

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY: 1976

Based on the novel by Jane Austen
Adapted by Anjali Ramakrishnan

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY: 1976

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Sense and Sensibility: 1976 was originally produced at the Glicker-Milstein Theatre in New York, New York by The Columbia University Players on November 11-12th, 2022 with the following cast and production team:

Elinor Dashwood...Anja Vasa
Marianne Dashwood...Elsa Hana Chung
Margaret Dashwood/Miss Grey...Ana Lourdes Sánchez Medina
Mrs. Dashwood/Charlotte Palmer...Rutva Satish
Willoughby/John Dashwood...Jasmine Richards
Colonel Brandon/Thomas Palmer...José Tallaj
Edward Ferrars/Robert Ferrars...Frankie DeGiorgio
Mrs. Jennings...Anna Kasun
Fanny Dashwood...Lauren Unterberger
Lucy Steele...Ava Slocum

Director...Anjali Ramakrishnan
Production Stage Manager...Isabelle Bohn
Co-Producer...Maya Shore
Co-Producer...Olivia Doyle
Production Designer...Jules Gross
Dramaturg...Frankie DeGiorgio
Set Designer...Jackson Key
Lighting Designer...Olivia Kuan-Romano
Sound Designer...Taylor Bronson
Co-Costume Designer...Noelle Nafus
Co-Costume Designer...Eirene Tomlinson
Props Master...Yin Fei
Assistant Director...Linnea Hopkins-Ekdahl
Assistant Stage Manager...Grace Batesi
Run Crew...Vi Tran

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CAST: 7W 3M (with doubling); up to 9W 6M (without doubling)

ELINOR DASHWOOD	26, woman of color, former Ph.D candidate in physics at CUNY, stepping in as family leader, “sense”
MARIANNE DASHWOOD	24, woman of color, English teacher, sister of Elinor, hopeless yet sharp romantic, “sensitivity”
WILLOUGHBY	Mid 20’s, student at Columbia Med School, charming, goes by last name
COLONEL BRANDON	35, person of color, Vietnam veteran, friend of Mrs. Jennings, empathetic
EDWARD FERRARS	Mid 20’s, gentle and awkward, political operative from old money, brother of Fanny Dashwood
MRS. DASHWOOD	Middle aged, immigrant, mother to Dashwood sisters, widow to Henry Dashwood, somewhere between “sense” and “sensitivity” of her daughters

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MARGARET DASHWOOD	15, youngest Dashwood sister, woman of color, no filter
JOHN DASHWOOD	30's, eldest brother from another mother to Dashwood sisters, inheritor of Henry Dashwood's wealth, scared of his wife
MRS. FANNY DASHWOOD	30's, wife of John Dashwood and sister of Edward and Robert Ferrars, conniving and elitist
MRS. JENNINGS	widow, friend of Fanny and the Dashwoods who invites them to her home, obsessed with romance
LUCY STEELE	20's, female, slightly sneaky, friend of Mrs. Jennings
MRS. CHARLOTTE PALMER	daughter of Mrs. Jennings, an even more turned up version of her
THOMAS PALMER	son-in-law to Mrs. Jennings; grumpy, but he's got a heart
ROBERT FERRARS	20's, younger brother of Fanny and Edward, sleazy

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DOUBLING

The only two characters who strictly *cannot* be doubled are Elinor and Marianne.

The doubling scheme used in the original production was: Margaret Dashwood/Miss Grey, Mrs. Dashwood/Charlotte Palmer, Willoughby/John Dashwood, Colonel Brandon/Thomas Palmer, Edward Ferrars/Robert Ferrars.

FORMATTING

1. / indicates start of the next line of dialogue or action (whichever is first).
2. *Continuous* indicates a scene flows directly from the previous one in time (no blackout).

NOTE ON ADAPTATION

In this stage adaptation, the goal is to keep the core of *Sense and Sensibility* while contemporizing it to a 1976 setting with women of color. Character name, traits, and major plot events are based on the original, with the main differences being the historical context and resulting references and language. *While the original production did not specify ethnicities of the family or characters beyond “BIPOC,” productions are welcome to integrate specific ethnicities and dramaturgically make tweaks (i.e., specifying ethnicities, using words for “Mom” and “Dad” in the mother tongue, etc.).*

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ACT I SCENE I

The home of the late Henry Dashwood in New York City (Queens), a nice faculty house where his family lives. FANNY, his daughter-in-law, has her ear to the door of a bedroom, and quickly springs away when she hears noise and pretends to be casual. Henry's son and Fanny's husband, JOHN, comes out, morose.

JOHN. He's gone, Fanny. His lungs gave out. *(A beat.)* The girls are in there now, saying goodbye.

FANNY. *(Secretly happy.)* Oh no! You poor thing! *(She embraces him, which he accepts.)* How difficult, losing your father, I mean, just...so much to deal with *(Hinting.)* ...like who gets this lovely house...and how much of the inheritance we'll get...

JOHN. *(Not picking up on the hint.)* It's okay. He's with my mother.

FANNY. Good. *(Loudly.)* I never liked his second wife.

JOHN. *(Looking around.)* Fanny, she's right in there.

FANNY. *(Unbothered.)* It's no secret.

JOHN. Well, there are still things to be done. He made me promise to take care of my stepmother and sisters—

FANNY. *(Annoyed.)* —*half-sisters.*

JOHN. Half or full, he asked me to make sure they're fit.

FANNY. *Fit?* Just how much are they getting?

JOHN. This house is paid for by Queens College, contingent upon my father honoring his teaching and research...which he obviously can't do now...so I'll finance it. That, and Elinor's education expenses — she's already accumulating loans. And Marianne and Margaret have various—

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FANNY. (*Upset.*) So you're going to use your rightful inheritance to finance his other family?

JOHN. My father—

FANNY. Your *father* didn't even wait for your mother's body to go into the ground before knocking his new wife up.

JOHN. But he asked me on his death bed. What am I supposed to do? (*Realizing her strategy isn't working, Fanny opts to switch tactics and sighs heavily and collapses on the couch.*) Fanny?

FANNY. (*Dramatically.*) Oh...nothing, just...our poor son.

JOHN. What about him?

FANNY. Oh, nothing. Just that he'll end up on the streets while your sisters gallivant away in this castle of a house, doing who knows what...but aside from that, nothing.

JOHN. Harry will still get *your* inheritance.

FANNY. Not until I'm dead. (*With a death glare.*) Do you want me dead, John?

JOHN. (*Backtracking, confused.*) Do I want you – wait – what?

FANNY. (*Over-the-top.*) But, if you want Harry to live a life of poverty, no big deal...he'll build a lot of character. We should start socializing him with the homeless people on the train to let him meet his new friends. (*She breaks occasionally to see if John is convinced before going back to the routine.*)

JOHN. But what will I use the money for if not this house?

FANNY. (*Glowing.*) You'll still use it for this house! Only...it'll be *our* house! (*John starts to consider this.*) Think about it. Don't you want our son to grow up with a nice backyard? What will your sisters and stepmom continue to do with this? (*John looks unsure but is starting to like the idea.*) It's your money, John. Let this be our house. Save the remaining money for our son's future. *He's* your blood. (*John looks around, taking in the room before turning to Fanny.*) I – we – deserve this, John. Harry deserves it. (*John nods slowly.*)

JOHN. Well, when you put it that way...let me be the one to talk to them. (*Fanny nods fake sympathetically and sits as John exits. When he's gone, she immediately collapses on the couch joyously, taking off her shoes and getting comfortable. A grieving ELINOR, MARIANNE, and*

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MARGARET DASHWOOD, interrupted from their goodbyes, walk out as they hear commotion. Fanny realizes she's been found and smiles sickly sweet.)

