

## THE “AFTERNOON TEA WITH JANE” SHOW

“Good afternoon, ladies. Welcome to the show,” Jane began.

“We’ve got an exciting theme for you tonight: the Dispossed...”

“Here to have tea with us today is the Dashwood sisters Ellen, Mary, and Mags, welcome here today all the way from Exeter.”

“Barton,” Ellen specified, “in Devonshire.”

“Your mum was turned out of her home as a widow by your half-brother John, married to Fran Ferrar, is that correct? They have taken over your country estate in Norland Park, Sussux. This is the trouble?”

“That Ferrar family is the trouble. They have money while we have nowhere to live almost,” cried Mary, “all on account of John and Fran’s brat! When my dad inherited the estate the will gave the house to John for his kid, and now John put me mum out like a wicked stepmother, her who was always so kind to everyone, without a penny too on account of Fran! I heard John wanted to give us thousand pounds each.”

“Slowly,” Ellen explained to Mary, “we’ve time to explain reasonably, no need for all this rush. We discussed this before.”

“How distressing,” Jane turned to the audience.

“Fran just moved in like that, without even giving mum time to invite her,” Mary continued. “Then she insulted her before she could us all out. Mags was only thirteen and had to change schools. It was complicated.”

“How did your step-sister upset your mother?” Jane asked.

“Snubbed us...” Mary began.

“They imagined that the elder of Fran’s two brothers, Eddie, had formed a certain attachment for me. Fran gave it out that this was not to be supported. Mum thought naively that the match was wonderful, while I had misgivings myself,” said Ellen.

“Eddie’s not like his sister,” Mags offered.

“Anyway, it worked out,” Ellen dismissed things. “We were lucky to be able to go stay on the Park estate of a generous distant relation, Sir John Middleton, who was kind enough to let us Barton Cottage without assurances. We were broke.”

“His wife’s a true Lady, unlike that nouvelle-riche snob Fran!” Mary pouted.

“Her Ladyship’s mum is very nice, Mrs. Jennings, I call her nana, only she hug too hard but she’s fat so it’s okay.” The crowd giggled. “And her sister gives me sweets.”

“That’s Mrs. Charlotte Palmer,” Ellen explained.

“Before we get the whole family tree,” we have a special guest I want to bring out. This all hinges on the will, it seems to me of Mr. Henry Dashwood it was, original proprietor of Norland Park who honored your father with it upon his death for the care he had received from his, cousins weren’t they? Your da’ alas survived him only shortly. But We have here a medium who can contact the dead, Madam Clarisse!”

The audience applauds as stage hands clear the tea things from the table and the house lights dim. They all join hands around the table and Madam Clarisse beings to call to the spirit of their dead father’s benefactor...

“Mr. Hendry Dashwood, I know you hear me. What do say of this affair?” Clarisse demanded. Silence.

“One of you will not believe,” Clarisse accused. Mags looked scared and expectant.

“Well, I’m sorry, it’s just nonsense!” Ellen objected. Mary began to sob violently.

Jane hugged Mary and Mags as the house lights came up and Clarisse slunk away. “It’s okay, there there...” Mary scowled at Ellen all alone in her hard chair.

“I hate that Fran witch!” Mary screamed.

“She left us your piano, darling,” Ellen addressed her.

“You’re on her side,” sulked Mary absurdly.

“We had to sell the carriage,” Mags sighed, “I miss that.”

“Anyway, John is his own man and responsible for his own actions and attitude to mum and his wife if we must lay blame,” Ellen reflected. “True, the leaves of Norland are lovely this time of year.”

“Well now, Mary,” Jane took control, “we have a special compensation for you today. Do you recognize this voice?”

“Hallo, luv! What a treat, innit? Imagine you on the tele. I’m taping it for later.”

“Mrs. Jennings?” Ellen guessed.

“Mary, dear, I know I’m a meddlesome old one,” Mrs. Jennings continued, “but guess who is in love with you?!”

Mary swooned. She was revived and the special guest brought out, a certain very correct, serious man presented by Jane as Capt. Brandt.

“But he’s over thirty years old,” Mary swooned again. She was not happy when revived. The Captain had slunk away, feigning an urgent cell phone call.

