

Excerpt Eight (Elinor & Willoughby)

WILLOUGHBY. Miss Dashwood... (ELINOR turns to go.) I entreat you to stay.

ELINOR. Your business cannot be with me.

WILLOUGHBY. It is with you, and only you.

ELINOR. Pray be quick sir.

WILLOUGHBY. Your sister, I have heard...

ELINOR. She is out of danger, or so I hope. I must return to her.

WILLOUGHBY. It is...a gift.

ELINOR. I cannot stay, sir.

WILLOUGHBY. It is our last time together, perhaps. One thing...do you think me a knave or a fool?

(She stares at him.) Yes, I am very drunk.

ELINOR. And you need a very particular excuse for forcing yourself upon my notice.

WILLOUGHBY. I came for forgiveness, for though I am a block head, I am not a rascal.

ELINOR. Be satisfied then. Marianne has long forgiven you.

WILLOUGHBY. Has she? She should not have. My vanity enjoyed her attentions, without any design of returning her affections.

ELINOR. I will listen no longer.

WILLOUGHBY. Please. Please. I did not know then what it was to love. But with her...with Marianne, by measurable degrees I grew to care. To love. But just as I had determined to tell her...to ask her if...a discovery took place. Mrs. Smith had somehow been informed of my addresses.

ELINOR. And what said Mrs. Smith?

WILLOUGHBY. She knew I had been a libertine...she offered to forgive me if I married a woman she had chosen. When I declined I was dismissed from her favor. It was then I left all that I loved and went to her to whom at best I was only indifferent. I married Miss Grey, to save myself from penury.

ELINOR. You are very wrong, Mr. Willoughby; very blamable. You have made your choice, it was not forced on you. Your wife has a claim on your respect at least.