meant they often had to spend much time with the Middletons and Steeles, as well, who did not particularly want to see the Dashwood sisters. Lady Middleton disliked them because they didn't flatter her or her children.

Lady Middleton dislikes the Dashwood sisters because they do not participate in the sort of fawning, subservient behavior that she would expect from those she considers to be her social inferiors.



Anne Steele was also not fond of Elinor and Marianne, but Mrs. Jennings was oblivious to all this and thought it was a good thing for the girls to socialize together. Around this time, a friend of Fanny sent her, John, Elinor, and Marianne an invitation to a party, thinking that Elinor and Marianne were staying with their brother. Fanny was annoyed to have to take her sisters-in-law out and pay them any attention.

Elinor and Marianne don't particularly like all the London society events that Mrs. Jennings encourages them to go to, but they keep on being included in various parties. Fanny does not want to have to spend time with her sisters-in-law, because they cannot help her advance socially.



Marianne at this point had become indifferent to her dress and appearance, in contrast to Anne Steele, who questioned “every part of Marianne’s dress.” After once again being critiqued by Anne, Marianne went with her sister to go to the party with Fanny. The party was unremarkable, but Elinor saw there the gentleman she had seen ordering the toothpick case at the jeweler. John introduced him to her as Robert Ferrars, Edward’s brother.

Anne is more concerned with making a good impression in aristocratic company than Marianne is. Elinor now identifies the irritating gentleman from before as Edward’s brother Robert. Thus, even before she meets him she essentially knows what she thinks of him.



Robert was very different from Edward, and appeared to dislike Elinor, much like his mother. He said that Edward lacked social skills, because he had been privately educated instead of sent to a school. Robert asked about the Dashwoods’ cottage at Barton, and talked at length about cottages. Elinor agreed with everything he said, “for she did not think he deserved the compliment of rational opposition.”

Robert’s character is more like that of his mother than Edward’s. He is more interested in advancing in high society than Edward is.



When John and Fanny returned home after the party, John suggested that they invite Marianne and Elinor to stay with them. Fanny objected because she had just decided to invite the Steeles to stay with them. She said that they could invite his sisters another time, and John was persuaded.

Fanny would rather advance her relationship with the Steele sisters than extend kindness to her own sisters-in-law. She easily persuades her husband to do what she wishes.



Fanny was pleased of being able to persuade her husband so easily, and wrote immediately to the Steeles. Lucy showed the invitation to Elinor excitedly, seeing it as further proof of how Edward’s family was fond of her. The Steele sisters went to stay with Fanny and John, and by all accounts Fanny “had never been so much pleased with any young women in her life.”

Fanny exercises a considerable amount of power in her marriage. Lucy sees living with Fanny as an opportunity to further ingratiate herself with Edward’s family.



CHAPTER 37

About two weeks later, Mrs. Jennings told Elinor she had some news. She had been with Mrs. Palmer, whose baby was ill. They called a doctor, who had just been at John and Fanny’s home. As he was leaving Mrs. Jennings asked him if he had any news. He said that he hoped Fanny Dashwood would be all right.

Mrs. Jennings is always eager to learn the latest information or gossip, and always ready to share it.



Mrs. Jennings asked what he meant, and he explained that Edward’s engagement to Lucy had been found out. Upon hearing of the engagement, Fanny “fell into violent hysterics.” She scolded Lucy harshly and told her to leave their home immediately. Mrs. Jennings pitied Lucy and thought that it would be good for her to marry Edward, even though she wasn’t rich.

Secrets can’t be kept for long in this society. Fanny doesn’t care whether Edward and Lucy love each other. She only cares that Lucy lacks a substantial fortune. Mrs. Jennings, on the other hand, supports their union even in spite of Lucy’s financial status.



Elinor was anxious to hear what Mrs. Ferrars would do when she found out about Edward's engagement. She told the news to Marianne and took care not to "represent herself as suffering much." Marianne was shocked. To her, "Edward seemed a second Willoughby." She apologized for talking of Elinor and Edward and thinking that they were happily together, and was upset that Elinor had kept a secret from her.

Marianne felt sorry for Elinor, but Elinor assured her that she was no longer sad over Edward and had come to peace with his marrying Lucy. Marianne was amazed at the ease with which Elinor seemed to have gotten over Edward, but Elinor told her sister that she had indeed suffered much pain over the whole issue.

Elinor made Marianne promise to be discreet and not give "the least appearance of bitterness" to Lucy or anyone else over the situation. The next morning, John came to visit, and described how Mrs. Ferrars suffered and was "in agony" when she heard of Edward's engagement. She disinherited Edward and said she would never see him again. Edward, however, would not give up his engagement to Lucy.

Mrs. Jennings was glad of this, as Lucy was her cousin, and said that she would make a good wife. John told her that he did not dislike Lucy, but that "the connection must be impossible." John told everyone that Edward had left and no one knew where he was now. He pitied Edward for his lost fortune and "wretched condition."

John said that all of Edward's inheritance had now gone to his younger brother Robert. He again said that he pitied Edward's situation, and then left. Marianne, Elinor, and Mrs. Jennings all disapproved of how Mrs. Ferrars had handled the situation.

