

Sense and Sensibility

Original by Jane Austen

Retold by Pauline Francis

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Introduction

Jane Austen was born in 1775 in Hampshire, where her father was a rector. She was one of eight children, but especially close to her only sister, Cassandra, and Henry, the second son of the family. She was educated partly at home and partly at boarding school where both girls nearly died from typhus.

Jane's home was full of books and lively discussion. Her friends and family often staged plays, many of them comedies, which developed much of Jane's strong sense of humour. Jane went on to write short novels and stories, which she always read to her family.

In 1800, when Jane was twenty-five years old, her father retired and the family moved to Bath. She did not enjoy town life and wrote little in the years there. Then her father died unexpectedly and after many moves, the family settled in Chawton, Hampshire, in 1809.

From this time, Jane published many successful novels: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *Mansfield Park* (1814).

Sense and Sensibility was her first novel. It tells the story of the newly widowed Mrs Dashwood and her three daughters who are left with no permanent home and very little money. They are offered a cottage in Devonshire. Here Elinor, the oldest daughter, pines privately for

Edward Ferrars, left behind in Sussex, and Marianne, her younger sister, openly falls in love with a visitor, the dashing and handsome John Willoughby. As both deal with their situations in different ways, they find happiness at last.

Jane Austen died in 1816, at the age of forty-one, and two of her novels – *Emma* and *Persuasion* – were published after her death..

CHAPTER ONE

A New Home

The Dashwood family owned a large estate at Norland Park, in Sussex. In time, this was left to Mr John Dashwood, who was married with a young son. He promised to make sure that his stepmother and his three sisters, Elinor, Marianne and Margaret, were well provided for.

‘I shall give each of my sisters one thousand pounds a year,’ he thought. ‘I can afford to be generous.’

John Dashwood might have kept his promise if he had not married a rather selfish and mean-minded woman. She installed herself as the new mistress of Norland Park straight after her father-in-law’s funeral, causing her mother-in-law great distress.

Elinor, the oldest daughter of nineteen and the most sensible, persuaded her mother not to leave immediately, but to wait until a suitable house in the neighbourhood could be found.

Mrs John Dashwood was not pleased about her husband’s intention to be generous to his sisters. After all, they were only his half-sisters? How could he rob his own son of three thousand pounds a year?

‘I promised my father, Fanny,’ her husband replied. ‘However, it is true that he did not suggest any particular