
PRAISE FOR QUIRK CLASSIC #1

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies

By Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith

“A delectable literary mash-up . . . might we hope for a sequel?

Grade A-.”

—Lisa Schwarzbaum of *Entertainment Weekly*

“Jane Austen isn’t for everyone. Neither are zombies. But combine the two and the only question is why didn’t anyone think of this before? The judicious addition of flesh-eating undead to this otherwise faithful reworking is just what Austen’s gem needed.”

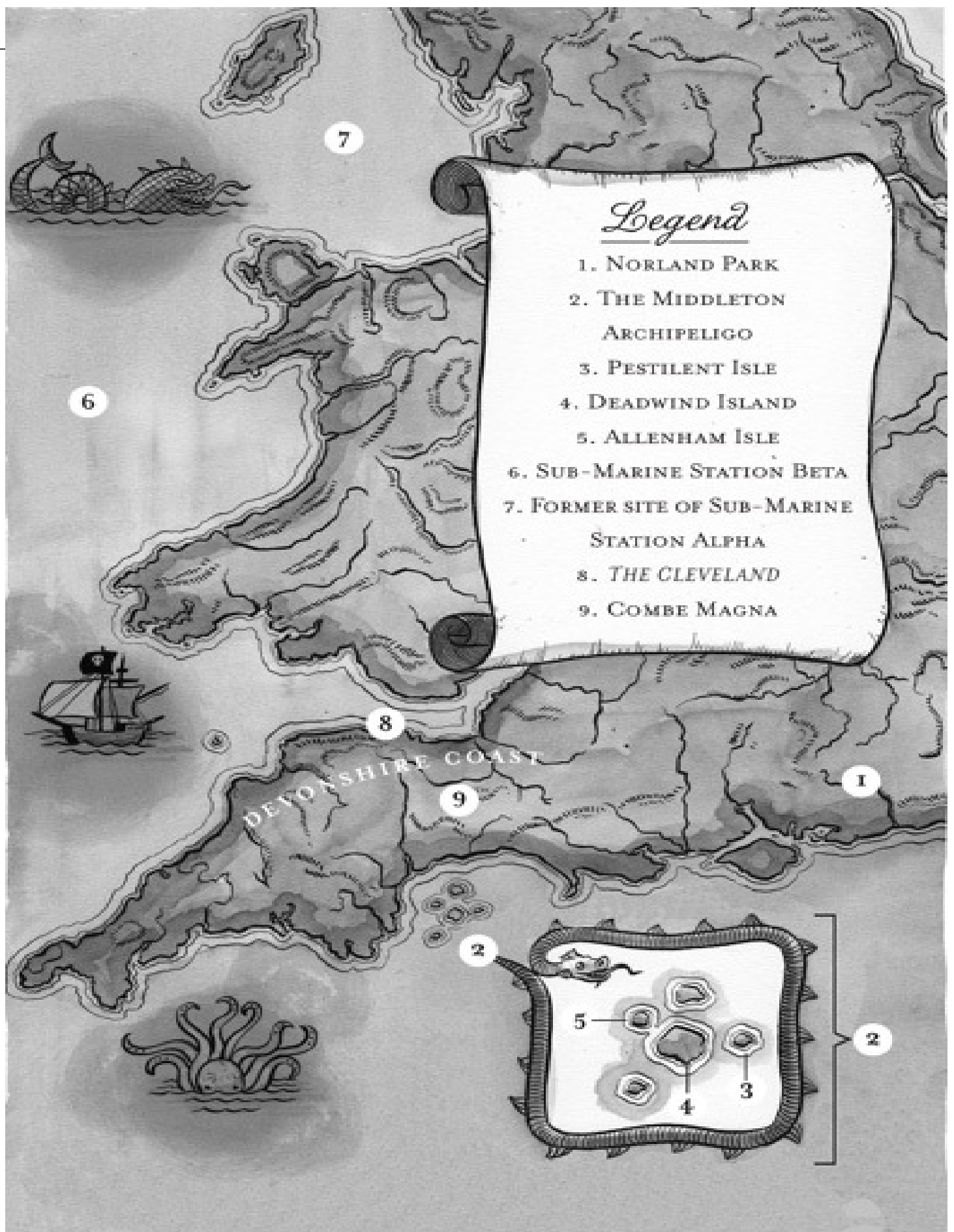
—*Wired*

“Has there ever been a work of literature that couldn’t be improved by adding zombies?”

—Lev Grossman, *Time*

“Such is the accomplishment of *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies* that after reveling in its timeless intrigue, it’s difficult to remember how Austen’s novel got along without the undead. What begins as a gimmick ends with renewed appreciation of the indomitable appeal of Austen’s language, characters, and situations. Grade A.”

—*The A.V. Club*



Legend

1. NORLAND PARK
2. THE MIDDLETON ARCHIPELIGO
3. PESTILENT ISLE
4. DEADWIND ISLAND
5. ALLENHAM ISLE
6. SUB-MARINE STATION BETA
7. FORMER SITE OF SUB-MARINE STATION ALPHA
8. THE CLEVELAND
9. COMBE MAGNA

2

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4

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2

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7

6

~~SENSE AND SENSIBILITY AND SEA MONSTERS~~



BY JANE AUSTEN AND BEN H. WINTERS
ILLUSTRATIONS BY EUGENE SMITH



This book is dedicated to my parents
lovers of great literature and great silliness.

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CHAPTER 1

THE FAMILY OF DASHWOOD had been settled in Sussex since before the Alteration, when the waters of the world grew cold and hateful to the sons of man, and darkness moved on the face of the deep.

The Dashwood estate was large, and their residence was at Norland Park, in the dead centre of the property, set back from the shoreline several hundred yards and ringed by torches.

