

Side #1

Fanny Dashwood enters; all the Gossips "tsk" reprovngly.

FANNY. My dear John, how can you think of taking four thousand pounds from the fortune of our dear little boy? What possible claim can the Miss Dashwoods, who are only related to you by half blood, have to so large an amount?

JOHN. My father's last request was that I provide for them, Fanny.

FANNY. Your father did not know what he was talking of, I dare say; ten to one he was light-headed at the time. Four thousand pounds!

JOHN. He did not specify any particular amount.

Fanny waits.

Perhaps if the sum were diminished by one-half. Five hundred pounds apiece would be a great increase to their fortunes!

FANNY. Two thousand pounds! What brother on earth would do so much for even his REAL sisters!

JOHN. One had rather do too much than too little. Do you think that they may expect more?

FANNY. Who knows what they may expect.

JOHN. Two thousand pounds, all at once, might overwhelm them and be spent unwisely, I suppose. Perhaps a yearly sum, instead?

FANNY. People always live forever when there is an annuity to be paid them. To be very honest, my love, I am convinced that your father had no idea of you giving them any *money*. I wager when he told you to "provide for them," he meant to help them to move their things, and send them occasional presents of fish and game, and so forth. My darling—may I risk being perfectly frank?

JOHN. Always, my angel.

FANNY. The painful truth is that even on his deathbed, your father was not thinking of us, nor of our little Harry—he thought only of THEM. So you owe no particular attention to his wishes, for given his way, he would have left them everything in the world. Remember, my dear—he left them all the best china.

JOHN. The china is a material consideration. It is absolutely unnecessary to do more, I think, than to help them move comfortably. How liberal and handsome you are, my lamb.

She takes his arm. They exit.

Side #2

She indicates a seat at the other end of the table. Edward half-bows again, his hands full of paper and pen. He awkwardly staggers over and spills his now-scattered materials across the table; Elinor steadies her ink. They sit in silence for a moment, unsure of what to do. Edward searches for his ink, but realizes he has forgotten it—the only ink is by Elinor. She holds it up in invitation. In order to reach the ink, he either has to lean across the whole length of the table or walk over to her. Choosing to be brave, he stands up, walks over to the ink, and dips in his quill; he's quite close to her. Everything about the moment is awkward. He walks back to his seat, holding his hand beneath the quill, which is now dripping ink everywhere. He sits and puts his pen to paper, but does not write. There is another brief moment of silence.

EDWARD. Miss Dashwood. I fear I have not yet had a proper occasion to express to you, ah, personally, my very sincere condolences on the loss of your father.

ELINOR. Oh. Yes. Thank you.

Another pause. They bend their heads to writing; neither of them is able to write. He clears his throat.

EDWARD. Miss Dashwood. I hope that my presence here has not caused you any...additional distress in this sad time. My sister—I confess, I was not entirely informed of all the particular...particulars before my visit.

ELINOR. Oh. No. You needn't apologize, Mr. Ferrars. In fact, I must thank you—My mother said only yesterday that your presence at Norland is a comfort, and I am very grateful for anything that raises her spirits.

EDWARD. I am pleased that your mother is...pleased. (*Mentally kicking himself for that.*) That is, ah. Might I enquire after Mrs. Dashwood?

ELINOR. It is rather too early to think of any moderation in grief. My father's death—it is very difficult.

She attempts not to get emotional.

EDWARD. I am sure that you must be a great comfort to her.

ELINOR. I attempt to be.

Side #3

The Morning After

The next morning, in the Dashwoods' room at Mrs. Jennings' London house. Marianne and Elinor are both asleep, still in their clothes. A knock on the door wakes them up.

MRS. JENNINGS. My dear Miss Marianne, I have something from a certain special someone, which I am sure you will find to your liking!

Marianne jumps up from the bed and flies to the door, grabbing the letter and running back to the bed. Elinor, just behind her, swiftly blocks the doorway.

I never saw a young woman so desperately in love in my life! Pray, when are they to be married?

ELINOR. You don't really, Ma'am, believe that my sister is engaged to Mr. Willoughby! I always thought you were only joking.