CHAPTER 38

Mrs. Jennings, Elinor, and Marianne all felt compassion for Edward. For the next few days, they heard no more news about the matter. One day, Elinor and Mrs. Jennings went to Kensington Gardens. Mrs. Jennings ran into an old friend, and Elinor encountered Anne Steele. Mrs. Jennings encouraged Elinor to "get it all out of her," and learn more of the situation with Edward from Anne.

Marianne must now revise her idea of Edward, as she had with Willoughby. She is sorry that she talked to Elinor about Edward when he was already engaged, and is upset that her close sister had kept a secret from her.



Marianne cannot believe that Elinor has not shown more emotion or sadness, but Elinor assures her that she has felt pain. She is simply more able to control her emotions.



Elinor strategically asks Marianne to be smart among their acquaintances and not betray their true feelings on the matter. Mrs. Ferrars values wealth so much that she kicks Edward out of her household for wanting to marry someone who would not improve the family fortune.



John pities Edward, but still sees his engagement to Lucy as impossible because of Lucy's small fortune. He prioritizes financial matters over love in questions of marriage.



Marianne, Elinor, and Mrs. Jennings all think that Mrs. Ferrars has wronged her son and put too much stock in wealth, failing to consider the feelings or wishes of Edward.



Mrs. Jennings, Elinor, and Marianne care less about money than Fanny or Mrs. Ferrars, and sympathize with Edward. Mrs. Jennings once again wants to get all the gossip she can about her circle of acquaintances.



Anne asked if Mrs. Jennings was angry with Lucy, and Elinor told her she wasn't. Anne said that false rumors were spreading that Edward was going to leave Lucy, as "nobody in their senses could expect Mr. Ferrars to give up a woman like Miss Morton, with thirty thousand pounds to her fortune."

Anne is worried about rumors circulating around their small aristocratic society. Most people would think it highly unlikely for Edward to decline a marriage to a woman as wealthy as Miss Morton.



Edward had come to Lucy, and Anne overheard him telling Lucy that they should abandon the engagement for her sake, since he now had no fortune to offer her. But Lucy would not do this, and the two happily decided to maintain their engagement. Edward planned to become a priest and they were going to wait until they had a living to marry.

Gentlemanly, Edward gives Lucy the option of leaving him now that he has no real fortune. Lucy, however, at least appears to want to marry Edward for him, rather than his money.



Anne spoke of how rudely Mrs. Ferrars, John, and Fanny behaved with the matter of Edward's engagement, before having to leave. When Mrs. Jennings and Elinor were in their carriage on the way back home, Mrs. Jennings "was eager for information," and Elinor told her that Edward planned to become a priest and was keeping his engagement with Lucy.

Anne rebukes John and Fanny, but not too harshly, as she knows Elinor is related to them. Mrs. Jennings doesn't want to miss out on any news of the situation that Elinor may have gleaned from Anne.



The next morning, Elinor received a letter from Lucy, saying that she and Edward were happy together even after the troubles they had gone through. She said that she urged Edward to break off their engagement "for prudence sake," but he would not agree. She explained Edward's plans to become a priest and asked if Elinor could recommend him "to any body that has a living to bestow." Elinor showed the letter to Mrs. Jennings, who was delighted to read that Lucy was happy.

Lucy also seems to recognize the imprudence of marrying Edward without a sizable fortune, but Edward is firm in his commitment to her. Lucy's letter is a delicate attempt to get Elinor to plead on her and Edward's behalf to someone who might be able to give Edward a living.



CHAPTER 39

Elinor and Marianne had now been in London for over two months, and Marianne was impatient to get back home. At the end of March, the Palmers were returning to their home at Cleveland, and they invited the Dashwood sisters. Marianne didn't want to go, because Cleveland was near Willoughby's home, but Elinor persuaded her to, by telling her that this would fix an end-date to their stay in London, and they could return home after the visit to Cleveland.

Elinor and Marianne miss their mother. Their close-knit family unit provides a loving support system that the sisters can rely on even when their prospective husbands disappoint them.



After Elinor and Marianne made their plans, Colonel Brandon visited, and Mrs. Jennings told him about their imminent departure, hoping to spur him to propose to Elinor. She thought she had been successful, because Elinor and Brandon then conversed privately by a window.

Mrs. Jennings tries to scheme to get Brandon to propose to Elinor. Little does she know, though, that he is interested in Marianne.



Mrs. Jennings overheard parts of their conversation, with Brandon apologizing “for the badness of his house,” and she heard him say, “I am afraid it cannot take place very soon.” She assumed that Brandon was talking about their engagement and marriage.

However, what Elinor and Brandon were actually talking about was Edward. Having learned that Edward had been disinherited by his mother, Brandon decided to give him a living on his estate in Delaford. Elinor was astonished, as this meant that Edward and Lucy would finally be able to marry.

Brandon did not think that the living at Delaford would be sufficient for both Edward and a wife, though, and said that it could only “make Mr. Ferrars comfortable as a bachelor.” So, he said that he was afraid the marriage could not take place very soon, and this was the sentence that Mrs. Jennings heard and misunderstood.

CHAPTER 40

As soon as Colonel Brandon left, Mrs. Jennings (thinking that Brandon had proposed to Elinor) told Elinor that she had overheard a bit of their conversation and she was overjoyed at the news. Elinor thanked her and said that Brandon was very compassionate and kind. Mrs. Jennings was surprised and said Elinor was too modest.