The late owner of this estate was a single man, who lived to a very advanced age, and who for many years of his life had a constant companion and housekeeper in his sister. Her death came as a surprise ten years before his own; she was beating laundry upon a rock that revealed itself to be the camouflaged exoskeleton of an overgrown crustacean, a striated hermit crab the size of a German shepherd. The enraged creature affixed itself to her face with a predictably unfortunate effect. As she rolled helplessly in the mud and sand, the crab mauled her most thoroughly, suffocating her mouth and nasal passages with its mucocutaneous undercarriage. Her death caused a great change in the elderly Mr. Dashwood's home. To supply her loss, the old man invited and received into his house the family of his nephew Mr. Henry Dashwood, the legal inheritor of the Norland estate, and the person to whom he intended to bequeath it.

By a former marriage, Henry had one son, John; by his present lady, three daughters. The son, a steady, respectable young man, was amply provided for by the fortune of his mother. The succession to the Norland estate, therefore, was not so really important to John as to his half sisters; for the mother had nothing, and their fortune would thus depend upon their father's inheriting the old gentleman's property, so it could one day come to them.

The old gentleman died; his will was read, and like almost every other will, gave as much disappointment as pleasure. He was neither so unjust, nor so ungrateful, as to leave his estate from his nephew—but Mr. Dashwood had wished for it more for the sake of his wife and daughters than for himself or his son—and to John alone it was secured! The three girls were left with a mere thousand pounds a-piece.

Henry Dashwood's disappointment was at first severe; but his temper was cheerful and sanguine, and his thoughts soon turned to a long-held dream of noble adventure. The source of the Alteration was unknown and unknowable, but Mr. Dashwood held an eccentric theory: that there was discoverable, in some distant corner of the globe, the headwaters of a noxious stream that fed a virulent flow into every sea, every lake and estuary, poisoning the very well of the world. It was this insalubrious stream (went Henry Dashwood's hypothesis), which had affected the Alteration; which had turned the creatures of the ocean against the people of the earth; which made even the tiniest darting minnow and the gentlest dolphin into aggressive, blood-thirsty predators, hardened and hateful towards our bipedal race; which had given foul birth to whole new races of man-hating, shape-shifting ocean creatures, sirens and sea witches and mermaids and mermen; which rendered the oceans of the world naught but great burbling salt-cauldrons of death. It was Mr. Dashwood's resolution to join the ranks of those brave souls who had fought and navigated their way beyond England's coastal waters in search of those headwaters and that dread source, to discover a method to dam its feculent flow.

Alas! A quarter mile off the coast of Sussex, Mr. Dashwood was eaten by a hammerhead shark. Such was clear from the distinctive shape of the bite marks and the severity of his injuries, when he washed up on the shore. The cruel beast had torn off his right hand at the wrist, consumed the greater portion of his left leg and the right in its entirety, and gouged a ragged V-shaped section from Mr.

Dashwood's torso.

His son, present wife, and three daughters stood in stunned desolation over the remains of Mr. Dashwood's body; purpled and rock-battered upon the midnight sand, bleeding extravagantly from numerous gashes—but unaccountably still living. As his weeping relations watched, astonished, the dying man clutched a bit of flotsam in his remaining hand and scrawled a message in the mud on the shore; with enormous effort he gestured with his head for his son, John, to crouch and read it. In this final tragic epistle, Mr. Dashwood recommended, with all the strength and urgency his injuries could command, the financial well-being of his stepmother and half sisters, who had been so poorly treated in the old gentleman's will. Mr. John Dashwood had not the strong feelings of the rest of the family, but he was affected by a recommendation of such a nature at such a time, and he promised to do everything in his power to make them comfortable. And then the tide swelled, and carried away the words scrawled in the sand, as well as the final breath of Henry Dashwood.

Mr. John Dashwood had then leisure to consider how much there might prudently be in his power to do for his half sisters. He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold hearted and rather selfish is to be ill-disposed: but he was, in general, well respected. Had he married a more amiable woman, he might have been made still more respectable than he was. But Mrs. John Dashwood was a strong caricature of himself—more narrow-minded and selfish.

When he gave his promise to his father, he meditated within himself to increase the fortunes of his half sisters by the present of a thousand pounds a-piece. The prospect of his own inheritance warmed his heart and made him feel capable of generosity. Yes! He would give them three thousand pounds: he would be liberal and handsome! It would be enough to make them completely easy, and offer to each the prospect of making a home at a decent elevation.

No sooner was what remained of Henry Dashwood arranged in some semblance of a human shape and buried, and the funeral over, than Mrs. John Dashwood arrived at Norland Park without warning with her child and their attendants. No one could dispute her right to come; the house with its elaborate wrought-iron fencing and retinue of eagle-eyed harpoonsmen was her husband's from the moment of his father's decease. But the indelicacy of her conduct, to a woman in Mrs. Dashwood's freshly widowed situation, was highly displeasing. Mrs. John Dashwood had never been a favourite with any of her husband's family; but she had never before had the opportunity of showing them with how little attention to the comfort of other people she could act when occasion required it.



AS HIS WEeping RELATIONS WATCHED, ASTONISHED, THE DYING MAN CLUTCHED A BIT OF FLOTSAM IN HIS REMAINING HAND AND SCRAWLED A MESSAGE IN THE MUDDY SHORE.

“It is plain that your relations have an unfortunate propensity for drawing the unwelcome attention

of Hateful Mother Ocean,” she muttered darkly to her husband shortly after her arrival, “If She intends to claim them, let Her do it far from where my child is at play.”

So acutely did the newly widowed Mrs. Dashwood feel this ungracious behaviour that, on the arrival of her daughter-in-law, she would have quitted the house for ever—had not the entreaty of her eldest girl induced her first to reflect on the propriety of going and second on the madness of taking leave before an armored consort could be assembled to protect them on their journey.

