

WILLOUGHBY

*(As WILLOUGHBY reaches to make the cut, ELINOR enters, walking towards the cottage, distressed. She stops upon seeing WILLOUGHBY and MARIANNE; they do not notice her. Beat)* I took the liberty of hoping that you might indeed bestow such a gift upon me— *(He removes a piece of paper from his pocket and carefully folds the lock of hair into it)*

MARIANNE

It is a gift I could bestow upon no one but yourself. *(ELINOR steps forward)*

ELINOR

Good evening. Both of you were much missed this afternoon!

WILLOUGHBY

Dear Miss Dashwood! We should have been only too glad of your company—

ELINOR

I imagine I might have been in the way.

MARIANNE

Elinor—

WILLOUGHBY

Let me take my leave of both you ladies now. I am sure your mother must be in dreadful want of company. Good night, Miss Dashwood. Marianne.

MARIANNE

Good night. And I thank you again for the beautiful mare. I regret deeply that we have not the stable or the groom to board her at Barton Cottage at this time.

WILLOUGHBY

Dear Marianne, the horse is still yours. When you leave Barton to form your own establishment in—a more lasting home, there Queen Mab shall receive you, and we shall ride the downs together.

MARIANNE

On the morrow, then.

WILLOUGHBY

On the morrow.

ELINOR

Good night. *(WILLOUGHBY exits, towards the carriage)* Well. I suppose I need not ask where you have spent the afternoon.

MARIANNE

I suppose you need not, if you have no interest in hearing about the matters of greatest importance to my heart and to my present and future happiness.

ELINOR

And you give no thought to how your behavior appears to our friends and neighbors! You have known the gentleman hardly a fortnight—

MARIANNE

It is not time or opportunity that is to determine intimacy—it is disposition alone. Seven years would be insufficient to make some people acquainted with each other, and seven days are more than enough for others. (*Pause. ELINOR looks at her, trying to collect her thoughts*)

ELINOR

To allow him to give you a horse, Marianne! It is in no way an appropriate gift. It bespeaks a promise far beyond—

MARIANNE

Far beyond what, exactly? What do you mean to say?

ELINOR

Far beyond the bounds either of propriety or of possibility.

MARIANNE

Elinor, I could not be more insulted than I am now, seeing how little delight you take in our attachment.

ELINOR

I take great pleasure in it, Marianne; it pains me to hear such an accusation. All I can wish of your attachment is that it were less openly shewn.

MARIANNE

And why should it not be openly shewn? (*Music in*) I have never spent a pleasanter evening in my life!