

Edward and Elinor

The Gossips turn with great speculative interest towards Elinor, the eldest Dashwood sister, sitting at a table in the parlor at Norland Park. She is attempting to write a letter. Edward Ferrars enters. Edward is awkward, shy, but fundamentally sweet. He also carries pen and paper, to write a letter.

EDWARD. *(Looks up and sees Elinor.)* Oh! Please do excuse me. *(He turns to flee.)*

ELINOR. Mr. Ferrars.

EDWARD. Miss Dashwood. Please pardon me. I did not ... I do not intend to intrude. *(He turns to leave, giving a hurried half-bow, and drops the pen and paper — leading to an undignified scramble. He is mortified. It is very endearing. This may be the first time that either Elinor or Edward has been completely alone with an eligible member of the opposite sex — ever.)*

ELINOR. Oh, no. You weren't. Intruding. Are you, ah — *(Indicating his paper.)*

EDWARD. — Yes. I am. Writing. A letter, yes. Oh. Are you, I see — are you as well?

ELINOR. I am. Writing, yes. *(He almost turns to leave again.)* Mr. Ferrars. Pray, do not leave? On my account. That is ... the light — is very good here. *(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. *(Small pause.)* I am writing to our cousin, Sir John Middleton. He may have a cottage available for us in Devonshire. The rent is uncommonly moderate.

EDWARD. I imagine it must be very difficult. To leave your home.

ELINOR. Yes. We were ... we have been very happy here. *(She attempts not to cry.)* I must not smudge this.

EDWARD! Miss Dashwood ... please forgive me, I fear — I did not mean to upset you — *(Edward impulsively takes out his handkerchief and brings it over to her, half-kneeling. Elinor takes it, slightly mortified.)*

ELINOR. Mr. Ferrars. I cannot use this. *(She shows him. There is ink all over the handkerchief, from his stained band. There is a moment of awkwardness; then she begins to laugh a little. They both begin to laugh a little, despite themselves.)*

EDWARD. Miss Dashwood,
I beg your pardon ...
no, this is inexcusable ...
I am very, very sorry ...

ELINOR. Oh, no — it's
very — it's very kind of
you — I beg YOUR pardon ...
Oh no, no, please stop,
you're going to smear it ...

(Fanny comes in and absorbs it all, Edward kneeling very close to Elinor. Edward looks up and starts guiltily, which makes it worse.)