MRS. JENNINGS. For shame, Miss Elinor! How can you talk so? We all know that they were madly in love with each other from the first moment they met! Because you are so sly about it personally, you think nobody else has any sense, but I tell you all society knows of it from here to Devonshire and back again. I tell everybody of it, myself!

ELINOR. Indeed, ma'am, you are mistaken. And you are doing a very unkind thing in spreading the report.

MRS. JENNINGS. Yes, yes. You are a very clever and subtle creature, Miss Elinor. Mum's the word until the banns are read, hey? (*Winking broadly.*) I am off to visit my Charlotte, but have asked Susan to lay out a nice breakfast for you two to stuff yourselves! Ta-ta!

Elinor rushes back into the bedroom, where Marianne sits, holding the letter. She reads the letter out loud.

ELINOR. "My dear madam, I gather that something in my behavior last night did not meet with your approval, although I am at a loss as

Side #4

MARIANNE. Elinor, what shall I do? What shall I do? (*Getting hysterical.*)

ELINOR. Marianne, please! Try to stay calm!

MARIANNE. How can I be calm?!!

ELINOR. What good does it do to become hysterical?!

MARIANNE. Leave me if it upsets you so much!

ELINOR. Do not indulge in this display!

MARIANNE. Leave me, hate me, forget me! But do not ask me not to feel!

ELINOR. Marianne, it might have been worse! Your engagement could have gone on much longer before he ended it!

MARIANNE. What engagement?

ELINOR. You weren't engaged?! But Marianne, you wrote to him!

MARIANNE. Leave me alone, leave me alone!

She sobs. Mrs. Jennings, without knocking, hurries in. The Gossips crowd outside the door.

MRS. JENNINGS. How do you do, my dear?

Marianne howls.

Poor thing, she looks very bad.—And no wonder, it is but too true. He is to be married very soon. Mrs. Taylor told me of it downstairs, and I almost sank on the spot! Well, said I, if this is true, he has used a young lady of my acquaintance abominably ill, and I wish with all my soul his wife may plague his heart out. But he is not the only man in the world worth having, Miss Marianne! You will soon be beating them back with a stout stick!

Marianne half-screams.

Yes, have your little cry out. (*Moving away from the bed; to Elinor, in a not-quiet stage whisper.*) Luckily, the Parrys and Sandersons are coming tonight, and that will amuse her!

Side #4 (cont.)

ELINOR. (*Attempts to usher her out of the room.*) Dear ma'am, I am sure Marianne will not leave her room today.

MRS. JENNINGS. I cannot believe that a man should use a pretty girl so ill! But when there is plenty of money on one side, and none on the other...

ELINOR. The lady then—is very rich?

MRS. JENNINGS. Fifty thousand pounds, my dear. The young Miss Grey—a stylish girl they say, but not handsome. Fifty thousand pounds! And it won't come before it's wanted, for they say he is all to pieces! Well, 'tis a true saying about an ill-wind, for it will be all the better for Colonel Brandon! How he'll chuckle over this news! They'll be married by Mid-summer. I shall spirit him up as soon as I can—maybe he'll come tonight. One shoulder of mutton, you know, drives another down!

She scampers off. Elinor turns back into the room and approaches the bed.

MARIANNE. All she wants is gossip, and she only likes me because I supply her with it.

ELINOR. Marianne.

MARIANNE. I do not want to talk.

ELINOR. I will leave you, if you will promise to rest.

Marianne pulls the covers over her head. Mrs. Jennings knocks at the door.

MRS. JENNINGS. I recollected that I had some fine old Constantia wine in the house, so I have brought a glass of it for your sister. My poor husband was very fond of it whenever he had a touch of his gout.

ELINOR. How good you are, ma'am.

Mrs. Jennings slips off. Elinor looks at Marianne, who is still under the covers, and tosses off the wine herself.

4. continued

Side #5

After the Scandal

Marianne sits on her bed, staring into space. Elinor sits with her.

ELINOR. And so you see that we never really knew Willoughby at all.

Pause.

...Marianne?

MARIANNE. I would sooner think myself deceived by all the world than by Willoughby.

ELINOR. He has practiced nothing but deceit, from beginning to end!