FANNY. Dashwoods! Hope everything's fab! *(The Dashwoods look at her in disbelief.)*

MARIANNE. ...we just said bye to our father, Fanny.

FANNY. Oh no! So sad! Big hugs! Big hugs! *(She opens herself up for a hug, a rarity. The Dashwoods eventually let them embrace her, too emotionally spent to get annoyed. Still in this position, Fanny pipes up.)*
Don't worry, we'll find you another place to live in no time. *(The Dashwoods, suddenly alert, fall into a cacophony of "what?" but Fanny has already skipped out of the room.)*

MARIANNE. Did...did she say...

ELINOR. Did she say another / place—

MARGARET. *(Right to the point.)* Did that bitch just evict us from our own home?

SCENE 2

A day or two later. Dashwood home that is now John and Fanny's house. EDWARD, Fanny's brother, is scribbling on a paper, when Elinor comes in. He stops when he sees her.

EDWARD. Oh, uh, I'm sorry...you can sit here...

ELINOR. *(Quickly.)* No, I'll go.

EDWARD. I won't be too much of a bother.

ELINOR. No, no, it's *your* sister's house now. Please stay.

EDWARD. It was your house first. I'm just a visitor.

ELINOR. ...good point.

EDWARD. So, perhaps, we'll both work here and pledge not to bother one another, seeing as we both have a rightful claim. *(It is a line that, if executed correctly, would be seen as smooth; but the way Edward says it is anything but. Not that it stops Elinor's intrigue...)*

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ELINOR. ...okay. Thank you. *(They sit on opposite sides and bend down over their respective work. Even though they were both supposed to not bother one another, they open their mouths at the same time.)*

ELINOR. Are you sure you don't want more space—

EDWARD. Do you know who you're voting for— *(They interrupt each other before simultaneously being quiet and motioning for each other to go, only to end up doing the same thing, when Elinor takes charge.)*

ELINOR. Did you ask who I was voting for?

EDWARD. Yes. *(Trying not to appear like a stalker.)* It's completely fine if you don't, I'm just obligated to convince you to vote for Jimmy Carter, because...I work for him.

ELINOR. The peanut farmer?

EDWARD. Yes, but he's quite qualified—

ELINOR. *(Smiling.)* I didn't mean that as a bad thing. *(Edward smiles awkwardly and looks back at his sheet.)* I will be voting, of course.

Though to be honest, I am —was — a Ph.D. student...and I generally stay far away from politics. I only know front page news.

EDWARD. What were you studying?

ELINOR. Physics...like my father.

EDWARD. I'm very sorry to hear about your father.

ELINOR. *(Looking down, clearly sad.)* Thank you. *(Trying to regain her composure.)* Um...your sister has been...generous in letting us...remain here until we find a place to live.

FANNY. *(Yelling offstage.)* John, you consider giving another cent to the poor excuse of sisters that you call "women" and I'm gone and taking everything with me! *(Elinor and Edward both awkwardly look at the ground, embarrassed.)*

EDWARD. Well, that wouldn't be the worst thing, right? *(Elinor smiles.)*

FANNY. *(Offstage.)* If we don't get them out of here now, they'll be living with us forever.

JOHN. *(Offstage.)* Fanny, we got the house, maybe they could use a loan or two—

FANNY. *(Offstage.)* Look at Elinor! She's a 26-year-old spinster! *(Edward shoots Elinor a look of apology, but it gets worse.)* God, she's so...*man-ish*...always doing math. She'll never find a husband.

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EDWARD. *(To Elinor.)* I find it very impressive that you do math-

FANNY. *(Offstage.)* And she went to a women's college. Only lesbians study at women's colleges.

JOHN. *(Offstage.)* If that's the case she'll go and join one of those lesbian colonies, just give it time. *(Once it seems like it's over, Edward, mortified, turns to Elinor.)*

EDWARD. I'm really sorry about my sister.

ELINOR. It's okay—

EDWARD. It's not. If I had space for you, I would get you out of here as fast as I could and find you a bed. *(Realizes that may sound sexual and panics.)* As in, a place big enough for you and your family...not bed bed...you know... I only live in a studio.

ELINOR. Ah. Not a one bedroom?

EDWARD. Studio is what I can do with my own money. I don't exactly want to be around my *family* 24/7.

ELINOR. *(Smiling.)* I can't see why. *(They share a smile. Fanny comes in and they immediately stop smiling at each other, as if caught, and she looks at them suspiciously.)*

FANNY. What are you two doing?

ELINOR. *(Quickly.)* I was just passing through.

EDWARD. And I was just leaving *(Jumping up.)* And I told Elinor to make herself comfortable. Bye Fanny. *(Fanny eyes them. Edward looks at Elinor and nods.)* Elinor. *(He turns to leave, but as he does, turns back to Elinor and smiles at her.)*

SCENE 3

A few days later. MRS. DASHWOOD can be seen gathering belongings with Marianne and Elinor's help, while Margaret is inspecting the house with sadness. Fanny enters, looking happy as a clam.

FANNY. *(Sounding delighted.)* What a bummer your stay with us is over already!

MARIANNE. *(Sarcastically.)* Is that why you single handedly expedited our departure? *(Elinor elbows her to be nicer.)*

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MRS. DASHWOOD. Let's get going, girls. Mrs. Jennings is expecting us by 5.

FANNY. Oh, you're going to love her, she adored your husband. When I told her you needed a place, she was thrilled, *thrilled* to get some company! It was a *pleasure* having you, Mrs. Dashwood. You know you're welcome to visit anytime.

MARIANNE. Great. Will you start charging us on the first night, or is breakfast complimentary? *(Elinor elbows her again, seeing Fanny purse her lips and fake smile. Edward comes in at that moment.)*

EDWARD. Do you need help with your luggage?

MRS. DASHWOOD. We're all set but thank you. It was great getting to see you, Edward.

EDWARD. The pleasure's all mine. Really. *(His eyes linger on Elinor as he says this. Mrs. Dashwood clocks it.)* Where are you headed?

MRS. DASHWOOD. Uptown. The widow of an old friend of Henry's has graciously rented us a room.

MARGARET. *(Pained.)* As in, all four of us will be sharing a bedroom. *(Marianne shoots her a look to behave.)*

EDWARD. I work in midtown. Maybe...I could come visit you sometime. *(Elinor smiles and nods.)*

ELINOR. That'd be great. *(She tries not to seem obvious but fails. Marianne looks on, curious.)* Well, we should get going. Come on. That means you too, Margaret.

MARGARET. Do we *have to*— *(Before she can complain more, she's whisked by her family offstage as they exit. When they come back, they're now in the apartment uptown. The Dashwood women re-enter and put their stuff down in the living room.)*

MRS. DASHWOOD. Well, this is nice. *(Looking pointedly at Margaret.)* Mrs. Jennings has been gracious enough to let us be here. Let's be hospitable guests.

MARGARET. If she's very nice, then could she give us two bedrooms rather than four of us in a closet?

MRS. DASHWOOD. *(Scolding.)* Margaret, enough.

MARGARET. *(Sighing, turning to her sisters.)* This problem could solve itself if you two just found some suckers to marry you.

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MRS. DASHWOOD. *(Exasperated.)* God, Margaret...