Mrs. Jennings started to leave and Elinor asked her not to spread the news, until she had a chance to write to Edward. Mrs. Jennings was puzzled as to why Elinor would write to Edward, but then thought that Edward was going to be the priest officiating Elinor’s wedding.

After Mrs. Jennings left, Elinor tried to start writing to Edward, but was interrupted when Edward himself arrived at the door. Both of them were embarrassed and felt awkward. Edward had seen Mrs. Jennings on the way out and she had told him that Elinor had news for him. Elinor told him about Colonel Brandon’s offer.

Edward was surprised and overwhelmed with gratitude. He called Brandon “a man of great worth and respectability. . . undoubtedly a sensible man, and in his manners perfectly the gentleman.” Edward left to go see Brandon and thank him in person. As he left, Elinor thought that the next time she saw him he would probably be Lucy’s husband.

In her attempt to be up to date with marriage gossip, Mrs. Jennings misinterprets Brandon’s intentions.



Brandon puts aside his own interests and extends a generous gift to Edward. Unfortunately for Elinor, this will have the consequence of allowing Edward and Lucy to marry. Brandon, of course, does not know of Elinor’s feelings for Edward.



Brandon does not think that the living he is offering is up to the standards of a wealthy married couple. Mrs. Jennings tries to figure out what is going on, but misinterprets Brandon and Elinor’s conversation.



Mrs. Jennings continues with her comic misunderstanding and thinks that Elinor is surprisingly modest about her own attractiveness as a wife.



Elinor doesn’t want Mrs. Jennings spreading her news throughout society (even though the news is different from what Mrs. Jennings thinks it is).



Elinor must do her best to maintain her composure in this awkward social situation, having to tell the man she loves that he will now be able to marry another woman.



Brandon’s generosity underlines to Edward his respectable, gentlemanly character. Elinor now must resign herself to the loss of Edward as a potential husband.



Mrs. Jennings returned home and talked to Elinor more about what she thought was her engagement to Brandon. At last, she talked plainly about the Colonel marrying Elinor, and the misunderstanding was cleared up. Mrs. Jennings said that the living at Delaford would be more than enough for Edward and Lucy to live comfortably. She was confident they would be married soon.

Mrs. Jennings finally realizes what is actually going on with Colonel Brandon. She thinks that Brandon's standard of living is too high and that Lucy and Edward will easily be able to live comfortably on his estate.



CHAPTER 41

Lucy and Edward were both equally happy and grateful to Elinor and Colonel Brandon. After this development, Elinor felt that she should pay a visit to Fanny, even though she did not particularly want to see her. She went alone and John invited her in to see Fanny.

Elinor feels a social obligation to visit her sister-in-law Fanny, even though she dislikes her.



John was astonished about the news of Colonel Brandon's gift and wondered what Brandon's motive was. Elinor said Brandon simply wanted "to be of use to Mr. Ferrars." John cautioned Elinor not to speak of Edward with Fanny, as it would upset her.

John cannot conceive of generosity without some kind of motive. The idea of Brandon simply giving away wealth is unfathomable to him.



John said that Mrs. Ferrars was unaware of the recent news and said that he thought she and Edward would reconcile when he married Lucy. He said that Mrs. Ferrars was "one of the most affectionate mothers in the world," and told Elinor that now Robert was planning to marry Miss Morton.

John has a very different idea of Fanny's character than Elinor (and, likely, the reader). Mrs. Ferrars is determined to have one of her sons marry wealthy, and so now plans for Robert to marry Miss Morton.



Elinor asked if Miss Morton had any choice in the matter, but John said that there was no difference between Robert and Edward from her point of view, as he had received Edward's former fortune. John then told her that, although Mrs. Ferrars would have opposed a union between Edward and Elinor, it would have been preferable to her to the engagement with Lucy.

Elinor is upset by the notion that Miss Morton, as a woman, seems to have no say in her marriage. John, though, can't see why she should care, because the main thing that matters to him in marriage is money, and Robert now has Edward's former fortune.



At this point, Robert Ferrars entered. John went to go get Fanny, and Robert began talking of Edward. He laughed at the idea of Edward becoming a priest. Elinor couldn't help but show her contempt for Robert in her expression. Robert said that he pitied Edward, and called Lucy "the merest awkward country girl, without style, or elegance, and almost without beauty." Robert and Elinor were interrupted by the entrance of Fanny.

Elinor dislikes Robert's arrogant character, and even she is unable to restrain herself from displaying her distaste for him. Robert has his own, prejudiced idea of Lucy's character. Elinor is not particularly fond of Lucy, but does not have this low of an opinion of her.



CHAPTER 42

Before leaving London, Elinor saw John one more time, and he congratulated her on “travelling so far towards Barton without any expense, and on Colonel Brandon’s being to follow them to Cleveland in a day or two.” Marianne and Elinor finally left London at the beginning of April. For all her earlier eagerness to leave, Marianne now found it hard to part with Mrs. Jennings’ home.

