

# Sense and Sensibility

Jane Austen

*Marianne and Elinor are sisters. Elinor is romantically attached to Edward Ferrars. However, it is revealed that Edward is secretly engaged to someone else, a woman named Lucy Steele. In this section, Elinor speaks to her sister Marianne about the engagement.*

'Edward will marry Lucy; he will marry a woman superior in person and understanding to half her sex; and time and habit will teach him to forget that he ever thought another superior to her.'

'If such is your way of thinking,' said Marianne, 'if the loss of what is most valued is so easily to be made up by something else, your resolution, your self-command, are, perhaps, a little less to be wondered at. – They are brought more within my comprehension.'

'I understand you. You do not suppose that I have ever felt much. For four months, Marianne, I have had all this hanging on my mind, without being at liberty to speak of it to a single creature; knowing that it would make you and my mother most unhappy whenever it were explained to you, yet unable to prepare you for it in the least. It was told me, – it was in a manner forced on me by the very person herself, whose prior engagement ruined all my prospects; and told me, as I thought, with triumph. This person's suspicions, therefore, I have had to oppose, by endeavouring to appear indifferent where I have been most deeply interested; and it has not been only once; I have had her hopes and exultation to listen to again and again. I have known myself to be divided from Edward for ever, without hearing one circumstance that could make me less desire the connection. Nothing has proved him unworthy; nor has anything declared him indifferent to me. I have had to contend against the unkindness of his sister, and the insolence of his mother; and have suffered the punishment of an attachment, without enjoying its advantages. And all this has been going on at a time, when, as you know too well, it has not been my only unhappiness. If you can think me capable of ever feeling, surely you may suppose that I have suffered now. The composure of mind with which I have brought myself at present to consider the matter, the consolation that I have been willing to admit, have been the effect of constant and painful exertion; they did not spring up of themselves; they did not occur to relieve my spirits at first. No, Marianne. Then, if I had not been bound to silence, perhaps nothing could have kept me entirely – not even what I owed to my dearest friends – from openly showing that I was very unhappy.'

Marianne was quite subdued.

'Oh! Elinor,' she cried, 'you have made me hate myself for ever. – How barbarous have I been to you! – you, who have been my only comfort, who have borne with me in all my misery, who have seemed to be only suffering for me! – Is this my gratitude? – Is this the only return I can make you? – Because your merit cries out upon myself, I have been trying to do it away.'

The tenderest caresses followed this confession.

Chapter 37