MARGARET. They have a way out, I don't. *(To Mrs. Dashwood.)*

Wouldn't it be nice if it's just us two?

ELINOR. No one's getting married, Margaret.

MARIANNE. *(Protesting.)* Okay, well, don't rule it out! Some of us *want* a partner.

MARGARET. Yeah!

ELINOR. Mom, please tell your fifteen-year-old daughter not to think about marriage. She has an education to worry about. We've not come this far for her to misplace her priorities.

MARGARET. I can't afford college anyway. *(She says it nonchalantly and matter of fact and walks out, but Mrs. Dashwood is wounded. Her daughters move to comfort.)*

MARIANNE. She didn't mean that to hurt you, Mom.

MRS. DASHWOOD. I know. But what if she's right?

ELINOR. She's not. I've already started running the numbers. Without my graduate expenses we'll get there.

MARIANNE. Elinor, come on, you're not dropping out-

ELINOR. *(Sharply.)* Then where's the money coming from, Marianne? *(The moment is interrupted by an exuberant call from outside.)*

SCENE 4

Continuous.

MRS. JENNINGS. Dashwoods! Dashwoods! *(In comes MRS.*

JENNINGS, an exuberant welcome party of one. Mrs. Dashwood, though startled, gets herself together and motions for her daughters to be on their best behavior.)

MRS. DASHWOOD. Mrs. Jennings. So good to see you. Thank you so much for letting us rent out a room.

MRS. JENNINGS. Nonsense! For Henry's family, anything! He was such a wonderful friend to my husband.

MRS. DASHWOOD. These are my daughters.

ELINOR. Good to see you, Mrs. Jennings.

MARIANNE. Thanks for having us.

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MRS. JENNINGS. Oh, I met you little ones when your father was just a student, my god, how you've grown. (*It seems like she's doing the sweet grandmother greeting when she clasps their hands, only to flip them and examine them.*) And both unmarried, I see!

ELINOR. (*Trying to change the subject.*) Do you need help with dinner? (*The question is redundant considering Mrs. Jennings has already made herself comfortable and is setting up for what must be a meal.*)

MRS. JENNINGS. Nonsense, everything is ready! A good friend of mine will be joining. Lovely guy, used to be a pianist. He even played with Paul Robeson. (*Sounding more serious.*) He just got back from Vietnam.

ELINOR. (*Sympathetically.*) Oh, poor guy.

MRS. JENNINGS. Poor guy indeed, while he was off, all the women got hitched and now he's 35 and alone! (*Elinor and Marianne are taken aback at how flippant she is. Margaret comes back in, saving the matchmaking scheme.*)

MARIANNE. Mrs. Jennings, this is our youngest sister, Margaret.

MRS. JENNINGS. Margaret! You're a pretty, young girl. Are you in the market / for—

ELINOR. She's 15.

MRS. JENNINGS. (*Disappointed.*) Oh.

MARIANNE. Mrs. Jennings, Margaret may be young, but *I* am looking to get married. Don't worry. (*Elinor rolls her eyes and Mrs. Dashwood makes a "be nice" face.*)

MRS. JENNINGS. (*Completely serious.*) I know a great place to print invitations. (*At that moment, COLONEL BRANDON walks in. He smiles at everyone but holds his gaze on Marianne, who doesn't notice. Mrs. Jennings notices him.*) Colonel!

COLONEL BRANDON. (*Trying to regain his composure.*) You don't need to keep calling me that.

MRS. JENNINGS. These are Henry's girls.

COLONEL BRANDON. I'm so sorry for your loss. I've only heard wonderful things about Henry.

MRS. DASHWOOD. Thank you, Colonel. These are my daughters.

ELINOR. Nice to meet you, Colonel. Thank you for your service.

MARIANNE. (*Nodding politely.*) Good to meet you, Colonel.

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MARGARET. (*Genuinely.*) You're the one who's 35 and alone?

MRS. DASHWOOD. (*Scolding.*) Margaret!

MARGARET. (*Protesting.*) I was only in the bathroom; I still could hear!

ELINOR. Sorry, Colonel. She's just a kid.

MARGARET. I'm 15!

COLONEL BRANDON. No worries.

MRS. JENNINGS. How about some drinks? (*They all sit. Colonel Brandon stares at Marianne in an awestruck way – which everyone else picks up as they chatter.*) So, Elinor...what are you looking for in a husband?

ELINOR. (*Quickly.*) I'm just focused on family and finances right now.

MRS. JENNINGS. We'll work on that. Marianne?

MARIANNE. (*Smiling.*) Yes...

MRS. JENNINGS. What are *you* looking for?

MARGARET. Rich.

MARIANNE. She's only kidding. Just someone kind...thoughtful...supportive of my goals.

MRS. JENNINGS. Marianne's an English teacher. (*She glances at Colonel Brandon.*) Did you know that, Colonel?

COLONEL BRANDON. (*Trying to snap back.*) Oh...uh, no...that's wonderful. What age do you teach?

MARIANNE. High school...I'm just getting ready to wrap up the school year. My students are writing a paper on Hamlet.

COLONEL BRANDON. I've always wanted to read Hamlet. Well, I've always wanted to *read* more...never had the time.

MRS. JENNINGS. Well, Marianne could help you! Couldn't you Marianne?

MARIANNE. (*Smiling at Colonel Brandon.*) Of course.

MRS. JENNINGS. Oh, we're going to have the best time, perhaps Colonel can come over in the mornings for book club, then we all can sit down and help Marianne find someone! (*Colonel Brandon, who is sipping a drink, tries to recover as the glass shakes.*) Maybe, Marianne, we could look into someone...older? Just *slightly* older...like... (*Looking at Colonel Brandon.*) ...someone who has *lived*...experienced other parts of the

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world...say...35? (*Colonel Brandon quickly gets up at this, almost knocking over his glass.*)

COLONEL BRANDON. Oh, I'm so sorry, I almost / knocked that—

MRS. JENNINGS. No, no, it's okay!

COLONEL BRANDON. Um...I, just...I think I'll uh...let me get some stuff to clean this. (*He exits. Everyone turns to Marianne, who pretends not to notice.*)

MARIANNE. What?

MRS. DASHWOOD. (*Smiling.*) We've not even been here an hour...

MARIANNE. (*Annoyed.*) What are you implying?

MRS. JENNINGS. Clean up a spill...there was nothing on the ground! Ha ha ha! I love it!

MARIANNE. (*Irritated.*) That's not true. Surely he spilled a little. (*Elinor realizes she isn't playing with them.*)

ELINOR. You're the one who *just* said you're looking to get married.

MARIANNE. Not to *him*! He seems nice and all but he's practically Dad's age.

ELINOR. (*Incredulously.*) He's only 35, Marianne.

MARIANNE. Close enough. I don't see why we need to rush to say the first man I have encountered is my husband. It's insulting, if anything. I'm a 24-year-old woman in good health! Should my only prospect be pushing 40? (*They are interrupted by the sound of Colonel Brandon, coming back in with napkins. He nods and they all fake smile. He notices Marianne again and tries looking at his drink, but Elinor smiles at him kindly before exchanging a look with her mother.*)

SCENE 5

The next day. Elinor is sitting, writing something, when Marianne enters.

MARIANNE. Margaret and I are going to the park. Wanna come?

ELINOR. (*Not looking up.*) I need to look over the finances, Marianne. But have fun.

MARIANNE. *Elinor.* You can't spend all your time looking at numbers. You need fresh air.

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ELINOR. I like numbers far more than I like fresh air. I'm fine.