“Be reasonable,” Ellen admonished her, “or at least charitable in rejection!”

“We have a remark from the audience,” Jane pulled forward a young woman.

“Mary, you ingrate. Think what pains Mrs. Jennings took for you and him,” the woman called her out by name.

“Is that you, Jane?” the voice of Mrs. Jennings came in again. “Cool!”

“No, the older Steele, Anne,” the woman gave her name.

“Shut up, Anne. I’m here too,” Jane cooed prettily, “and I think Mary’s right, he’s too old. I like a hot young hunky man myself..”

“Cousins or no, you ought not to have attacked my sister publicly,” Ellen was protective now, or territorial at least, “after all we were rather ambushed with the proposal, reasonable as it is on surface. Some reflection is surely needed.”

“You and your reflection!” Mary confused her.

“Someone is here today watching you,” Jane admitted to them...

“It’s Fran! I’ll,” Mary jumped up and while Ellen tried to stop her fell off the stage into the front row, right into the lap of a handsome young sportsman. He placed her gently back in her seat, massaging her turned ankle.

“Who are you, kind sir?” Jane did not miss a beat.

“Will of Somerset, ma’am,” said he, tilting his cap all the while at Mary who had her eyes locked on his shoulders.

“What do you do?” Ellen objected.

“Estate owner, rider and huntsman. I support an old lady in Allenham. Let’s call her Smith.” Ellen looked displeased. “She’s old and alone,” he added.

“Ahhh” oohed the audience.

“She supports you rather,” Jane guessed at the cougar cub’s nature. Mary gasped.

“I like to draw,” said Mags who knew she was supposed to contribute but was not quite sure all that was going on.”

“As I was saying,” Jane tried to reassert, “we have someone watching you all.”

“Will you come riding with me?” Will had Mary’s hands now. “Come see the Smith house. It is near where you live actually.”

“A lot of coincidences,” Ellen observed. Of course Jane had set it all up with Jennings.

“I’ve been in the house. It’s grand!” Mags blurted.

“How?!” Ellen suspected.

“Mary took me. We broke in. Just to look. Took nothing,” Mags admitted.

“Sister,” Ellen faced Mary sternly, “you keep too many secret which proves you know wrong from right. Pray do not involve out younger sister in such misadventures.”

“Ellen!” Jane almost shouted, “Let me reveal the mystery observer, a psychologist and author of several books on family dynamics, sibling relationships, love and the female psyche, please welcome Dr. Ed!”

Ellen was astonished to see Eddie Ferrars spotlighted, but determined not to show it. Whether he knew or not she would be the subject of his study that day, she did not ask. It was immediately apparent to Jane and audience that they knew each other when dear Mags shouted, “Eddie!”

“What I see here, Jane,” Dr. Ed began, “is a study in logic versus feeling, sense and sensibility if you will. I will leave the youngest daughter out as child psychology is not my specialty. But let us examine cold Ellen in contrast to her hot-blooded sister Mary.”

“I’ve read your books, ‘Doctor’ Ed, is it? Not very interesting.” Ellen went on a pre-emptive attack. “Still too much for that fiancée of yours, Lucy, I believe she’s in the audience. She once confessed to me she know you did not love her but wanted to manrry you anyway for your money. Did you write about that case? And why did you quit law school and what exactly are you qualifications as a therapist or psychiatrist or whatever?”

“That’s all the time we have for today,” Jane felt the show finally get away from her completely and decided to cut it short. They could fill in with edits later. “Perhaps we will have a follow-up show on these fascinating sisters and their cousins. Join us for tea tomorrow here with Jane Austin.”

Many months later, Jane decided against better judgment but convinced by ratings of the bizarre Dashwood episode to have the two older sisters back on the show

“Good evening, ladies. Welcome to the show.”

“Should be an interesting one, we are calling: All in the Family...”

“You’ll remember the dispossessed sisters Ellen and Mary from an interesting show we did last season, one of Dr. Ed’s first appearances with us. Also with them tonight are the Steele sisters, Anne and Lucy, all here in London now. Welcome!”

“Again we have a surprise guest,” Jane decided to just go for chaos this time and was surprised at who accepted, and who did not. They could not book handsome Will...