MARIANNE. I cannot explain his behavior towards that poor girl, but whatever his sins, I know that he loved me. He loves me. That much is true.

ELINOR. Did he tell you that he loved you?

MARIANNE. Yes—no. Never absolutely. It does not matter.

ELINOR. Of course it does. He is the worst kind of villain.

MARIANNE. No, he isn't! Not at heart. You say that we never knew him, Elinor, but I did, I knew him as I know myself! If he is wicked, then perhaps so am I. He and I are the same.

ELINOR. You are not being reasonable!

MARIANNE. You do not understand.

ELINOR. Perhaps I don't! Marianne, how could you have written to him?

MARIANNE. I felt myself to be as solemnly engaged to him, as if the strictest legal covenant had bound us!

ELINOR. Obviously, he did not feel the same.

MARIANNE. He DID! Elinor, I may have been cruelly used; but not by Willoughby.

ELINOR. Who else but Willoughby?

MARIANNE. I do not know!

ELINOR. Well, whoever may have been your enemy, let them be cheated of their triumph, by seeing you rise above these circumstances!

Side #5 (cont.)

MARIANNE. I care not who knows that I am wretched! It is easy for those who have no sorrow to talk of calmness and exertion!

ELINOR. Do you think I have no sorrow, Marianne? (*Restraining herself.*) ...Can you believe me capable of being at ease, when I see you in this state?

MARIANNE. Forgive me: I know that you feel for me, and I am very sorry to make you unhappy. But mine is a misery which nothing can ever do away.

Beat.

I want to go home.

John Calls

John Dashwood sails in, surrounded by several Gossips. They prepare him for the party as he speaks, as much to them as to Elinor and Marianne. He is part of the machine.

JOHN. My dear sisters! So delightful to see you in town! Fanny and I wanted to stop in on you earlier, of course, but you know we have been very busy visiting and being visited!

GOSSIP 1. Visit!

GOSSIP 4. Visit!

GOSSIP 3. Visit visit visit!

MARIANNE. Pardon me.

She sits.

Side #6

Lucy's Visit

The next day; Lucy sails in and sits next to Elinor, in Mrs. Jennings' parlor.

LUCY. My dearest, dearest friend! Can you believe it?

ELINOR. What, exactly?

LUCY. Did you not see Mrs. Ferrars' way of treating me yesterday? So exceedingly affable! So kind, from the moment I was introduced! She really seemed to take a special fancy to me! Were you not quite struck with it?!

ELINOR. She was certainly very civil to you.

LUCY. Did you see nothing but civility?

ELINOR. If his family knew about your engagement, nothing could be more promising than their treatment of you. But as that is not the case—

LUCY. Why in the world would they pretend to like me, if they did not? Mrs. Ferrars is affability itself, and so is your sister-in-law, and I think it will all work out **SPLENDIDLY**, and all my fears were for nothing!

Pause.

ELINOR. I suppose time will tell.

Pause.

LUCY. Why did you never mention, Miss Dashwood, how exceedingly charming your sister-in-law is? She is generosity itself. She wrote Anne and I a little note this morning and invited both of us to stay with her for a bit; isn't that very delightful?

Beat.

Are you ill, Miss Dashwood?—You seem rather low.

ELINOR. I never was in better health.

LUCY. Really? You do not look it. Oh, I am so glad that his mother loves me already! I would have given up all hope if she had treated me in a forbidding sort of way, and made clear that I was unwelcome! For when she **DOES** dislike people, I know it is most unshakable and violent!

Side #7

~~ELINOR. "Marianne"?! You should not be so familiar.~~

~~WILLOUGHBY. Is she in as much danger as they say?~~

~~*Elinor does not speak.*~~

~~Is she dying?~~

~~*Beat.*~~

~~It is my fault, I know. Please let me see her.~~

~~ELINOR. No.~~

~~*She turns to leave again.*~~

WILLOUGHBY. I did not plan any of this! I never wanted to hurt anyone!

ELINOR. I must ask you to leave.

WILLOUGHBY. When I met your sister, I only wanted an idle dalliance. Something to do in the country.

ELINOR. Mr. Willoughby!