MARIANNE. Even in the context of our financial ruin?

ELINOR. That is precisely why I need to *look* at the numbers. You should go soon. It's supposed to rain.

MARIANNE. *(Calling out.)* Margaret! *(Margaret skips in.)* Time to go explore.

MARGARET. *(Reluctantly.)* Now? It's supposed to rain.

MARIANNE. Everyone's so bothered about a little rain! We'll take an umbrella.

MARGARET. But—

MARIANNE. Shoes! We'll go to the park. Come on. *(Margaret looks at Elinor, who shrugs, and leaves to put them on. Elinor decides now is the time to casually bring up...you know who.)*

ELINOR. By the way...have you heard from John?

MARIANNE. Take a wild guess.

ELINOR. It would be nice of him to check in on us. We're still his sisters...dad alive or not.

MARIANNE. Nice is not his strong suit. He prefers cowardly.

ELINOR. Still. *(Trying to sound nonchalant.)* I just wonder how everyone's doing.

MARIANNE. *(Confused.)* Why? They're not spending a second concerned about our well-being.

ELINOR. Still. John...Fanny...their little boy...

MARIANNE. Whose existence is still yet to be proven after spending *weeks* with them.

ELINOR. And what was Fanny's brother's name, the one that stayed with us in Queens these past few weeks. *(Trying way too hard.)* Fredward? *(Marianne suddenly gets interested. She turns and looks at Elinor mischievously.)*

MARIANNE. *Fredward?*

ELINOR. *(Innocently.)* Mmhmm?

MARIANNE. ...*Edward Ferrars?*

ELINOR. *(Trying to save face.)* Oh, I got my consonants all mixed up. Yes. Wonder how he is. *(Marianne says nothing for a few moments when she bursts into a grin.)*

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MARIANNE. *(Jumping and yelling.)* Mom!!! We were right!! *(Margaret and Mrs. Dashwood enter after hearing the scream, seeing what's going on. Elinor tries to hush Marianne.)*

MARGARET. What's going on?

MARIANNE. Elinor has given me so much flack for wanting a husband when she's already got a guy!

ELINOR. MARIANNE! That's / not true!

MARGARET. *(Eagerly.)* Who? Who?

ELINOR. *(Through gritted teeth.)* Marianne–

MARIANNE. Edward Ferrars.

ELINOR. That is not true! I just said I wondered how he was doing! *(Everyone cackles at her now.)* I asked about John and Fanny too!

MARIANNE. Which was enough to reveal you had an agenda. *(To Mrs. Dashwood.)* She pretended to forget his name. Called him Fredward.

ELINOR. *(Flustered.)* Marianne, I just...I have a lot on my mind I forgot–

MRS. DASHWOOD. Oh, I'm not surprised. Elinor did always have a thing for him. Since John and Fanny got married...I remember her eyeing...*Fredward* at their wedding.

ELINOR. *(Mortified.)* Mom! I barely know him!

MRS. DASHWOOD. *(Twinkle in her eye.)* Then why are you concerned about his whereabouts? *(Elinor, unable to form words, shakes her head. The sound of drizzling can be heard. Elinor opens her mouth, but nothing comes out for a few seconds.)*

ELINOR. He's a good person to know, he's working for the man that could be our next president!

MARGARET. *(Sarcastically.)* Because you just love politics. *(Eleanor tries to defend herself to no avail, huffing.)*

ELINOR. I...you – you two better go to the park quickly, before it starts pouring! Go! *(Marianne and Margaret exit, giggling. Elinor turns red, looking at her mother.)* They have a one-track mind...Edward Ferrars. Please. *(She is hoping for her mother to agree, but Mrs. Dashwood just smiles.)*

MRS. DASHWOOD. There's nothing wrong with having a crush, Elinor.

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ELINOR. I don't have a *crush*, Mom, I'm not twelve years old. I am a 26-year-old physicist – *former* physicist.

MRS. DASHWOOD. Who says you can't be a 26-year-old physicist and have a crush? You don't have to choose. It doesn't make you any less of a person or woman or scientist.

ELINOR. (*Dismissive, averting her mother's gaze.*) I don't have time to deal with this right now.

MRS. DASHWOOD. (*Teasing.*) If you say so. You're the smart one, after all. (*Mrs. Dashwood fancies herself with a book. Elinor looks down, clearly thinking of Edward. She finds herself smiling a little bit. The sound of rain intensifying can be heard.*)

SCENE 6

Half an hour later. Elinor and Mrs. Dashwood are in the same position. Mrs. Dashwood, concerned, looks out the window.

MRS. DASHWOOD. It's really pouring.

ELINOR. (*Immediately.*) I'll go look for them, Mom.

MRS. DASHWOOD. No. No need. I'm sure they're on their way back. I'm just paranoid. (*Elinor looks at the worry in her mother's eyes and gets up.*)

ELINOR. I'll get my coat. Which park did they say / they're going to? (*Margaret comes running in in her rain jacket, wide-eyed as she takes her hood off.*)

MRS. DASHWOOD. (*Urgently.*) Where's Marianne?

MARGARET. (*Out of breath and excited.*) It, it was raining, then, and we were going down the hill to the park, and, and, she slipped, and she couldn't walk, but then, but then, guess what, but then—! (*She is cut off by WILLOUGHBY coming in, carrying Marianne, who looks mortified. Margaret turns on dramatic walk on music – most likely a 60's or 70's hit - on the record player. He gently places her on the couch and dazzles everyone with a smile.*)

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WILLOUGHBY. Mrs. Dashwood. Good to meet you. (*A beat.*) Your daughter slipped and fell in the park. She's unharmed, aside from a sore ankle. She mentioned she was staying with Mrs. Jennings and I know her well, so I thought I would bring her back safely. (*All the women are taking in this strange sight in slow motion.*)

MRS. DASHWOOD. You're...a friend of Mrs. Jennings?

WILLOUGHBY. Her son and I grew up together. Lovely woman. (*A beat.*) Margaret told me you lost your husband recently. My sincerest condolences. (*The charm is off the roof. Marianne is still looking mortified.*)

MRS. DASHWOOD. Uh...thank you very much...um...?

WILLOUGHBY. Willoughby, ma'am.

MRS. DASHWOOD. Willoughby. Thank you for helping my daughters.

WILLOUGHBY. It's no problem at all, Mrs. Dashwood. (*Looks at Marianne.*) Do you have some towels? She looks cold.

MRS. DASHWOOD. (*Absentmindedly.*) ...yes, towels...

WILLOUGHBY. I'm sorry I can't stay. I must get to class. But can I come check in on her tomorrow?

MARGARET. Class? What class?

WILLOUGHBY. I'm studying to be a doctor...in Columbia. (*He gives a confident smile, waiting for the oohs and aahs, but the women are still processing this entire interaction. Elinor looks at Marianne, who, while still mortified, is clearly taken with Willoughby. Not having gotten the "ooh" he wanted, Willoughby clears his throat.*) Uh, well, I'm going to get going. (*He kneels beside Marianne and kisses her hand.*) Rest well, Marianne. (*He nods to the rest of the women and exits, dramatic music playing again. Elinor swats Margaret's hand, which is on the record player.*)

SCENE 7

Later that day. In the living room, Marianne is playing piano, though one leg is elevated, when Mrs. Dashwood, comes in with Colonel Brandon. They watch her play for some time, before clapping. Marianne notices and

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whips around, hoping for Willoughby. She fails to hide her disappointment.