When the sisters arrived at Cleveland, Marianne had “a heart swelling with emotion” from being so close to Barton and to Willoughby’s home. She planned to spend most of her time there on solitary walks outside. Mrs. Palmer was a kind hostess, and the sisters had a comfortable stay.

Elinor was surprised to find Mr. Palmer behaving gentlemanly and “found him very capable of being a pleasant companion.” Colonel Brandon arrived and spent much time talking to Elinor. Mrs. Jennings continued to think that Colonel Brandon loved Elinor, though Elinor knew he had his eyes on Marianne.

Marianne went on “delightful twilight walks” two nights in a row and walked through the areas where “the grass was the longest and wettest.” She sat in her wet shoes and stockings, and came down with a terrible cold. She refused everyone’s advice for remedies, but Elinor finally persuaded her to try “one or two of the simplest of the remedies” before going to bed.

CHAPTER 43

The next day, Marianne seemed better, but that night she was feverish. As Mrs. Jennings had suggested, Elinor called for the Palmers’ apothecary. He came and said that Marianne would likely recover in a few days, but Mrs. Palmer became worried her baby might catch what Marianne had, and so went to go stay with a friend nearby.

Marianne was upset that her illness was delaying her journey back home, but Elinor tried to cheer her up. The next day, Marianne was neither better nor worse. Mr. Palmer left to go stay with his wife, and Colonel Brandon was also preparing to leave, but Mrs. Jennings persuaded him to stay.

Marianne’s illness continued for two days and though the apothecary still said she would recover, Mrs. Jennings thought Marianne was dying, and told Brandon this. The next day, though, Marianne seemed much better, and it appeared she would soon be able to travel to Barton. However, that evening, her illness got worse.

John congratulates Elinor on what he thinks is a deliberate scheme to travel without spending money and to spend time with Colonel Brandon. In typical, romantic fashion, Marianne has formed a deep sentimental attachment to Mrs. Jennings’ London home.



Marianne once again lets her emotions get the best of her, as she is consumed by thoughts of Willoughby and the desire to see her mother.



Elinor is surprised by Mr. Palmer’s behavior because she previously thought him to be a rather disagreeable character. Mrs. Jennings is still misinformed when it comes to her society gossip.



Marianne goes on stereotypically romantic walks outside. Lacking the prudence and good sense of Elinor, she gets herself sick by staying in her wet clothes.



Marianne’s foolish decision to walk outside through the wet grass has now made her seriously ill and inconvenienced Mrs. Palmer, who was kind enough to invite Marianne in the first to her home in the first place.



Mrs. Jennings persuades Colonel Brandon to stay, hoping that he might propose to Elinor.



Mrs. Jennings sensationalizes Marianne’s illness and spreads the rumor of her imminent death.



Elinor stayed up all night by Marianne's side, as she slept "more and more disturbed." She woke up suddenly and asked about their mother, clearly delirious. Marianne seemed sicker than ever before, and Elinor was scared for her sister. She sent for the apothecary and decided to send a messenger to bring her mother.

Colonel Brandon volunteered to go to Barton and get Mrs. Dashwood. Elinor was very grateful for his friendship and generosity. Elinor went back to Marianne's side for the rest of the night, and Colonel Brandon left immediately for Barton. Marianne was delirious most of the night, and talked of her mother.

Finally, at five o'clock in the morning, the apothecary arrived, and said that Marianne was all right, and would recover. In the morning, Mrs. Jennings was upset that Elinor had not woken her up to tell her of Marianne's worsening condition. She was genuinely concerned for Marianne.

By noon, Marianne seemed to be improving, and gradually got better over the course of the day. Elinor "could not be more cheerful" at her sister's recovery. Marianne went to sleep early that evening, and Elinor thought her mother would be arriving soon. At around eight o'clock, she heard a carriage arrive, and was sure it was her mother. However, when she went to the door, she found it was Willoughby.

CHAPTER 44

Elinor was shocked and tried to walk away, but Willoughby asked her to listen to him for just ten minutes. He told her he had business with her, and she told him to be quick. Willoughby asked if Marianne had recovered and was relieved to learn she had. He told Elinor that he hoped to make her hate him less and get some forgiveness from Marianne.

Willoughby explained that when he first met the Dashwoods he had no intentions of finding a wife, but greatly enjoyed spending time with Marianne. "Careless of her happiness," he thought only of his "amusement," though he had no "design of returning her affection."

Elinor asked Willoughby to stop, but he continued explaining his behavior. He said that his fortune was "never large," so it would have been impossible for him to marry Marianne. He said that he behaved selfishly in leading Marianne on, but didn't realize "the extent of the injury" because he did not "know what it was to love."

Elinor stays up all night by her dear sister's side. In her delirium, Marianne expresses how much she misses her mother. Finally, Elinor decides that the illness is serious enough that Mrs. Dashwood should be sent for.



Colonel Brandon once again displays his gallant, generous character. Marianne continues to talk of her mother, and Elinor stays with her caringly.



Although Mrs. Jennings can have an excessive penchant for gossip and rumors, she is earnestly concerned for Marianne, of whom she has grown fond. She is, at heart, a kind person.



Elinor is very close to her sister, and is greatly relieved at Marianne's recovery. The startling arrival of Willoughby threatens to throw a wrench in Marianne's plans to get over Willoughby and return home for some rest.