WILLOUGHBY. I mean—you misunderstand me—I thought that it was only a harmless flirtation! And at first, I thought that surely Marianne also knew that it could not lead to anything. You must see that it was impossible for me to seriously pursue a girl with no fortune, no station, no—forgive me—no notable family. But quite against my intentions, the part I played became the most pressing reality. I found myself most terribly in love.

ELINOR. —Did you?

WILLOUGHBY. I was going to ask her to marry me!

ELINOR. And what, precisely, stopped you?

He does not answer.

You must think me very foolish indeed.

WILLOUGHBY. My luck went bad. Mrs. Smith had somehow been informed of a...regrettable connection in my past.

ELINOR. I know your history, Mr. Willoughby.

WILLOUGHBY. I can guess who might have told you. Ask yourself

Side #7 (cont.)

if he is truly impartial! It was wrong, yes, I ought never to have touched Jane, but do not suppose that because I was a libertine, SHE was a saint!

ELINOR. Any weakness on her part is no excuse.

WILLOUGHBY. I assure you, Miss Dashwood, I have paid richly for my sins. Mrs. Smith pronounced me no gentleman, and I was summarily disinherited. I had many debts. Should I have gone to prison? I had no practical choice but to give up Marianne!

ELINOR. When you left Marianne that day, did you tell her that you would soon return?

WILLOUGHBY. I do not know what I told her, I was out of my head! I had to resolve to forget her entirely.

ELINOR. You did an excellent job—you ignored her letters, shunned her in public, exposed her to the worst kind of gossip and intrigue! Is this all evidence of the great love you have borne her?

WILLOUGHBY. Everything had already been settled between Miss Grey and me!

ELINOR. Then you have made your choice. And now you will be held to it. Goodbye.

WILLOUGHBY. I must see her.

He begins to push past her anyway.

ELINOR. Seeing you will endanger her recovery!

WILLOUGHBY. Recovery!

ELINOR. Her fever broke last night. She is no longer in material danger.

WILLOUGHBY. Miss Dashwood. You have been very cruel.

ELINOR. As have you.

Side #8

He loves her, of course.

ELINOR. To judge from his spirits, he does not think that there is much hope.

MRS. DASHWOOD. He thinks Marianne's affection and opinions too deeply rooted for any change, and even supposing her heart free again, does not believe that he could ever attach her.

MARIANNE. *(More gently than she spoke to Edward.)* Did you know, Colonel, that Shakespeare writes in a rhythm which matches precisely the beats of the human heart?... Ba-bum ba-bum ba-bum.

She opens her eyes and smiles at him. Colonel Brandon looks at her, then continues reading.

MRS. DASHWOOD. Hm-hm!

The Recovery

Marianne and Elinor walk, slowly.

MARIANNE. And he had been drinking?

ELINOR. Yes—but I think he meant it all. Marianne...may I ask?

MARIANNE. Yes?

ELINOR. Do you perceive now that marriage to Willoughby would have condemned you to continual unhappiness? Can you imagine being bound forever to someone so endlessly selfish?

MARIANNE. Do you think him selfish?

ELINOR. The whole of his behavior from the beginning to the end of the affair, has been based on selfishness. His own pleasure, is, in every particular, his ruling principle.

MARIANNE. I suppose my happiness was never his object.

ELINOR. At present, he regrets marrying for money. And why does he regret it?—Because it has not made him perfectly happy. But had he married you, he would have always been poor, suffering all of poverty's attendant evils. He has already proven that he is capable of

Side #8 (cont.)

treating you with great cruelty and indifference when it suits his purposes; in those circumstances, who knows how you might have fared?

MARIANNE. Elinor...I agree with you. Are you surprised?

ELINOR. A little!

MARIANNE. I am glad we can speak about it. I am relieved to hear that he was not ALWAYS acting a part, not ALWAYS deceiving me; it makes me feel not quite such a fool. I think I may even understand how he justified his actions entirely.

ELINOR. Do you still acquit him?

MARIANNE. No. I assure you that I see everything as you desire me to. He was very wrong in what he did, and I never could have been happy with him after knowing how he treated that unfortunate girl. But I also feel sorry for him. Is that very foolish?