MRS. DASHWOOD. You have a visitor, Marianne.

MARIANNE. Colonel Brandon. *(Mrs. Dashwood sneaks one last glance as she exits.)*

COLONEL BRANDON. Mrs. Jennings mentioned you were hurt.

MARIANNE. Just a small slip in the rain.

COLONEL BRANDON. *(Reaching into his pocket, getting out a packet of tea bags.)* I brought some tea.

MARIANNE. Thank you, but you didn't need to do that. We have tea here.

COLONEL BRANDON. *(Showing her the packet.)* Of course, I just...this is my favorite green tea. A little bit of a good luck charm. To heal your battle wounds.

MARIANNE. *(Smiling.)* My injury is nowhere as severe as a battle wound. *(She takes the tea.)* Green tea. Thank you, Colonel. *(She looks at the packet more closely.)* Oh, from Vietnam?

COLONEL BRANDON. *(Visibly flustered.)* Um...yes...correct. *(Awkward pause as Marianne waits for him to say more but he stares at his shoes.)*

MARIANNE. Ah. *(Trying to break the silence.)* Uh, Mrs. Jennings mentioned you used to be a jazz pianist?

COLONEL BRANDON. *(Smiling, thinking of it.)* Hardly a professional. Up until I was drafted. Feels like another lifetime ago. *(A beat.)* I really enjoyed hearing you play.

MARIANNE. *(Smiling.)* Coming from someone who accompanied Paul Robeson, I take your opinion as sacred.

COLONEL BRANDON. *(Flattered.)* I only played with him once...may he rest in peace. Really, your playing was a nice treat ...I've never heard that song before.

MARIANNE. It's an original composition...I got restless.

COLONEL BRANDON. It's beautiful.

MARIANNE. I'm glad you think so. Elinor says everything I've come up with after my father's death is too depressing.

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COLONEL BRANDON. I don't think so. Being a ballad doesn't make it depressing. It's as important to the human experience.

MARIANNE. (*Flattered.*) Well, I don't know if it's *that* nuanced...but I'll take it. I call it, "Henry Dashwood's Lament." Just a little something for my father. What do you think?

COLONEL BRANDON. That's a great name. Your father sounded like a great man. (*Genuinely, without an agenda.*) What was his real name?

MARIANNE. (*Confused.*) Real name? Our last name *is* Dashwood.

COLONEL BRANDON. Oh. Dashwood, it's your birth name?

MARIANNE. (*Suspicious.*) What do you mean?

COLONEL BRANDON. (*Genuinely.*) Oh, my bad. I must have misunderstood.

MARIANNE. What could Marianne Dashwood possibly be short for?

COLONEL BRANDON. I thought maybe it wasn't your original name just because – I'm sorry, that was silly.

MARIANNE. (*Upset.*) Why, should I not be allowed to have a normal name?

COLONEL BRANDON. No, no, not at all, I shouldn't have assumed. Marianne, I didn't mean to upset you—

MARIANNE. Who are you to tell me what my name should and should not be?

MRS. DASHWOOD. (*Coming in.*) Everything okay? (*They stop talking and Colonel Brandon stands.*)

COLONEL BRANDON. I was just leaving, Mrs. Dashwood. (*Handing her tea.*) Give my love to Mrs. Jennings.

MRS. DASHWOOD. Why don't you come join us for dinner tomorrow? (*Marianne is scoldingly mouthing MOM from behind his back.*)

COLONEL BRANDON. That's very kind of you, Mrs. Dashwood. I'll see you tomorrow. (*He leaves. Marianne gives Mrs. Dashwood a dirty look, who's confused.*)

MARIANNE. Mom! I'm not *interested* in Colonel Brandon!

MRS. DASHWOOD. Okay...and?

MARIANNE. You invited him for dinner!

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MRS. DASHWOOD. Mrs. Jennings asked me to. Why shouldn't he come over?

MARIANNE. Because I don't *like* him!

MRS. DASHWOOD. He just got back from a war and he's all alone, Marianne. Why can't you have a little empathy?

MARIANNE. If he's so great, why don't *you* marry him?

MRS. DASHWOOD. (*Taken aback and upset.*) Really, Marianne?

MARIANNE. He's probably closer in age to you than me, anyway, and you're free. (*Marianne realizes she may have taken it too far as Mrs. Dashwood is silent for a few minutes.*)

MRS. DASHWOOD. (*Harshly.*) You're not the only one grieving, Marianne. (*Marianne opens her mouth to apologize, but Mrs. Dashwood has left the room.*)

SCENE 8

The next day. Elinor is setting the table, when Mrs. Jennings comes running in.

MRS. JENNINGS. Elinor! Put another place, we have a guest!

ELINOR. I already put an extra setting for Colonel Brandon.

MRS. JENNINGS. (*Excited, spilling the tea.*) Not just *him*! We'll be joined by another fellow, the son of a dear old friend of mine. Marianne has taken quite a liking to him.

ELINOR. *Oh...* you're talking about that dude from the park?

MRS. JENNINGS. That *dude* is Dr. Willoughby! He's charming, a student at Columbia med school, *single*, age-appropriate, oh, just the best.

ELINOR. (*Bemused.*) I see...what happened to Colonel Brandon?

MRS. JENNINGS. There are plenty of future widows who'll snatch him up, he'll be fine. (*As if on cue, Willoughby and Marianne enter. They are laughing flirtatiously. Elinor watches them curiously as Mrs. Jennings excitedly greets them.*) There he is!

WILLOUGHBY. Always a pleasure to see you, Mrs. Jennings.

MRS. JENNINGS. Studying hard?

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WILLOUGHBY. It's challenging. (*Turning to Marianne and smiling.*) But I wouldn't have it any other way. (*Elinor examines him, slightly suspicious, as Marianne giggles. Mrs. Jennings eagerly watches. Elinor pretends to keep setting the table even though it's done, folding the same napkin repeatedly.*) By the way, Marianne, I asked my professor about your ankle, and he assured me there's nothing to worry about.

MARIANNE. (*Doe-eyed.*) Oh? (*Mrs. Dashwood and Margaret enter nods Elinor doesn't try to hide her exasperation with Marianne's antics. They sidle next to Elinor and watch.*)

WILLOUGHBY. So take the word of not only a future doctor, but one of Columbia University's finest.

MARIANNE. Wow, I'm so lucky.

MARGARET. (*Under her breath.*) Lucky indeed... (*Mrs. Dashwood shushes her.*)

WILLOUGHBY. He did mention you should try to walk on it though – with a hand, of course. I can take you to the park – or, if you're up for it, we could go roller skating sometime. I know a great place downtown.

MARIANNE. (*Excited.*) Oh, I'd love that.

WILLOUGHBY. (*Noticing Mrs. Dashwood and Margaret.*) Mrs. Dashwood. Margaret.

MRS. DASHWOOD. Lovely to see you again. Thank you so much for helping Marianne.

WILLOUGHBY. (*Looking at Marianne.*) The pleasure's all mine.

MARGARET. Are you two getting married? (*Mrs. Jennings dramatically pops up when she hears this. Marianne is mortified when her mom steps in.*)

MRS. DASHWOOD. Forgive her, Willoughby. It has nothing to do with you, she just wants her sisters out of here.