Elinor, this eldest daughter, possessed a strength of understanding which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counselor of her mother. She had an excellent heart, a broad back, and sturdy calf muscles, and she was admired by her sisters and all who knew her as a masterful driftwood whittler. Elinor was studious, having early on intuited that survival depended on understanding; she sat up all nights poring over vast tomes, memorizing the species and genus of every fish and marine mammal, learning to heart their speeds and points of vulnerability, and which bore spiny exoskeletons, which bore fangs, and which tusks.

Elinor’s feelings were strong, but she knew how to govern them. It was a knowledge which her mother had yet to learn, and which one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught. Marianne’s abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor’s. She was as nearly powerful a swimmer, with a remarkable lung capacity; she was sensible and clever, but eager in everything. Her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting; she was everything but prudent. She spoke sighingly of the cruel creatures of the water, even the one that had so recently savaged her father, lending them such flowery appellations as “Our Begilled Tormentors” or “the Unfathomable Ones,” and pondering over their terrible and impenetrable secrets.

Margaret, the youngest sister, was a good-humoured, well-disposed girl, but one with a propensity—as befit her tender years more so than the delicate nature of their situation in a coastal country—to go dancing through rainstorms and splashing in puddles. Again and again Elinor warned her from such childish enthusiasms.

“In the water lies danger, Margaret,” she would say, gravely shaking her head and staring her mischievous sister in the eye. “In the water, only doom.”

CHAPTER 2

MRS. JOHN DASHWOOD now installed herself mistress of Norland; and her mother and sisters-in-law were degraded to the condition of visitors. As such, however, they were treated by Mrs. Dashwood with quiet civility—she reserved for them the gills of the tuna at nuncheon—and by their half brother with kindness. Mr. John Dashwood pressed them with some earnestness to consider Norland their home; and, as no plan appeared so eligible to Mrs. Dashwood as remaining there till she could accommodate herself with a house in the neighbourhood, his invitation was accepted.

A continuance in a place where everything reminded her of former delight—except for the patch of beach where Henry's blood still stained the rocks, no matter how often the tide washed over them—was exactly what suited her mind. In sorrow, she was carried away by her sorrow; conversely, in seasons of cheerfulness, no temper could be more cheerful than hers, or possess that sanguine expectation of happiness that is happiness itself.

Mrs. John Dashwood did not at all approve of what her husband intended to do for his sisters. To take three thousand pounds from the future fortune of their dear little boy, would be impoverishing and endangering him to the most dreadful degree. She begged her husband to think again on the subject. How could he answer it to himself to rob his child of so large a sum? "Why was he to ruin himself and their poor Harry," she asked, "whose little life was already horribly imperiled by living in a coastal county, by giving away all their money to his half sisters?"

"It was my father's last request to me," replied her husband, "Arduously written out, letter by letter, using a bit of waterlogged beach-timber clutched 'twixt the digits of his sole remaining hand, that should assist his widow and daughters."

"He did not know what he was about, I dare say, considering the amount of vital fluids that had spilled upon the beach by the time he wrote it. Had he been in his right senses, he could not have thought of such a thing as begging you to give away half your fortune from your own child."

"He did not stipulate for any particular sum, my dear Fanny; he only requested me, in general terms, to assist them, and make their situation comfortable. As he required the promise, and as I was clutching at bits of his ears and nose to give his face some form of face-shape while he required it, I could do no less than give my word. Something must be done for them whenever they leave Norland and settle in a new home."

"Let *something* be done for your sisters; but *that* something need not be three thousand pounds. Think of the number of life-buoys such a sum can purchase!" she added. "Consider that when the money is parted with it never can return. Your sisters will marry or be devoured, and it will be gone forever."

"Perhaps, then, it would be better for all parties if the sum were diminished one half. Five hundred pounds would be a prodigious increase to their fortunes."

"Oh, beyond anything great! What brother on earth would do half as much for his sisters, even *really* his sisters! And as it is, only half-blood! But you have such a generous spirit! Simply because a man is mauled by a hammerhead does not mean you must do everything he tells you to before he dies!"

"I think I may afford to give them five hundred pounds a-piece. As it is, without any addition on my mine, they will each have above three thousand pounds on their mother's death, which will furnish

very comfortable fortune for any young woman.”

“To be sure it is; and, indeed, it strikes me that they can want no addition at all. They will have ten thousand pounds divided amongst them. If they marry they will be sure of doing well; and if they do not, they may all live very comfortably together on the interest of ten thousand pounds.”

“I wonder therefore whether it would be more advisable to do something for their mother while she lives, rather than for them; something of the annuity kind, I mean. A hundred a year would make them all perfectly comfortable.”

His wife hesitated a little in giving her consent to this plan. “To be sure,” said she, “it is better than parting with fifteen hundred pounds at once. If Mrs. Dashwood should live fifteen years, we shall be completely taken in.”

“Fifteen years! My dear Fanny! Her life cannot be worth half that purchase! Even strong swimmers rarely make it that long, and she’s weak at the hips and knees! I’ve glimpsed her in the bath!”

“Think, John; people always live forever when there is any annuity to be paid them; and old ladies can be surprisingly quick in the water when chased; there is something porpoiselike, I think, in the leathery wrinkliness of their skin. Besides, I have known a great deal of the trouble of annuities; for my mother was charged by my father’s will with the payment of one to three old superannuated servants who had once dragged him from the mouth of a gigantic phocid. Twice every year, these annuities were to be paid, and then there was the trouble of getting it to them; and then one of them was said to have been lost off the Isle of Skye in a shipwreck and cannibalized; and afterwards it turned out it was only his fingers above the knuckles that had been eaten. Her income was not her own, she said, with such perpetual claims on it; and it was the more unkind in my father, because otherwise, the money would have been entirely at my mother’s disposal, without any restriction whatever. It has given me such an abhorrence of annuities, that I am sure I would not pin myself down to the payment of one for all the world.”