ELINOR. No. No, not at all.

MARIANNE. I am grateful that you told me, Elinor. I do not regret anything, I assure you—except my own behavior.

ELINOR. Do you compare your behavior with his?

MARIANNE. No. I compare it with what it ought to have been; I compare it with yours.

Long pause.

ELINOR. (*Moved.*) Well.

Pause, pokes her.

...You are a goose.

MARIANNE. We must turn back.

ELINOR. Are you tired?

MARIANNE. No. The Colonel has promised to read *The Tempest* with me this evening, and I don't wish to be late.

Elinor gives her a Look.

He's very good!

& continued.

Side #9

Colonel Brandon's Revelation

The next morning. Elinor sits and attempts to compose herself in the drawing room. She begins to write to her mother.

SERVANT. Colonel Brandon, miss.

Elinor hurriedly hides the letter and smooths her hair. Colonel Brandon enters.

ELINOR. I am afraid Mrs. Jennings is away from home, Colonel.

COL. BRANDON. And your sister?

ELINOR. Marianne is...unwell.

COL. BRANDON. Perhaps, then, what I heard this morning—there may be more truth in it than I thought possible.

ELINOR. What did you hear?

COL. BRANDON. It concerned a certain gentleman.

ELINOR. You mean Mr. Willoughby's sudden engagement to Miss Grey. Have you also heard that Miss Grey has fifty thousand pounds?

COL. BRANDON. ...How is your sister?

ELINOR. Her sufferings have been very severe.

COL. BRANDON. Miss Dashwood, I may be able to offer some comfort—no, not comfort, but I may be able to relate some—history about Mr. Willoughby which may bring some...clarity.

ELINOR. Please go on.

COL. BRANDON. You may find me a very awkward narrator.

ELINOR. Please.

COL. BRANDON. In my youth, I knew a lady who...was very like your sister Marianne, both in person and in temperament. I loved her, and she loved me in return—but Eliza had no fortune, and I was a young man with no independence and no occupation. I was under my father's power.

Beat.

He forbade the match, of course. A marriage of that kind was impossible, he said, unthinkable—and though I protested violently, I am ashamed to say that he won his point at the last. Threatened

Side #9 (cont.)

with disinheritance and disownment, I faltered. And Eliza was sent away.

Pause.

At seventeen, I was also shipped off to my regiment in the East Indies, and there lost contact with Eliza entirely. A man came along, and treated her kindly for a time...and then another, and then another. I returned to England a grown man, independent—and determined to find her. By the time I did, she was dying in the poorhouse, her infant by her side. You may have heard some rumors about my ward, Miss Jane Williams. She is Eliza's daughter, whom I swore to look after as my own. That was fifteen years ago. Last February, Jane suddenly disappeared from her boarding school; for months, I could not find her. Finally, I received a letter from her—on that evening I left Barton so suddenly. In it, she did not name the man who had seduced her—his luck, for I would have done him violence at the table, even as he basked in your sister's smiles.

ELINOR. Mr. Willoughby.

COL. BRANDON. He left Jane in a situation of the utmost distress, with no home, no help, no friends, ignorant of his whereabouts. She is fifteen. And now she is with child.

ELINOR. This is beyond everything!

COL. BRANDON. When I came to you last week, I thought that all was settled between your sister and Mr. Willoughby. I did not know how I could stop the marriage without heaping scandal upon both her and my poor Jane.

ELINOR. Who knows what his designs on Marianne were!

COL. BRANDON. I promise you, Miss Dashwood, if I did not from my heart believe that this might eventually lessen Miss Marianne's regrets, I would never have burdened you with such troubling information.

He bows.

Side #10

JOHN. Our host, Mrs. Ferrars.

All bow or curtsy as appropriate. Mrs. Ferrars very pointedly turns away from Elinor and mumbles to John.

Yes, ma'am. Mrs. Ferrars says that the Miss Steeles are exceedingly pretty.

Polite murmur. They all sit down, uncomfortably. Conversation starts up. Robert Ferrars strolls up to Elinor and makes a flourishing little bow.