WILLOUGHBY. No apologies necessary. I can respect the curious mind. (*Marianne giggles. Willoughby is waved over to talk to Mrs. Jennings, and Marianne pulls Elinor aside excitedly. Margaret tries to peek, but Mrs. Dashwood redirects her.*)

MARIANNE. Elinor, I've found him! It will be Willoughby! (*She laughs giddily.*) Get it! Will be Willoughby! Haha! God, it even *sounds* like poetry—

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ELINOR. (*Exasperated.*) **MARIANNE.** You barely know him.

MARIANNE. I'm not saying I'm going to marry him *tomorrow*. (*She glances at him for a beat.*) Though I totally would.

ELINOR. (*More to herself than Marianne.*) Jesus Christ, Marianne.

MARIANNE. Wouldn't it be nice to have a doctor in the family?

ELINOR. Do you like his stature or him?

MARIANNE. It's *everything*, Elinor! He's...otherworldly, like a gentleman out of an old movie. He kissed my hand. He's so well read, from Plato to Homer to Aristotle to all the works of Shakespeare! He compared me to a summer's day. You know how I love the classics.

ELINOR. ...the classics...? I know you *like* them—

MARIANNE. Of course I do! I'm an *English* teacher!

ELINOR. But you're the one that always says there's so much more to literature than just "the classics."

MARIANNE. I don't know what you mean.

ELINOR. (*Not letting it go.*) He knows you teach Hamlet, but does he know how you're trying to add the works of Zora Neale Hurston and Gabriel García Márquez to your curriculum? Does he know who they *are*?

MARIANNE. (*Exasperated.*) That has nothing to do with this. I can't believe you're trying to claim he's not intelligent.

ELINOR. That's not what I said—

MARIANNE. Do you know how much work it takes to get into med school and become a doctor? So what if he hasn't read some books, it's too niche. He's a *Columbia* educated man.

ELINOR. (*Rolling her eyes.*) So I've heard.

MARIANNE. I know it hurts to see someone else getting to pursue an education, but there's no need to be envious, Elinor.

ELINOR. (*Slightly stung but standing her ground.*) I'm not envious, Marianne, I'm cautious. (*Leaning in.*) He goes by his last name. What good has ever come from a guy who only goes by his last name?

MARIANNE. (*Shaking her off.*) I'm happy, Elinor. Why is that so bad? (*Elinor looks a little guilty as she listens*). Elinor, I don't do quantum physics. I teach high school students...classics, mostly, because the school won't let me teach anything else. And that's hardly the end of the world.

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ELINOR. (*Concerned.*) Marianne, I wasn't trying to say that makes you any lesser than me—

MARIANNE. I'm *lonely*, Elinor. I was lonely *before* Dad was gone.

ELINOR. You have me, and Margaret, and Mom.

MARIANNE. And I'm very grateful. But you're all family. And no matter how lucky we are to have a great one...to some degree it *must* be unconditional. But Willoughby doesn't love me out of obligation...I, a random girl without a trust fund, caught his eye. There's a beauty that comes from finding someone new to create a family like the one we have. It's a cycle, Elinor, and it's one that I want to start. (*Before Elinor can reply, they notice Mrs. Jennings greeting Colonel Brandon. Marianne sighs heavily.*) Oh, great. Uncle Sam will be gracing us with his presence. (*Colonel Brandon makes his way to Marianne and Elinor and greets them.*)

ELINOR. Hi, Colonel Brandon.

COLONEL BRANDON. Elinor. (*Turning to Marianne.*) Marianne.

MARIANNE. (*Coldly.*) Colonel.

COLONEL BRANDON. Marianne, I wanted to apologize for my questions the other day. I didn't mean to pry. (*Elinor looks between the two of them, curious.*) I, really, was just curious about your background, the story of your family...I love hearing stories of family and roots and ...I didn't realize I was prying until it was too late.

MARIANNE. (*Not making eye contact.*) Let's just move on from the incident, Colonel. (*He catches her gaze before nodding and leaving to talk to Mrs. Jennings. Elinor turns to Marianne.*)

ELINOR. Incident?

MARIANNE. He was so rude the other day. He came to visit me after he heard of my injury to bring some tea, and he implied that Marianne Dashwood is not my birth name!

ELINOR. (*Digesting this, a little confused.*) But...it's not your birth name.

MARIANNE. That's beside the point, Elinor! He insulted us!

ELINOR. How?

MARIANNE. Implying that we are not proud of where we came from, that we're fake!

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ELINOR. I'm sorry, what exactly did he say?

MARIANNE. He asked what Dad's *real* name is. What is that supposed to mean?

ELINOR. He didn't say anything about pride...I'm sure he gets it. I mean, he's right, it's not our birth name. (*Considering.*) Maybe he could have approached it differently...instead of assuming...but I don't think he intended on—

MARIANNE. EXACTLY. I didn't appreciate the prying and the character assassination.

ELINOR. Okay, well, he didn't request your social security number.

MARIANNE. He might as well have. (*Elinor opens her mouth but is interrupted by Willoughby approaching.*)

WILLOUGHBY. Sorry for interrupting. Are you ready for dinner?

MARIANNE. (*Lighting back up.*) Definitely. (*She throws a look over to Elinor, who watches and sighs.*)

SCENE 9

Half an hour later. Dinner is finished, and everyone is drinking coffee and tea. Marianne and Willoughby are giggling about who knows what. Colonel Brandon is watching, but quickly averting his stare, which Elinor notices.

WILLOUGHBY. What a wonderful dinner, Mrs. Dashwood.

MRS. DASHWOOD. Thank you very much, Willoughby, but it's Mrs. Jennings who you should be thanking. I wouldn't be able to cook without a kitchen.

MRS. JENNINGS. Anything for Henry's girls.

WILLOUGHBY. (*To the Dashwoods.*) Mrs. Jennings speaks very highly of your father. A world class researcher and an even kinder man, from what I heard.

MRS. DASHWOOD. He really was. (*Smiling at Elinor.*) Elinor gets it from him.

WILLOUGHBY. I'm not surprised, she's very kind. (*Marianne smiles and raises her eyebrows at Elinor who smiles thinly.*)

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MRS. JENNINGS. Not just his kindness! Elinor graduated top of her class from Mount Holyoke, and now she's doing her Ph.D at CUNY. One of the first women in the department!

ELINOR. *Was doing a Ph.D. (To Willoughby.)* I won't be able to continue in light of my father's passing.

MRS. DASHWOOD. We're telling her not to drop it, but she's insistent.

WILLOUGHBY. Academia, from what I've heard, can be a miserable life. You're not missing out, Elinor, believe me. There are moments when I question what I'm doing going to med school. If it wasn't for the importance of the profession, I would have bowed out a long time ago. *(Elinor fake smiles at this.)* Should you ever be interested, Elinor, I have many classmates who I am sure would love to meet you.

MRS. JENNINGS. Future doctors?

WILLOUGHBY. Indeed.

ELINOR. I'm not interested but thank you.

MRS. JENNINGS. Why not? Wouldn't a *doctor* be / a great-

MARGARET. She's taken. *(Marianne kicks her.)* Ow!

MRS. JENNINGS. *(Riveted.)* Is that so?

MARGARET. Mr. F—

MARIANNE. *(Swooping in.)* Margaret here is just young, you know.

MARGARET. Once again, I'm 15! *(Marianne kicks her again.)* Ow! What happened to your ankle being hurt?

MRS. JENNINGS. Mr. Ffffff? Francis? Fairview? Foster...Foster! Oh, I know quite a few Fosters!

ELINOR. *(Trying to change the subject.)* Willoughby, did you know that Marianne's an English teacher?

MRS. JENNINGS. *(To herself.)* Featherington? Farmer? Foley? Fletcher? Fields?

