

Excerpt Five (Elinor & Mrs. Dashwood)

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. What can have happened? Can they have quarreled? No. Rather I think Mrs. Smith suspects his regard for Marianne, disapproves of it and sends him off. He is aware of her disapproval and therefore dares not, at present, confess to her his engagement to Marianne. (To Elinor, who stands quietly)

And now, Elinor, what have you to say?

ELINOR. I can hardly tell you myself. But suspicion of something unpleasant is the inevitable consequence of such an alteration as we have just witnessed in him.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. What is it you suspect him of?

ELINOR. Willoughby may, undoubtedly, have very sufficient reasons for his conduct and I will hope he has and yet—secrecy may be advisable; but I still wonder at it being practiced by him.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. But do you admit the justice of what I have said in his defense?

ELINOR. Not entirely. It may be proper to conceal their engagement, if they are engaged, from Mrs. Smith, but that is no excuse for their concealing it from us.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. Concealing it from us! This is strange indeed, when your eyes have been reproaching them every day for their incautiousness.

ELINOR. I want no proof of their affection, but of their engagement I do.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. I am perfectly satisfied in both.

ELINOR. Yet not one syllable has been said on the subject by either of them.

MRS. HENRY DASHWOOD. I have not wanted syllables where actions have spoken so plainly. Has not his behavior to Marianne and to all of us, for at least the last fortnight, declared that he loved and considered her as his future wife, and that he felt for us the attachment of the nearest

relation? Have we not perfectly understood each other? Has not my consent been daily asked by his looks, his manner and affectionate respect? My Elinor, is it possible to doubt their engagement? How could such a thought occur to you?

ELINOR. Their silence, Mother, outweighs all circumstances.