“It is certainly an unpleasant thing,” replied Mr. Dashwood, “to have those kinds of yearly drains on one’s income. One’s fortune, as your mother justly says, is *not* one’s own. To be tied to the regular payment of such a sum on every rent day, like Odysseus lashed to the mast, is by no means desirable. It takes away one’s independence.”

“Undoubtedly, and you have no thanks for it. They think themselves secure, you do no more than what is expected, and it raises no gratitude at all. If I were you, whatever I did should be done at my own discretion entirely.”

“I believe you are right, my love. It will be better that there should be no annuity in the case; whatever I may give them occasionally will be of far greater assistance than a yearly allowance. It will certainly be much the best way. A present of fifty pounds, now and then, will prevent their ever being distressed for money, and will, I think, be amply discharging my promise to my father.”

“To be sure it will. Indeed, to say the truth I am convinced that your father had no idea of your giving them any money at all. The assistance he thought of, I dare say, was only such as might be reasonably expected of you; for instance, such as looking out for a comfortable small house for them.”

Their conversation was cut short by the clang of the monster bell; the servants were arriving in a mad panic and bringing up the drawbridge. The front coil of a fire-serpent had been spotted by the night watchman through his spyglass; the beast was some leagues out to sea, but it was uncertain how far inland such creatures could deliver a fireball.

“Perhaps it is best we cower in the attic for the time being,” suggested John Dashwood to his wife.

who most readily agreed, pushing past him as they rushed up the stairs.

This conversation gave to Mr. Dashwood's intentions whatever of decision was wanting before; and by the time they emerged to find, to their relief, that only a small woodland parcel on the outskirts of the estate had been singled, he had resolved that it would be absolutely unnecessary to do more for the widow and children of his father than he and his wife had determined.

CHAPTER 3

MRS. DASHWOOD WAS INDEFATIGABLE in her enquiries for a suitable dwelling in the neighbourhood of Norland, somewhere at a similar remove from the shoreline, if not the same elevation, as their current residence; for to remove from the beloved spot was impossible. But she could hear of no situation that at once answered her notions of comfort and ease, and suited the prudence of Elinor, whose steady judgment rejected several houses as too large for their income, or too hard by the water's edge.

On the tragic night that Henry Dashwood was murdered by the hammerhead, Mrs. Dashwood had glimpsed what her mutilated husband scrawled in the sand and heard John's solemn promise in the favour; she considered that it gave what comfort it could to her husband's last earthly reflections. She doubted the sincerity of this assurance no more than he had doubted it himself, and she thought of it for her daughters' sake with satisfaction. For their brother's sake, too, for the sake of his own heart she rejoiced, and she reproached herself for being unjust to his merit before, in believing him incapable of generosity. His attentive behaviour to herself and his sisters, stopping by their rooms in the evening to run his hands along the window frames, feeling for the tiny, blight-bearing water bug that would sneak their way in through the smallest opening, convinced her that their welfare was dear to him. She firmly relied on the liberality of his intentions.

The contempt which she felt for her daughter-in-law was very much increased by the further knowledge of her character, which half a year's residence in her family afforded. She was astonished to hear Margaret harshly scolded for helping herself to a second generous portion of craw-fish stew, where Fanny Dashwood saw a gluttonous and unmannered girl-child, her mother-in-law saw a young woman taking appropriate enjoyment in every opportunity to dine upon the hated foe. In short, the two Mrs. Dashwoods had as much mutual antipathy as two barracudas trapped in the same small tank. They might have found it impossible to have lived together long, had not a particular circumstance occurred to give still greater eligibility to their continuance at Norland.

This circumstance was a growing attachment between her eldest girl and the brother of Mrs. John Dashwood, who was introduced to their acquaintance soon after his sister's establishment at Norland, and who had since spent the greatest part of his time there.

Some mothers might have encouraged the intimacy from motives of interest, for Edward Ferrars was the eldest son of a man who had died very rich, having amassed a vast fortune from the manufacture and sale of sterling-silver lobster tongs; and some might have repressed it from motives of prudence, for the whole of his fortune depended on the will of his mother. But Mrs. Dashwood was alike uninfluenced by either consideration. It was enough for her that he appeared to be amiable, that he loved her daughter, and that Elinor returned the partiality. It was contrary to every doctrine of her disposition; life was too short, and too many dangers lurked under every sea-slimed rock, to allow otherwise. Of course, that Elinor's merit should not be acknowledged by everyone who knew her was impossible to comprehend.

Edward Ferrars was not recommended to their good opinion by any peculiar graces of person or address. He was not handsome and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing. But when his natural shyness was overcome, his behaviour gave every indication of an open, affectionate heart. His understanding was good, and his education had given it solid improvement. But he was neither fitted by abilities nor disposition to answer the wishes of his mother and sister, who longed to see him

distinguished—as—they hardly knew what. They wanted him to make a fine figure in the world some manner or other. His mother wished to interest him in political concerns, to get him in government, perhaps, or into aquatic engineering on the great freshwater canals of Sub-Marine Station Beta. Mrs. John Dashwood wished it likewise, but in the meanwhile it would have quieted his ambition to see him managing a gondola fleet.