WILLOUGHBY. She mentioned. *(Smiles at her.)* So quaint, I love it, keeping an eye on America's youth. Marianne, one of these days I'd love to come with you, maybe when you're teaching Shakespeare? I was a little bit of an actor myself back in undergrad. I would love to do a reading for your class.

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MRS. JENNINGS. A Shakespearean actor! What a true renaissance man!
(Colonel Brandon is staring down and sighing, and quickly smiles uncomfortably when he notices Elinor seeing him.)

WILLOUGHBY. I studied him in *great* detail. *(Turning to Marianne, smiling warmly.)* Just give me a day and time, I'll assemble a lesson plan. *(Marianne nods and smiles, though Elinor spies a second of uneasiness. They are interrupted when Mrs. Jennings goes to the phone and picks up.)*

MRS. JENNINGS. Colonel, it's for you.

COLONEL BRANDON. *(Confused.)* Uh, how?

MRS. JENNINGS. They said they couldn't reach you and we're your emergency contact. *(Colonel Brandon takes the phone.)*

COLONEL BRANDON. Hello? *(He listens and grows animated.)*

Uh...please, what's your number? *(He takes out a pen and writes on a napkin. He then turns to Mrs. Jennings.)* Do you have another telephone I could use?

MRS. JENNINGS. Right in the kitchen.

COLONEL BRANDON. Thank you. Excuse me. *(He leaves to go to the kitchen. Willoughby raises his eyebrows at Marianne.)*

WILLOUGHBY. *Mysterious.* Didn't you say he played with Paul Robeson, Mrs. Jennings? I suspect that he's a Communist, with all that sneaking around and wandering gazing.

ELINOR. ...he's a Vietnam veteran, Willoughby.

WILLOUGHBY. Not a happy one at that if he's hanging out with lefties like Robeson.

MRS. JENNINGS. *(Completely missing the point.)* Oh, if he's a communist that's going to limit his options for a wife. Too bad. He already has strikes against him being a father.

MARGARET. He has a kid?

MRS. JENNINGS. *(To Margaret.)* Eliza. She's just two years older than you, in fact.

MARIANNE. *(Astonished and smug.)* Would you look at that? Not only dad-age, he has a child!

ELINOR. Huh. He seems kind of young to have an 18-year-old daughter.

MARIANNE. Looks like someone had a little too much fun in his youth.

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MRS. JENNINGS. Not a biological daughter. One of Colonel's soldiers who did not make it home left a daughter behind, all alone. He took her in as his own. (*Marianne looks embarrassed after hearing this.*)

MRS. DASHWOOD. That's a very noble thing for him to do, raising her. (*Looking at Marianne.*) He seems like quite the gentleman.

WILLOUGHBY. A *communist* gentleman. Maybe he's even a spy. Who's he voting for? (*Mention of the election makes Elinor perk up, reminded of Edward.*)

MARIANNE. (*Anxious to change conversation.*) Enough about him. I meanwhile can't wait to vote!

MARGARET. (*Oblivious.*) Way to rub it in.

WILLOUGHBY. (*Confused.*) I'm sorry. In the upcoming election, do you plan on voting?

ELINOR. Yes...

WILLOUGHBY. Oh...I'm afraid there are rules for this type of thing.

MARGARET. Women have been able to vote for a while. Did they not teach you that at *Columbia*?

WILLOUGHBY. Not because they're *female*, Margaret, because... (*Elinor sighs heavily, understanding what he's getting at.*)

MRS. DASHWOOD. My daughters are citizens, Mr. Willoughby.

WILLOUGHBY. Really! (*They all nod.*) How is that so?

ELINOR. We were naturalized a while ago...we've been here a while. And Margaret was *born* here.

WILLOUGHBY. Wow! *All* of you!

MRS. DASHWOOD. My husband got a student visa for his graduate studies in 1959.

WILLOUGHBY. (*Flabbergasted.*) 1959! Wow, he must have *really* been quite the scholar. I didn't even know that was possible. Wow. (*Marianne smiles, acting flattered, but Elinor is not having it. At that moment, Colonel Brandon comes in, looking worried.*)

COLONEL BRANDON. I need to get going, I'm so sorry.

MRS. JENNINGS. But we still need to have dessert!

COLONEL BRANDON. I have a family emergency – in Boston. (*To Mrs. Dashwood.*) Mrs. Dashwood, thank you again for dinner. Elinor.

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Margaret. (*Lingers.*) Marianne. (*Willoughby looks up expectantly, awaiting his farewell.*) Mr. Willoughby. (*Colonel Brandon quickly leaves.*)

WILLOUGHBY. (*Turning to Marianne.*) I told you. Communist.

MARIANNE. He said family emergency.

WILLOUGHBY. Maybe the daughter is *also* a spy. An Ethel Rosenberg in the making. (*Marianne laughs uncomfortably, slightly worried.*)

SCENE 10

A day or two later. Elinor and Marianne are sitting, one looking at finances and the other grading papers. Elinor looks up.

ELINOR. How's the grading going? (*Marianne stays silent, pointedly avoiding eye contact. Eleanor sighs.*) I'm sorry...please just talk to me, Marianne.

MARIANNE. (*Breaking.*) You just seem so intent on disliking Willoughby.

ELINOR. I'll be more open...I never have thought you're lesser than me, Marianne. I get lonely too, I understand. (*At this moment, Edward can be seen making his way in, looking uncomfortable. Marianne's eyes light up.*) Marianne? What— (*She trails off when she realizes Marianne is escorting Edward in. He awkwardly stands with his hands by his sides.*)

MARIANNE. (*Gleefully.*) Look who's here, Elinor!

EDWARD. Hi. (*It is not clear who he is talking to. Elinor can't help but smile genuinely, despite her initial shock, but Edward is not making eye contact with her.*)

MARIANNE. We were wondering when we were going to see you, Edward!

EDWARD. (*Still no eye contact.*) Yes, uh, I'm sorry for the delay. I wanted to make sure you were all settled after my sister ...banished you.

MARIANNE. (*Gleefully.*) Oh good! You think your sister is awful! That makes three of us! Isn't that great, Elinor? (*Elinor is distracted by Edward's lack of eye contact, so much so that she barely cringes at Marianne's wing woman attempt.*)

ELINOR. How's the campaign going?

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EDWARD. *(Staring at his shoes.)* It's looking more and more like we'll get the nomination.

MARIANNE. I'll be damned. I had never heard of Jimmy Carter until a few months ago. Must be a testament to Edward's hard work, right Elinor? *(Elinor nods and Edward continues not to say anything. They're interrupted by Mrs. Jennings barging in, looking ecstatic when she spies Edward.)*

MRS. JENNINGS. Who's this?

ELINOR. Mrs. Jennings, Edward Ferrars. He is... *(She pauses, debating what to say.)* Fanny's brother.

MRS. JENNINGS. Ferrars!? Ferrars! *(Sounding out the f.)* As in Fffferrars!? The man himself?

EDWARD. *(Confused.)* Um...yes, ma'am.

MRS. JENNINGS. With an F!?

EDWARD. *(Still confused.)* Yes, ma'am...uh...it's good to finally meet you...Fanny has told me all about you... *(Elinor isn't even bothered by Mrs. Jennings' revelation, more focused on Edward.)*

MARIANNE. He's working on Jimmy Carter's campaign.

MRS. JENNINGS. How about that! Must be hard to maintain a good relationship with your *girlfriend* if you're always on the campaign trail, no?