Elinor has solidified her understanding of Willoughby's wicked character and does not wish to hear whatever he has to say. Willoughby, however, promises to alter at least slightly her idea of him.



Willoughby had no plans of finding a wife, but couldn't help his growing love for Marianne.



Willoughby didn't realize how much he was hurting Marianne, because he didn't realize until later the power of love. Wealth in a marriage is so important to him that he thought of marrying Marianne as absolutely impossible.



Willoughby said that he became “sincerely fond” of Marianne. But then his aunt Mrs. Smith, from whom he had been expecting to inherit a fortune, was informed of his affair with Eliza (younger). Elinor said she knew about Eliza, but Willoughby said that she had heard a partial version of the story, and that he was not entirely to be blamed for what had happened. He said it wasn’t his intention to abandon Eliza, but he had forgotten to give her information to contact him.

Mrs. Smith disinherited Willoughby, and now his “affection for Marianne” was outweighed by his “dread of poverty.” He felt that he needed to find some way to become wealthy, and he knew that he had to leave Marianne. He said that he deeply regretted “the stupid, rascally folly of my own heart.”

In London, Willoughby was pained to receive Marianne’s letters. He watched Mrs. Jennings’ house and waited until Marianne was out of the house before visiting and leaving his card. He said that he often watched Elinor and Marianne and just barely avoided running into them around town. He said that he “was forced to play the happy lover to another woman,” even though he loved Marianne.

Willoughby enquired again about Marianne’s health, and then continued his story. Miss Grey had become suspicious of Willoughby’s affection for Marianne, and when he received Marianne’s letter after seeing her at the party, Miss Grey read it. Then, she dictated Willoughby’s reply to him and forced him to send it to Marianne. Willoughby called himself a fool and a scoundrel, but said that Miss Grey’s money “was necessary” to him.

Willoughby said that he and Miss Grey did not love each other. Elinor admitted that she regarded him as slightly less guilty now. He asked her to tell all this to Marianne, and Elinor agreed that she would. Elinor asked how Willoughby had heard of Marianne’s illness and he said that Sir John Middleton had told him, in London, that Marianne was dying.

Willoughby now prepared to leave, and Elinor “forgave, pitied, wished him well.” He said that for him “domestic happiness” was “out of the question,” and he was sad that Marianne was lost to him. He said that he dreaded the day that she would marry someone else, and then left.

Willoughby claims that Brandon’s story about his affair with Eliza has given an incomplete picture of his character. He attempts to rehabilitate to some degree his former good name with Elinor.



Once Mrs. Smith got a better idea of Willoughby’s deceitful character, she exercised her power in disinheriting Willoughby. Willoughby was now desperate to marry someone wealthy, even though he loved of Marianne.



Willoughby schemed and strategized not to run into Marianne in London. He tries to persuade Elinor that he is a good person and did not intentionally hurt Marianne, whom he really did love. In some ways, he describes himself as the victim, forced to marry for money rather than love.



The revelation that the cold, cruel letter Marianne received was not actually composed by Willoughby alters Elinor’s opinion of his character, since its unemotional language was not actually his. He was too attached to the idea of wealth not to marry Miss Grey.



Willoughby married Miss Grey only for her money, and they do not love each other. He begs Elinor to tell Marianne, so that she might think better of his character. Elinor learns that news of Marianne’s illness has apparently spread through their society in London.



Elinor has now largely altered her judgment of Willoughby and forgives him. Having not married the woman he loved, Willoughby now has to endure the knowledge that she will marry someone else.



CHAPTER 45

Elinor was greatly distressed to find herself pitying the man whom she had, until just recently, “abhorred as the most worthless of men.” She went to Marianne, who was now refreshed by a long sleep. At last, Mrs. Dashwood arrived with Colonel Brandon.

Mrs. Dashwood was overcome by happiness upon seeing her daughters again and couldn’t help shedding tears of joy. Elinor was also delighted at the reunion. Elinor tried to sleep that night, but kept thinking of Willoughby, whom she now called “poor Willoughby” in her mind.

Marianne continued to recover, and Mrs. Dashwood was “one of the happiest women in the world.” When she got the chance to speak alone with Elinor, she said that she was overjoyed because Colonel Brandon told her that he loved Marianne. Elinor was not very surprised, and Mrs. Dashwood was amazed at her composure upon hearing this news.

On the journey back from Barton, Colonel Brandon had told Mrs. Dashwood that he had loved Marianne from the moment they met. Mrs. Dashwood said that his love was “more sincere or constant” than that of Willoughby. Elinor agreed that Colonel Brandon was “an excellent man.”

Mrs. Dashwood said that she had told Brandon that she would gladly encourage his union with Marianne, but he worried that Marianne still had affections for Willoughby and would not love him. Mrs. Dashwood, though, was convinced that Marianne would be happier with Colonel Brandon than she ever could have been with Willoughby. She said that she did not know what Brandon’s fortune was like, but was sure it would be enough.

CHAPTER 46

Within four days of Mrs. Dashwood’s arrival, Marianne was well enough to leave her room. Colonel Brandon visited her in her room, and Elinor imagined that the scene reminded Brandon “of many past scenes of misery.” Mrs. Dashwood saw his gentle behavior toward Marianne as more evidence of his love for her.