“Will!” Mary swooned.

Again Capt. Brandt came in to find his intended passed out with disappointment. He decided to wait it out this time.

But when Mary revived, Jane had another bomb for her: “know this voice?”

As a video screen came down, Jennings screeched, near tears herself, “Sorry dear but I thought it best you heard it from me.”

On the screen Will was caught in flagrante delicto. Anne and Lucy beamed.

“What is this nonsense?” Ellen held Mary. Jane patted. Jennings sobbed. Mary just stared into space.

“Stop!” yelled the Captain suddenly. “That’s my daughter Lisa with that playboy on that tape and she is a minor and you do not have my permission to show it.”

“She is of age and we have signed releases from her and her real dad,” Jane protested.

“He’s her pimp. I’m her dad.” Capt. Brandt looked about him madly. Ellen came down to calm him. He had suffered so much so suddenly again. Dr. Ed came on to console Mary as planned. He held her but a moment before Lucy screeched.

Lucy pulled Eddie off Mary and there looked to be a catfight while Jane made no move to intervene but Ellen yelled “Stop that nonsense and sit,” at once and with such force that they all obeyed even the Captain and Jane herself sitting in the audience.

“Now, Lucy, you two-timed Edward for his young brother Robert so what do you care if he holds Mary, and Mary, you be glad you got out of Will’s clutches and listen to poor, patient Capt. Brandt here, and Edward you get off Mary and leave off Lucy and someone start attending to me!”

All this Ellen blurted while Lucy looked mortified, her ignored, indignant almost silent sister Anne clucked, the voice of Jennings laughed nervously, Mary sat sadly, Edward

came to conduct Ellen back to her chair, and Jane basically lost her show, her surprise guest Robert having been already announced.

“Why did you leave Eddie for his brother Robert?” Jane asked Lucy now the cat was out of the bag.

“Who can understand the mysteries of the heart?” Ed offered.

“I can,” Mary said bitterly. “Robert inherited the family business and is now richer than his infamous quack brother!”

“I have my own foundation for veterans, the Laford Clinic. We could use a new chief of psychiatry who can bring in donors, if you want meaningful work,” Capt. Brandt offered.

Ed shook his head no, staring sheepishly at Ellen, hiding his lack of credentials.

At this point Ellen lost interest in the show and took knitting out of her bag. She was brought back into it by her sister Mary’s pained utterance:

“He gave me a venereal disease, that bastard, said he did not know what it was.” Dr. Ed and Ellen both rushed to comfort her, their hands touching on her back.

“We have a comment from the audience,” Jane announced. It was Will! Capt. Brandt decked him out hold before he could say word one.

“Marry me, Ellen,” Eddie proposed at this ill timed moment so lost in his own thoughts was he.

“I wish I were you,” Mary looked at her sister Ellen. “You always know what to do. I never do.”

“Nor do I,” said Ellen, “nobody does.”

“Let’s call and ask ma,” they both laughed. Ed waited.

“Marry me,” Capt. Brandt begged Mary.

“Let’s bring out our surprise guest,” Jane interrupted. Out came Robert in a loud red tie, gleaming teeth proposing on well rehearsed bended knee as if he’d been in the starters blocks, all the while looking at the audience to see what impression he made.

“Another comment from the audience,” Jane asserted.

“Yeah, look here, all you white folk got no idea what’s going on with all this screwin around stuff. I work as Tom man for y’all’s mother Ma’am Dashwood and when she

hears about all this she gonna cut you all off without a penny. Wise up! All these contrived surprises and stuff just don't make no sense. You need heart and mind."

Lucy accepted her proposal from young, brash Robert as she had rehearsed. Cameras clicked. Mary, going on impulse as always, accepted the Captain at last. Ellen took a long logical look at Edward's past and prospects and decided to pass.

"No, thank you, Eddie," she explained, "I think I will move to Cleveland to be a writer." Later Dr. Ed married Anne Stelle and continued to make regular appearances on the popular Jane Austin Show on the basis of his infamy in the former episodes.

Ellen is now a writer in Cleveland.

Mary married the Captain and...  
That is another story.