ROBERT FERRARS. Miss Dashwood. Robert Ferrars. You reside in Devonshire, I am told—in a cottage.

ELINOR. We do.

ROBERT FERRARS. For my own part, I am excessively fond of a cottage; there is always so much elegance in a cottage. If I had any money to spare, I should build a cottage, and have all my friends visit me. In my cottage. I advise everybody I see to build a cottage. My intimate friend Lord Courtland—of the Lancashire Courtlands—came to me the other day, and laid before me three different architectural schemes. "Which one should I build, Robby?" said he. "My dear Courtland," said I, throwing them all directly into the fire, "do not build any of these deplorable shacks, but by all means build a cottage." A cottage, man. A cottage, a cottage, a cottage! And THAT was the end of THAT.

ELINOR. *(Pause.)* Indeed.

He bows again.

ROBERT FERRARS. *(Turning to Lucy Steele.)* And you, Miss Steele. Do you live in a cottage?

LUCY. I do not.

ROBERT FERRARS. *(Eyeing her.)* More's the pity.

He saunters away.

LUCY. *(Watching him walk away; to Elinor.)* And that is Edward's brother! They are...very unlike. *(Recalling herself.)* Mrs. Dashwood, I cannot thank you enough for your invitation to dine tonight. Anne and I are quite overwhelmed by your generosity! I only hope we do not intrude!

FANNY. Oh, Miss Lucy. How could a charming creature such as

Side #11

thinks it worth his acceptance? I only wish it were more valuable, but it is enough for him to marry upon.

ELINOR. That is very generous, Colonel. But wouldn't you rather offer him the position yourself?

COL. BRANDON. I do not know him well, Miss Dashwood; I have only met him two or three times. I should think, as you are his old friend, he would be more inclined to hear the happy news from you.

Elinor, trapped, inclines her head.

Edward and Elinor Meet

EDWARD. Miss Dashwood. I received a note from Mrs. Jennings. That—that you wished to speak with me?

ELINOR. Yes! Hello. Yes. I have something of consequence to inform you of. I am charged with a most agreeable office! (*Trying to make the best of it and having some difficulty.*) Our dear friend, Colonel Brandon, has desired me to say, that understanding you mean to take orders, he has great pleasure in offering you the living of Delaford. Allow me to congratulate you, and to join in his wish that it may allow you to—establish all your views of (*Looking for the correct word.*) domesticity. (*Regrets using that word.*)

EDWARD. Colonel Brandon?

ELINOR. Yes. Colonel Brandon has heard of your troubles and wishes to help in any way that he can. As do we all.

EDWARD. Colonel Brandon give me a living!—

ELINOR. The unkindness of your family has made you astonished to find kindness anywhere.

EDWARD. No.

He regards her seriously.

I am sure I owe this to you.

ELINOR. You are very much mistaken. I have had no hand in it. Not that I wouldn't have. Had a hand in it. If I had had a hand to give in it.

Awkward pause.

Side #11 (cont.)

EDWARD. Miss Dashwood. When I became engaged to Miss Steele, I was very young, and quite...stupid, really.

Another awkward pause.

Colonel Brandon lodges, I think, on St. James Street.

ELINOR. I believe so.

EDWARD. I must hurry away then, to thank him.

ELINOR. May...may I give you my unceasing good wishes for your happiness.

EDWARD. And mine for yours.

Pause.

Miss Dashwood.

He bows and leaves. As Elinor broods, the Gossips sweep her, Marianne, and Mrs. Jennings up and take them to Cleveland. Marianne and Elinor both look rather the worse for wear.

Cleveland

11 continued

MRS. JENNINGS. And here we are! Miss Elinor, Miss Marianne, Colonel, may I introduce Charlotte, the prettiest of my daughters? Ooh, Charlotte, you have grown so plump!

She exits. Colonel Brandon exits with her, leaving the sisters alone for a moment.

MARIANNE. I am so stiff from the carriage. I may take a little walk around the grounds.

ELINOR. It is so late, and looks as if it may rain—wait only until tomorrow, and I will walk with you.

MARIANNE. It is not going to rain! I shall go mad if I do not walk, Elinor. I will return soon.

ELINOR. At least take your shawl!