But Edward had no turn for great men or gondolas; his ambition was more modest. All his wishes were centered in domestic comfort and the quiet of private life. He was an avid scholar who had spent many years elaborating a personal theory of the Alteration. Edward Ferrars was skeptical of the poison-stream theory, which had seduced Mr. Henry Dashwood to set off, with such tragic results, in search of the mythic headwaters; he believed the calamity's origins could be located in the time of the Tudors, when Henry VIII turned his back on the Holy Church. God in his vengeance, thought Edward, had smote the English race for this impertinence and set the beasts of the sea against them.

Such scholarly theorizing was dismissed by Fanny and their mother as a waste of time and potential; fortunately Edward had a younger brother who was more promising.

Edward had been staying several weeks in the house before he engaged much of Mrs. Dashwood's attention. She was, at that time, in such affliction as rendered her careless of surrounding objects. When at last she noticed him, she saw only that he was quiet and unobtrusive, and she liked him for it. He did not disturb the wretchedness of her mind with ill-timed conversation.

She was called to observe and approve Edward further by a reflection which Elinor chanced one day to make on the difference between him and his sister. It was a contrast which recommended him more forcibly to her mother.

"It is enough," said Mrs. Dashwood, as they sat at the breakfast table one morning, "to say that he is unlike Fanny. It implies everything amiable. I love him already."

"I think you will like him," replied Elinor, "when you know more of him."

"Like him!" replied her mother with a smile. "I can feel no sentiment of approbation inferior to love."

"You may esteem him!"

"I have never yet known what it was to separate esteem and love."

Mrs. Dashwood now took pains to get acquainted with Edward Ferrars. Her manners were attaching and soon banished his reserve. She speedily comprehended all his merits; the persuasion of his regard for Elinor perhaps intensified the natural process of her affection, were slightly less unsettling when she knew his heart was warm and his temper affectionate.

No sooner did she perceive any symptom of love in his behaviour to Elinor than she considered their serious attachment as certain, and looked forward to their marriage as rapidly approaching.

"In a few months, my dear Marianne," said she, as they sat one day, carefully skinning catfish flanks and cutting the meat into bite-size chunks, "Elinor will, in all probability, be settled for life. We shall miss her, but *she* will be happy."

"Oh, Mama, how shall we do without her?"

"My love, it will be scarcely a separation. We shall live within a few miles of each other, and shall meet every day of our lives. You will gain a brother, a real, affectionate brother. I have the highest opinion in the world of Edward's heart. But you look grave, Marianne; do you feel some burden of sympathy for the beasts we painstakingly prepare and are soon to consume? Never forget that each bite represents a victory that must be savored, exactly as *they* would savor a victory over *us*. Or is

that you disapprove your sister's choice?"

"Perhaps both," said Marianne. "I may consider the match with some surprise. Edward is very amiable, and I love him tenderly. But yet—he is not the kind of young man—there is something wanting—his figure is not striking. It has none of the grace which I should expect in the man who could seriously attach my sister. His eyes want all that spirit, that fire, which at once announce virtue and intelligence. And besides all this, I am afraid, Mama, he has no real taste. Music seems scarcely to attract him; and, though he admires Elinor's driftwood statuettes very much, it is not the admiration of a person who can understand their worth. He admires as a lover, not as a connoisseur. To satisfy my taste, those characters must be united, like two sea horses amorously intertwined in their watery rendezvous. I could not be happy with a man whose taste did not in every point coincide with my own. He must enter into all my feelings: the same books, the same music must charm us both. Oh Mama, how spiritless, how tame was Edward's reading to us of the diary of those shipwrecked sailors last night! Even during the passage where the doomed sun-mad protagonist realises with a start that the fellow-seaman upon whom he has relied for comfort and protection is but a bucket balanced on the end of a mop! To hear those haunting lines, which have frequently almost driven me wild, pronounced with such impenetrable calmness, such dreadful indifference!"

"He would certainly have done more justice to simple and elegant prose. I thought so at the time, but you had to give him the diary of the shipwrecked sailors!"

"Well, it really is my favourite. But we must allow for differences. Elinor has not my feelings, and therefore she may overlook it, and be happy with him. But it would have broken my heart, had I loved him, to hear him read with so little sensibility. Mama, the more I know of the world the more am I convinced that I shall never see a man whom I can really love, and rely upon to protect me! I require so much!"

"I know, dear."

"The man I choose must have all Edward's virtues, and his person and manners must ornament his goodness with every possible charm."

"Remember, my love, that you are not seventeen. It is yet too early in life to despair of such happiness. Why should you be less fortunate than your mother?"

CHAPTER 4

WHAT A PITY IT IS, Elinor,” said Marianne, “that Edward should have no taste for fashioning attractive miniatures out of driftwood.”

“No taste for it!” replied Elinor. “Why shouldn’t you think so? He does not whittle driftwood himself, indeed, but he has great pleasure in observing and admiring the efforts of other people; and assure you he is by no means deficient in natural taste, though he has not had opportunities of improving it. Had he ever been in the way of learning, of instruction on the handling of a long beak knife, I think he would have whittled very well. He distrusts his own judgment in such matters so much that he is always unwilling to give his opinion on a model of a building, or vessel, created out of a lump of raw flotsam; but he has an innate simplicity of taste, which directs him perfectly right. I think that given proper instruction, he could whittle, and be a great whittler indeed.”

Marianne was afraid of offending, and said no more on the subject, but the kind of approbation which Elinor described as excited in him by the driftwood figurines crafted by other people was to her mind very far from that rapturous, wide-eyed delight which could alone be called taste. Yet, though smiling within herself at Elinor’s mistake, she honoured her sister for that partiality towards Edward which produced it.

“I hope, Marianne,” continued Elinor, “you do not consider him as deficient in general taste. For that were your opinion, I am sure you could never be civil to him.”