Elinor is surprised that Willoughby has been able to alter her understanding of his character so much.



Elinor now thinks of Willoughby with pity, no longer as a cruel person. Mrs. Dashwood is overjoyed for most of her loving family to be reunited under one roof.



Colonel Brandon finally confesses his love for Marianne explicitly. Mrs. Dashwood is excited at the chance of having one of her daughters settled into a marriage.



Mrs. Dashwood is more concerned with his sincere love for Marianne than whatever his fortune might be. Elinor agrees with her mother’s assessment of Brandon’s honest character.



Mrs. Dashwood is a great proponent of the match between Marianne and Brandon, but Brandon worries that he does not live up to Marianne’s idealistic ideas of a husband. Mrs. Dashwood would be happy to have Colonel Brandon as a son-in-law, regardless of his wealth.



With her knowledge of Brandon’s past, Elinor knows that the sight of the sick Marianne must remind him of Eliza. Mrs. Dashwood sees in his gentle behavior more proof of his love for Marianne.



A couple of days later, Marianne was ready to travel back to Barton. Colonel Brandon offered to let the Dashwoods use his carriage, and promised to visit the cottage within the next few weeks. Marianne was cheerful on the trip back to Barton, and Elinor and Mrs. Dashwood did everything they could to “render her comfortable.”

As they approached Barton, where “every field and every tree brought some peculiar, some painful recollection,” Marianne grew quiet and began to cry. Nonetheless, when they got home, she did her best to smile and be cheerful. She eagerly awaited Margaret’s return home, so that their family would be reunited. She planned to spend her time reading and going on long walks.

Elinor was glad to see this positive change in Marianne’s behavior, but was worried about having to share Willoughby’s revelation with her. One morning, Marianne and Elinor went for a walk together. They walked by where Marianne had first met Willoughby when she fell and he picked her up. Marianne said that she was no longer sad to think of him, but only wished she could know that he had not always been deceiving her.

Marianne said that her recent illness made her think about her past and her life. She realized that she had behaved imprudently with Willoughby, and that she had brought on her own illness by her “negligence of [her] own health.” Looking back on her life, she felt bad for the contempt with which she treated the kindness of Mrs. Jennings and even Fanny, John, the Steeles, and the Middletons.

Marianne said that her plan now was to live for her family. She told Elinor, “You, my mother, and Margaret, must henceforth be all the world to me.” She promised to restrain her emotions with reason. Elinor took this opportunity to relate Willoughby’s recent explanation for his behavior. Marianne listened to the whole story as they walked back home and when they went inside she simply kissed Elinor graciously and told her to tell their mother, as well.

Colonel Brandon once again demonstrates his generosity. Now that the loving Dashwood family (except for Margaret) is reunited, Elinor and Mrs. Dashwood do all they can to help Marianne recover and feel better.



Marianne’s sentimental nature means that she is particularly affected by painful memories of Willoughby. However, she is now making an effort to moderate her emotions, as Elinor has often encouraged her to do. She is excited for all of her sisters and her mother to be together again.



Marianne is reminded of her past with Willoughby, but seems now to have matured and is able to restrain her sadness.



Now that Marianne has had time to reflect on her behavior, she vows to improve her impulsive, often socially inappropriate character.



Marianne plans now to devote her love to her family, which has always supported her. She will now try to reign in her sensibility with some of Elinor’s sense. She appears to receive the news about Willoughby remarkably calmly.



CHAPTER 47

Mrs. Dashwood was happy to hear about Willoughby and “rejoiced in his being cleared from some part of his imputed guilt,” though she didn’t entirely forgive him. That evening, Marianne told Elinor and Mrs. Dashwood that the news about Willoughby was a relief and she was now “perfectly satisfied” with the situation. She said she never could have been happy with Willoughby. Elinor complimented her on seeing the situation “exactly as a good mind and a sound understanding must consider it.”

Elinor agreed that Willoughby would have made a bad husband for her, and called him selfish. She said that “all Willoughby’s difficulties have arisen from the first offence against virtue, in his behavior to Eliza Williams.” Marianne agreed, and Mrs. Dashwood began talking about the merits of Colonel Brandon.

Margaret returned soon after this, and the Dashwood family was happily reunited. Meanwhile, Elinor “grew impatient for some tidings of Edward.” One day, she spoke with a servant, who told her that “Mr. Ferrars” was married. Elinor and Marianne were both upset by this news, and the servant had to call a maid to help Marianne, who appeared to suddenly fall ill.

The servant explained that he had seen “Mr. Ferrars” with Lucy, newly married. He had spoken with Lucy, who confirmed the union. He said Lucy seemed well and very content. The servant departed, leaving Marianne, Elinor, and Mrs. Dashwood all feeling troubled.

After dinner, Mrs. Dashwood realized that Elinor was greatly hurt, even though she tried to project a calm, collected demeanor. She worried that she had been more attentive to Marianne’s sadness, because it was more obviously apparent, and had neglected Elinor’s troubles.

CHAPTER 48

Elinor now realized, by how much Edward’s wedding upset her, that she had always held an unlikely hope that Edward and Lucy’s marriage would be prevented and he would still marry Elinor. Now, she imagined Lucy had prudently sought to marry Edward quickly, before anything came between them. She waited for some letter or announcement of the marriage, but none came.