EDWARD. My role's only in New York, ma'am. *(Elinor is keenly aware he doesn't specify he has no girlfriend.)*

MARIANNE. Edward, want something to eat?

EDWARD. Um, thank you, but I should get back to work. Lovely seeing you all. Glad that you're settled. *(Everyone files out and he nods or shakes their hand. Elinor is last, leaving her and Edward alone, though Marianne can be seen peeking in. Edward nods at Elinor.)* Miss Dashwood. *(With that, he exits, leaving Elinor alone. Marianne comes back in and comforts her.)*

ELINOR. Miss Dashwood?

MARIANNE. He's probably still in campaign mode, Elinor. *(Elinor nods, not quite believing it, and she and Marianne exit.)*

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SCENE 11

A few days later. Margaret and Mrs. Dashwood are chatting.

MARGARET. So when are Willoughby and Marianne getting married?

MRS. DASHWOOD. Margaret. It's not been that long...*(Smiling.)* But I suspect he isn't going anywhere.

MARGARET. Good. We can save money on medical bills. *(At that moment, Marianne comes running through, distraught. Confused, her mother and sister look to find Willoughby now standing in front of them.)*

MRS. DASHWOOD. Willoughby, is she hurt?

WILLOUGHBY. *(Averting eye contact.)* No. Um...she's...I – I'm heading to Boston. I need to go visit my aunt.

MRS. DASHWOOD. *(Sighing.)* Oh, dear...I'm sure you can understand our emotions are running high since Henry's death ...I'll go talk to her, she'll be fine.

WILLOUGHBY. No, Mrs. Dashwood...I don't know when I'll be back. Wishing you all the best. *(He leaves without another word. Elinor walks in, having overheard this last part.)*

ELINOR. Back from where?

MRS. DASHWOOD. *(Still confused.)* To see an aunt in Boston.

ELINOR. Why?

MRS. DASHWOOD. ...he didn't say.

ELINOR. *(Grumbling.)* These men. Can't be bothered to use their words. *(Marianne comes back in at that moment, crying, as her mother and Elinor try to comfort her.)*

MRS. DASHWOOD. I'm sure he'll be back soon, Marianne.

MARIANNE. Why would he leave like that!?

MRS. DASHWOOD. It's not forever.

MARIANNE. Did I do something?

ELINOR. It's just Boston, Marianne. He's close by.

MARIANNE. What's there in Boston that he *must* leave for?

MARGARET. Maybe he keeps a girlfriend there?

ELINOR. *(Shooting Margaret a "not now" look.)* An aunt, Margaret. He's visiting his aunt.

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MARGARET. *(Slightly disappointed at the lack of scoop.)* Oh.

MRS. DASHWOOD. You know how family stuff is. She may be ill, and he doesn't want to burden you.

MARIANNE. Yeah. He's just visiting his aunt...I'm sure there's a good reason.

(She looks expectantly at Elinor, who after a beat, quickly nods.)

ELINOR. There's nothing to worry about. *(Marianne nods and tries to smile but looks unsure.)*

SCENE 12

A few days later. Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret are in the living room, morose. Mrs. Jennings comes in, not reading the room.

MRS. JENNINGS. Girls! I have a surprise for you. I'd like you to meet a dear friend of mine, Lucy Steele.

MARGARET. *(Muttering.)* How many dear friends can one old woman have?

ELINOR. I don't know if we're feeling up to it today— *(She is interrupted by LUCY STEELE entering. Margaret sighs and Marianne just looks at her forlornly.)*

MRS. JENNINGS. I thought a nice visit would be fun, for you to talk to some girls your own age...so I went ahead and brought her!

MARIANNE. *(Depressed.)* How nice.

LUCY. Hi! It's so nice to meet you! *(The Dashwood sisters are taken aback but try to regroup to deal with this unexpected visitor.)* I have heard so much about you all. Especially you, Elinor.

MRS. JENNINGS. She went on and on about wanting to see the Dashwoods!

LUCY. Yes! All of you! And Mrs. Jennings mentioned you also have a brother?

MARIANNE. *(Monotone.)* He's useless. Let his wife take our home.

LUCY. Fanny? Of the Ferrars family?

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY: 1976

MARIANNE. (*Wondering how she knows this.*) You know the Ferrars'? (*Lucy sits and gets comfortable.*)

LUCY. Oh, everyone knows of them, great family, very respected in politics, from what I've heard. (*Turning to Elinor.*) Quite the family, right Elinor?

ELINOR. I guess.

LUCY. I'm especially eager to meet Fanny.

MARGARET. (*Popping out from her silence.*) Why? She's a pain in the ass.

ELINOR. *Margaret.* Again with the language.

MARGARET. Fine, pain in the neck then.

LUCY. Well... (*She looks down shyly and then at Elinor.*) I just ...you know.

MARGARET. (*Matter of fact.*) I don't, that's why I'm asking.

LUCY. Um...haha...Elinor, could I talk to you for a second...just the two of us?

MARGARET. (*Glad to get to escape.*) Fine by me! (*She leaves and drags Marianne who looks back.*)

MARIANNE. (*Wondering if there's tea about to be spilled.*) Margaret—

MARGARET. (*To Marianne.*) Take the opportunity. (*They leave. Mrs. Jennings stays put until Margaret makes her leave the room. Elinor looks at Lucy.*)

LUCY. I'm sorry, I thought we'd go for a walk...I didn't mean to kick them out.

ELINOR. What do you want to tell me that you can't say in front of them?

LUCY. Um. (*She looks down shyly.*) I guess, Elinor...I feel like I already have a connection with you...and I want to talk to you about ...a mutual friend.

ELINOR. (*Confused.*) That's...uh...really? (*Lucy nods vigorously.*) ...I, uh, honestly, don't really have any...friends.

LUCY. Sure you do! The Ferrars family?

ELINOR. Oh...well, they're my in-laws...I don't *really* know them...intimately. (*Thinks of Edward and regrets her choice of words.*) Not all of them...at least.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY: 1976

LUCY. It's the fact you know them by marriage that made me want to meet you. *(She looks around, making sure no one can hear.)* Don't tell anyone, but...I plan to marry into the Ferrars family.

ELINOR. *(Surprised, thinking of Robert Ferrars.)* Really?

LUCY. Really.

ELINOR. Voluntarily?

LUCY. *(Laughing.)* Of course voluntarily, silly! I'm *engaged* to him.

ELINOR. *(In a tone of wonderment.)* Oh...huh. Well, congrats to you and Robert.

LUCY. Oh, no, not Robert, hahaha! No, his brother. *(Elinor thinks she misheard.)*

ELINOR. *(Taken aback.)* You're marrying...his brother?

LUCY. Yes. *Edward Ferrars.* *(She shows a ring. Elinor feels like she might collapse.)* We've been engaged for four years, but I don't come from money... so Edward has been unsure about how to break it to his sister.

But I just want to marry him, I've been waiting so long! *(Elinor is speechless, which Lucy doesn't seem to realize.)* I thought, maybe, you would have some advice for me on how to go about it. Edward has spoken so highly of you. *(Elinor is still paralyzed but musters up some words.)*

ELINOR. Has he? *(A beat.)* You're marrying *Edward Ferrars.*

LUCY. *(Exuberant.)* Edward Ferrars. The one and only. And to say he speaks highly of you doesn't begin to cover it – you're like a *sister* to him! *(Elinor says nothing, shocked, but holds onto the word sister and sighs heavily.)*

END OF ACT I

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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