Marianne hardly knew what to say, and she was additionally attempting to dislodge a catfish bone from where it had become lodged in her throat since lunch. She could not wound the feelings of her sister on any account, and yet to say what she did not believe was impossible. At length she coughed and pounded a bit on her breastbone, and replied:

“Do not be offended if my praise of him is not in everything equal to your sense of his merits. I have not had so many opportunities of estimating the minute propensities of his mind, as you have; but I have the highest opinion in the world of his goodness and sense. I think him everything that is worthy and admirable.”

“I am sure,” replied Elinor with a smile, “that his dearest friends, could not be dissatisfied with such praise. I do not perceive how you could express yourself more warmly.”

Marianne hacked three times vigorously and—a-ha!—out came the catfish bone. It ricocheted against the opposite wall and went skittering across the floor.

“Of Edward’s sense and his goodness,” Elinor continued, “no one can be in doubt who has seen him so often enough to engage him in unreserved conversation. He has favoured me with his most intriguing theory of the Alteration, and he possesses a wide range of knowledge of that which is most important to our common safety. He can list most species of cirripedes, to provide just one example, and classify them by phylum and subphylum. The excellence of his understanding and his principles is concealed only by his shyness, which too often keeps him silent. I have seen a great deal of him, have studied his sentiments and heard his opinion on subjects of literature and taste; and, upon the whole, I venture to pronounce that his mind is well-informed, his enjoyment of books exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure. His abilities in every respect improve as much upon acquaintance as his manners and person. At first sight, his address is certainly not striking; and his person can hardly be called handsome, and yet—I am sorry, dear sister, but that

most distracting!”

Marianne, who had become involved in an effort to pick her teeth with the newly ejected catfish bone, smiled.

“I shall very soon think him handsome, Elinor, if I do not now. When you tell me to love him as brother, I shall no more see imperfection in his face than I now do in his heart.” She smiled and renewed her attack upon her back molars.

Elinor, meanwhile, started at Marianne’s use of the word “brother” and was sorry for the warmth she had been betrayed into. Edward stood very high in her opinion, and she believed the regard to be mutual. But she required certainty of it to make Marianne’s conviction of their attachment agreeable to her. She knew that what Marianne and her mother conjectured one moment, they believed the next—that with them, to wish was to hope, and to hope was to expect. She tried to explain the real state of the case to her sister.

“I do not attempt to deny,” said she, “that I think very highly of him—that I greatly esteem, that I like him.”

Marianne here set down her catfish bone and burst forth with indignation—

“Esteem him! Like him! Cold-hearted Elinor! Oh! Worse than cold-hearted! Snake-hearted! Lizard-hearted! Ashamed of being otherwise! Use the words such as ‘esteem’ again, and I will leave the room at this moment.”

Elinor could not help laughing. “Excuse me,” said she; “and be assured that I meant no offense to you by speaking in so quiet a way of my own feelings. But I am in no means assured of his regard for me. There are moments when the extent of it seems doubtful; and till his sentiments are fully known, you cannot wonder at my wishing to avoid any encouragement of my own partiality, by believing or calling it more than it is. In my heart I feel little—scarcely any doubt of his preference. But there are other points to be considered besides his inclination. He is very far from being independent. What his mother really is we cannot know; but, from Fanny’s occasional mention of her conduct and opinion, we have never been disposed to think her amiable; and I am very much mistaken if Edward is not himself aware that there would be many difficulties in his way, if he were to wish to marry a woman without an estate sufficiently inland to protect against whatever bloodthirsty selachian might one morning drag itself out of the tide.”

Marianne was astonished to find how much the imagination of her mother and herself had outstripped the truth.

“And you really are not engaged to him!” said she. “Yet it certainly soon will happen. But two advantages will proceed from this delay. I shall not lose you so soon, and Edward will have great opportunity of improving that natural taste for your favourite pursuit which must be so indispensably necessary to your future felicity. Oh! If he should be so far stimulated by your genius as to learn to whittle himself, how delightful it would be!”

Elinor had given her real opinion to her sister. She could not consider her partiality for Edward in so prosperous a state as Marianne had believed it. There was at times a want of spirits about him, as he was constantly recovering from the ingestion of bad chowder—if it did not denote indifference, it spoke of something almost as unpromising. Without sure knowledge of his feelings, it was impossible for Elinor to feel easy on the subject. She was far from depending on that result of his preference for her, which her mother and sister considered as certain.

But Edward’s regard for Elinor, when perceived by Fanny, was enough to make her uneasy and

uncivil. That lady took the first opportunity of affronting her mother-in-law, talking expressively of her brother's great expectations, and of Mrs. Ferrars's resolution that both her sons should marry well, and of the danger attending any young woman who attempted to *draw him in like a tidal pool*. Mrs. Dashwood gave her an answer which marked her contempt, resolving that, even if they had to go live in an undersea grotto, in a very nest of sea-squids, her beloved Elinor should not be exposed to another week of such insinuations.

In this state of her spirits, a letter was delivered to her from the post, which contained a provision particularly well timed. It was to offer their use of a rickety seaside shack belonging to a relation of her own, an aging eccentric monster-hunter and adventurer who had lately returned from the waters off Madagascar, where he had trapped and slain the infamous Malagasy Man-Serpent; he had, upon his return, laid claim to his ancestral inheritance, a chain of small islands off the coast of Devonshire. Sir John (for that was his name) understood that Mrs. Dashwood was in need of a dwelling. Although the waters off Devonshire were well-known to be among the most beast-bedeveled swaths of the English ocean, and the house he offered was merely a haphazard shanty, built atop a jagged promontory on the windward side of Pestilent Isle, the smallest island in the archipelago, he assured her that everything should be done to it which she might think necessary. Sir John himself, being vastly experienced in the ways of the hateful denizens of the inky deep, assured her that while she and her family lived on his island every possible measure of security would be offered them. He urged her to come with her daughters to Deadwind Island, the place of his own residence, from whence she could judge for herself whether Barton Cottage—as the tiny, wind-rattled shack on Pestilent Isle was called—could be made comfortable to her. Well, not comfortable, he continued, given the amount of mosquitoes that swarmed the house at all hours, comfort was not really feasible. But she could judge whether it could be made *tolerable*. Despite this cavil, Sir John seemed really anxious to accommodate them; the whole of his letter, though composed in the crabbed, spidery script of a man used to composing treasure maps and desperate pleas for help rather than warm invitations to distant kin, was written in a most friendly style.