Mrs. Dashwood is surprised but happy to be able to return to some of her former positive judgment of Willoughby’s character. Marianne seems to have genuinely transformed her character and appears rational and sensible, to the delight of Elinor.



Elinor may have forgiven Willoughby somewhat, but she still sees him as a selfish non-virtuous person. Mrs. Dashwood is eager to promote a possible union between Marianne and Brandon.



With Margaret’s return, the loving Dashwood family is finally reunited after so long. Despite Marianne’s apparent change, she is still overcome with emotion at the news of Edward’s apparent marriage.



By speaking to the servant, Lucy deliberately tried to spread the news of her marriage to Elinor.



Mrs. Dashwood now realizes that Elinor feels pain just as much as Marianne. Elinor is simply less demonstrative in her feelings, as she characteristically moderates her emotions.



Despite her good sense, Elinor always held onto a sentimental hope that she would be able to marry Edward. She imagines that Lucy schemed to marry Edward as quickly as possible.



Colonel Brandon was due to visit soon, and Elinor looked forward to his arrival, as he might have news of Edward. Just when Elinor was expecting Brandon, a gentleman came to the cottage. But it was not Colonel Brandon; Elinor looked and saw that it was Edward. She was greatly distressed, but told herself to remain calm.

Elinor looks forward to any news or even rumors she might be able to learn of about Edward. She struggles to maintain her outward calm when Edward shockingly shows up.



Edward entered the cottage, “white with agitation,” as the Dashwoods nervously waited for him to say something. After an awkward silence, Mrs. Dashwood inquired after “Mrs. Ferrars,” and Edward said his mother was doing well. Elinor said that she had meant his wife, but Edward was confused, and asked if she meant his brother’s wife.

The Dashwoods attempt to be polite and make conversation, despite the tenseness of the situation. As Edward’s confusion shows, Elinor appears to have been misinformed by popular rumor.



Edward explained that Lucy had married his brother Robert. On hearing this news, Elinor had to leave the room and “burst into tears of joy.” Edward “fell into a reverie” when he saw Elinor’s reaction and he left the cottage to go into the village.

At this moment, even Elinor is unable to restrain her emotions, and bursts out into tears of joy. Just as Marianne has tempered her sensibility with sense, Elinor now shows that beneath her sense she has a deep well of sensibility.



CHAPTER 49

Edward’s purpose in coming to Barton Cottage was to propose to Elinor. About three hours after his arrival, the engagement was already arranged. He had long been miserable with Lucy, and now was happy to be with Elinor.

After all their difficulties, Edward and Elinor have finally entered into a loving engagement. It is noteworthy that Elinor wants to marry Edward despite his having been disinherited. This is a marriage for love.



Edward explained to Elinor that he had foolishly fallen in love with Lucy when he was very young, and that the attachment was the result of his idleness and boredom. He said that their engagement was foolish. The Dashwoods were overjoyed at this change of their fortunes, and Marianne “could speak her happiness only by tears.”

Edward’s marriage with Lucy was the result of idleness and ignorance, not love. Marianne is overcome by her happiness at this fortuitous turn of events.



Elinor, meanwhile, “was every thing by turns but tranquil.” Edward stayed at the cottage for a week, enjoying spending time with Elinor. Elinor was puzzled by the marriage between Lucy and Robert, and Edward guessed that they had been drawn together by their vanity and mutual flattery.

Usually reserved, Elinor finally allows herself to express her emotion and indulge in some of her sister’s sensibility.



Edward showed Elinor a letter he had received from Lucy while he was in Oxford. In the letter, Lucy said she was sure she had “long lost” Edward’s love, and that she had fallen in love with Robert. Elinor wondered how Mrs. Ferrars would take this news, but Edward said that Robert was her favorite, so he would probably not suffer.

It is unclear to what degree Lucy truly loved Edward or to what degree she was self-interestedly seeking a wealthy husband, which she finds in Robert.



Elinor now realized that Lucy had meant to deceive her when she spoke to the servant who gave her the impression that Edward and Lucy had married. Edward said that he had given Lucy the option of breaking off their engagement after he had been disinherited, and didn't know why she had stayed with him when she didn't love him and he didn't have any wealth.

Elinor now realizes Lucy's strategic communication of information to the servant, who had given Elinor the impression that Lucy and Edward had married. Edward was surprised when Lucy stayed with him even after he lost his inheritance.



Elinor scolded Edward a bit for leading her on at Norland, when he was engaged to another, and Edward apologized, pleading "an ignorance of his own heart." Edward was glad to hear that Colonel Brandon was coming to the cottage soon, and looked forward to the opportunity to thank him again for giving him the living at Delaford.

Edward apologizes for having hurt Elinor, and Elinor does not see Edward's mistakes as signifying any significant faults in his gentlemanly character.



Now that Edward and Elinor were "brought together by mutual affection," the only remaining question for them was one of finances, as neither had a great fortune. Edward hoped that his mother would perhaps forgive him, though Elinor worried that she wouldn't, as Edward still hadn't married a wealthy woman like Miss Morton.

Edward and Elinor are happily engaged, but they still need to figure out their financial future. They prioritize love over wealth in marriage, but money is still a concern for them.



