

~~I don't mean it. I'm sorry. I promise that if you get better, Marianne, I will never chide you again. Please, dearest — you cannot leave me. Do not leave me alone here. Please. (Lights fall on her holding Marianne's hand. Hours later. Elinor awakes, having fallen asleep next to Marianne. She feels her forehead, then starts. The doctor comes in and bends over Marianne. The sound of a carriage arriving. Elinor rushes out to meet her mother ...)~~

## ELINOR + WILLOUGHBY

### Willoughby's Visit

*She hurries downstairs, only to see Willoughby. She immediately turns to go.*

WILLOUGHBY. Miss Dashwood.

ELINOR. Your business cannot be with ME, sir. The servants must have forgotten to tell you that Mr. Palmer was not at home.

WILLOUGHBY. Had they told me that Mr. Palmer and all his relations were at the devil, it would not have turned me from the door! (*Elinor turns to leave again.*) How is your sister?

ELINOR. You have no right to ask. (*He stands to block her way.*) Mr. Willoughby!

WILLOUGHBY. Forgive me. I have been drinking.

ELINOR. What do you want?

WILLOUGHBY. ... I want to make things right, if I can. I want something like forgiveness from Marianne.

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 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.