Mrs. Dashwood needed no time for deliberation or enquiry. Her resolution was formed as she read. To quit the neighbourhood of Norland was no longer an evil; it was an object of desire; it was a blessing, in comparison of the misery of continuing as her daughter-in-law's guest. She instantly wrote Sir John Middleton her acknowledgement of his kindness, and her acceptance of his proposal.

As she laid down her pen and called to Marianne, Elinor, and Margaret to pack up their dunnage, lightning crackled in the sky, and a cloud hid the face of the moon.

CHAPTER 5

MRS. DASHWOOD SHORTLY INDULGED herself in the pleasure of announcing to her son-in-law and his wife that she was provided with a coastal shanty, and should incommode them no longer. They heard her with surprise. Mrs. Dashwood had great satisfaction in explaining that they were going off the coast of Devonshire. John Dashwood gasped and clapped his hand before his mouth. "Not the Devonshire coast!" he exclaimed, growing very pale, while his wife smiled cruelly at the corners of her mouth, sure in her intuition that her mother-in-law would very shortly pose no future inconvenience, save perhaps to the digestion of some ravenous, bottom-dwelling devil.

Edward Ferrars turned hastily towards her and, in a voice of surprise and concern, which required no explanation to her, repeated, "Devonshire! Are you, indeed, going there? So far from hence! There! Of all places?"

Mrs. Dashwood, too suffused with pleasure at finding a situation for herself and her family, did not hear the shock and horror in his normally even voice. Calmly, she explained the situation.

"Barton Cottage is but a haphazard two-story shack, tottering on a rocky promontory above the sea," she continued, "But one under the protection of the ancient defenses employed by the sagacious Sir John. I hope to see many of my friends in it. A room or two can easily be added; and if friends find no difficulty in travelling so far to see me, and if they can bribe a ship's captain to undertake the journey, I am sure I will find no difficulty accommodating them."

She concluded with a very kind invitation to Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood to visit her at Barton Cottage, to which they did not bother to pretend enthusiasm; and to Edward she offered an invitation with still greater affection. To separate Edward and Elinor was as far from being her object as ever, and she wished to show Mrs. John Dashwood how totally she disregarded her disapproval of the match.

Mr. John Dashwood told his mother again and again how exceedingly sorry he was that she had taken a situation at such a distance as to prevent his help in removing her furniture from Norland. He really felt conscientiously vexed on this occasion, and all the more so when the furniture was sent round by water, meaning that its likelihood of actually arriving at their new residence was exceedingly dim.

Mrs. Dashwood arranged to take the house for a twelvemonth; as she had reported to her son and daughter-in-law, it was already furnished with the netting, drain-plugs, and alarum bells that any seaside domicile must reasonably employ against the threat of ravagement, as well as those more esoteric devices known to Sir John's wisdom, which he had assured her were unobtrusive but effective. Elinor's good sense limited the number of servants they would take to four: a maid, a musket-man and two torchbearers, with whom they were speedily provided from amongst those who had formed their establishment at Norland. The servants left immediately to prepare the house for their mistress's arrival.

Mrs. Dashwood began to abandon any hope that her son-in-law would abide by his promise to his dying father. He so frequently talked of the increasing expenses of house-protecting, what with the coming of spring tide and the return of Highest Danger Season, and of the perpetual demands upon his purse, and also of the high likelihood that she and the girls would die either en route or soon after the arrival at the coast of Devonshire, and his having to bear their funerary expenses; in short he seemed rather in need of more money himself than to have any design of giving money away.

Many were the salty tears shed by them in their last adieus to a place so much beloved. “Dear, de
Norland!” said Marianne, as she wandered alone before the house, a pounding rainstorm soaking h
pelisse. “When shall I cease to regret you!—when learn to feel a home elsewhere!— Oh! happy hous
could you know what I suffer in now viewing you from this spot, from whence, perhaps, I may vie
you no more! You will continue the same, unconscious of the pleasure or the regret you occasion, an
insensible of any change in those who walk under your shade! But who will remain to enjoy you?”