Four days after Edward's arrival, Colonel Brandon came to Barton Cottage. He enjoyed the company of the Dashwoods, and especially Marianne. He heard and wondered at the news of Lucy and Robert, and Edward and Elinor. Edward and Brandon "advanced in the good opinion of each other," as they both stayed with the Dashwoods.

As Edward and Brandon get to know each other's particular character better, they grow fond of each other and become friends.



Elinor received a letter from Mrs. Jennings about Lucy, which communicated "her honest indignation against the jilting girl," and her pity for Edward. John also wrote Elinor a letter, saying how unfortunate Mrs. Ferrars was, as neither of her children married wealthy women. John hinted to Elinor that he thought Mrs. Ferrars might be receptive to an apology from Edward, after these new developments.

Lucy's recent behavior changes even Mrs. Jennings' opinion of her character. John pities Mrs. Ferrars because both her sons have failed to marry wealthy women. He hints that Edward might be able to regain his mother's favor, along with some of his former wealth.



Seeing John's letter, Edward now determined to "attempt a reconciliation" with his mother, though he did not want to write "a letter of proper submission," as John had urged. Brandon and Edward finally left Barton Cottage together, to examine the property at Delaford and then go to London.

Proud and stubborn, Edward does not want to submit to his mother's authority, but needs to attempt some kind of reconciliation so that he and Elinor have a fortune to live off of comfortably.



CHAPTER 50

Mrs. Ferrars eventually did forgive Edward, and called him her son again. He told her of his engagement to Elinor and, although Mrs. Ferrars tried to persuade him to marry Miss Morton, she eventually consented to the marriage. Finally, she again promised Edward some inheritance, enough for Edward and Elinor to live comfortably at Delaford.

Mrs. Ferrars would prefer for her son to marry a wealthy bride, but relents and allows him to marry the woman she loves, even returning some of Edward's inheritance to him.



Edward and Elinor were married in the fall and happily settled into their life at Delaford. All they wanted now was for Colonel Brandon and Marianne to marry. John visited Elinor and was happy for her, but said that he was slightly disappointed as he would have liked to have Colonel Brandon as a brother-in-law.

Elinor and Edward's long, tumultuous relationship has finally reached the only conclusion that guarantees both their happiness and comfort: marriage.



Mrs. Ferrars visited Edward and Elinor and made a pretense of “decent affection,” though her “real favour and preference” were for Robert, whom she quickly forgave for marrying Lucy. The narrator says that Lucy’s behavior is “a most encouraging instance of what an earnest, an unceasing attention to self-interest, however its progress may be apparently obstructed, will do in securing every advantage of fortune.”

Mrs. Ferrars tries to act kindly and politely toward Edward and Elinor, even though she favors Robert and did not want Edward to marry Elinor. Lucy’s persistent, self-interested behavior is an example of how women in this sexist society can try to control their own destinies and move up through society.



Robert had visited Lucy only to persuade her to give up her engagement to Edward, but as he met with her more and more, they began to develop affections for each other. After they married, Robert easily found the pardon of his mother, and Lucy was gradually forgiven by her, as well. Before long, Lucy and Robert were closer to Mrs. Ferrars than Edward and Elinor were.

Lucy and Robert developed an unexpected romantic connection that served Lucy’s goals of finding a husband well. Even though Mrs. Ferrars disowned Edward for being engaged to Lucy, she hypocritically is quick to forgive Robert for marrying her.



Elinor’s mother and sisters visited her often, so that her “marriage divided her as little from her family as could well be contrived.” Mrs. Dashwood, Edward, and Elinor all hoped that Marianne and Colonel Brandon would marry. Gradually, Marianne came around to liking Brandon, and discovered “the falsehood of her own opinions” about love. Just two years before she thought Brandon was too old to be an eligible husband, though now she thought otherwise.

Elinor is fortunate not only to find love with Edward, but to retain her close, loving relationship with her family. Marianne finally relinquishes her overly romantic notion of love and is able to grow gradually fond of Colonel Brandon.



Instead of “falling a sacrifice to an irresistible passion,” which was how Marianne used to think of love, she gradually grew more and more attracted to Brandon. They married, and her fondness grew even more, as she “could never love by halves.” Willoughby heard of Marianne’s marriage with some pain, but eventually found “no inconsiderable degree of domestic felicity” with Miss Grey, though he still thought of Marianne as “his secret standard of perfection in woman.”

Marianne now has a slightly more rational understanding of love. Like Elinor, she has achieved some balance between sense and sensibility. She is still rather extreme in her emotions, though, and is unable to love Brandon moderately. Before long, she is fully in love with Colonel Brandon.



Mrs. Dashwood stayed at Barton Cottage with Margaret, as Marianne and Elinor were now living with their husbands. Margaret was now approaching the age where she was “not very ineligible for being supposed to have a lover.” The Dashwoods remained close, with “strong family affection.” In their new married lives, Elinor and Marianne retained a happy relationship between themselves and between their husbands.

Margaret is now approaching the time when she, as a young woman, will also have to enter society and attempt to find a husband. Elinor and Marianne are very fortunate for being able to find loving, happy marriages, while also retaining strong connections with each other based on familial love.





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