CHAPTER 6

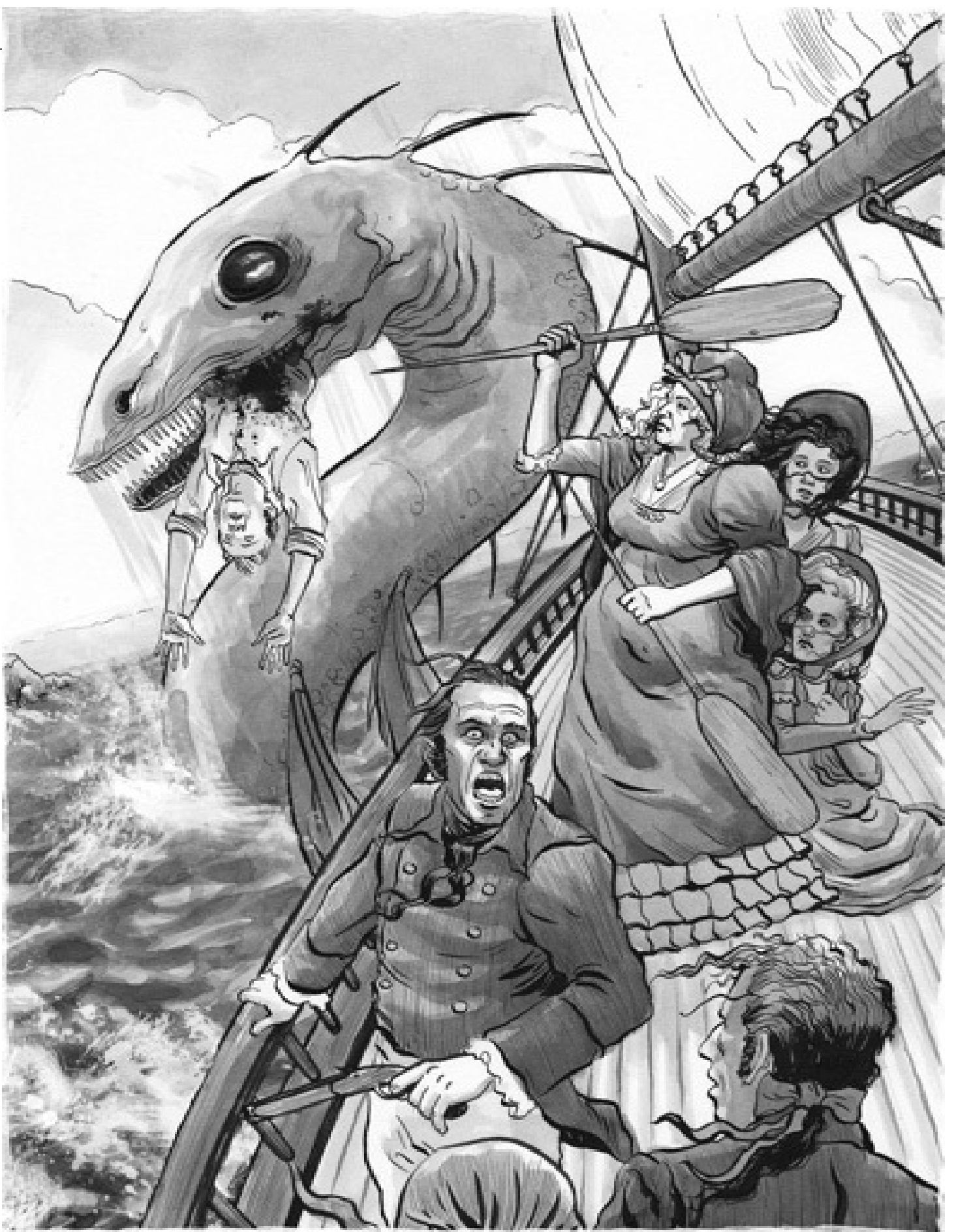
THE FIRST PART OF THEIR JOURNEY was simple; in a post-chaise they travelled to the dock at Brighton where they changed from their lightweight, pointed-toed travelling shoes into thick galoshes to protect their extremities if by some grievous mishap they ended up in the water. The Dashwoods lined up upon the dock to receive the attentions of a prelate, following the long-established custom of administering last rites to anyone embarking on a journey by sea. Gulls circled overhead, seeming to cry piteously for them as they stepped aboard a three-masted, heavily armored schooner called the *Tarantella*, which would take them to the coast of Devonshire.

Elinor felt a twinge of horror as the Sussex coast disappeared behind them and they were surrounded on all sides by the churning sea. As for Marianne, she swooned with anticipation of the new life and looked upon the captain of the *Tarantella*, a stern and weathered personage with a rheumy step and a corncob pipe, as a charming harbinger of the romance and adventure that awaited them.

Elinor's apprehensions soon proved prescient; for, as they bore to the starboard after passing Dorsland and piloted into the narrow inlet that would lead them to Sir John's chain of islands, that same captain hollered throatily to his men to take their stations. At once the dozen hardy sea salts of the crew were scrambling grimly about the foredeck, and from a sea chest at the schooner's waist, were rapidly unloaded blunderbusses and flint-lock muskets.

Before the Dashwoods could ascertain the nature of the threat, something thudded powerfully against the hull; the mainmast snapped from its moorings and tilted forward at a perilous angle, sending the bosun's mate, who had been on duty in the crow's nest, pitching forward wildly; in an instant the unfortunate sailor was holding desperately to the cross trees, dangling beside the bowsprit just above the surface of the waves. The ship, its mainsail flapping uselessly, yawed heavily to port. The Dashwoods clutched each other in fear as a vast mouth appeared at the waterline, opening wide to display two jagged rows of razor-sharp fangs, which rose from the water and chomped down effortlessly on the bosun's mate.

It was Mrs. Dashwood who acted first, even as the sailors were still loading their blunderbusses and the coxswain was pulling the tarpaulin off the Ship's cannon. She grasped a spare oar from its rigging, snapped it in twain upon her knee with a swift motion, and plunged the sharp, broken point into the churning sea—piercing the gleaming, deep-set eye of the beast. “Up, mother! Drive it up!” shouted Elinor, and leant hard upon the flattened oar end to push the sharp point into the brain of the serpent. The beast relaxed its grip upon the shattered corpse of the bosun's mate; it pitched; it rolled; and then it was still, floating belly up upon the surface of the water, its scales glittering blue and green in the sunlight, blood streaming from the punctured eye.



MRS. DASHWOOD GRASPED A SPARE OAR FROM ITS RIGGING, SNAPPED IT IN TWAIN UPON HER KNEE, AND PLUNGED THE SHARP, BROKEN POINT INTO THE GLEAMING, DEEP-SET EYE OF THE BEAST.

“Dear God,” said the old captain, flabbergasted, his pipe hanging limply in one hand. “You’ve sla

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