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About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.
The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

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Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

Part 1

Nobody who saw Catherine Morland as a small child would have said, “This girl will grow up to be a heroine.” Everything seemed against it. Her father was a clergyman, but he was not poor, not proud, and not at all mysterious. Her mother was a sensible woman with a strong body, and instead of dying after Catherine’s birth, she lived on, had many more children, and stayed in excellent health. The Morlands were a large family, cheerful and respectable, but there was nothing grand or romantic about them, and Catherine herself was for many years one of the plainest children in the house.

She was thin, awkward, brown-haired, and careless of her looks. She liked noisy games better than quiet ones and would much rather run outside with boys than sit still with dolls. If she picked flowers, it was often because she had been told not to pick them. She did not care for gardens, fine work, or any of the soft little pleasures that people thought suitable for girls. If anyone had said, “Come, Catherine, sit neatly and behave like a young lady,” she would very likely have wanted at once to run down a hill, get her dress dirty, and forget the whole thing.

Lessons did not make her look more promising. She learned only when she was taught, and sometimes not even then. Her mother tried to teach her poems, but Catherine forgot the lines or said them badly, while other children remembered them at once. Music was no better. She began with hope, struck the old keys happily enough, then soon decided she hated practice, and the day the music master stopped coming was one of the happiest days of her life. Drawing also failed, unless houses, trees, chickens, and girls that all looked alike could be called drawing.

Still, she was not a bad child. She was not cruel, not proud, and not false. She could be wild and careless, but she was good-tempered, loved her younger brothers and sisters, and was often kind even when she was rough. At ten, she still

liked rolling down the grassy bank behind the house more than almost anything else in the world. At fifteen, however, changes began. Her face grew softer, her figure improved, her eyes became brighter, and one day she heard her parents say, “Catherine is almost pretty today.” That pleased her more than long praise would have pleased a girl who had always been called beautiful.

As she grew older, she also began to care more for dress, for dancing, and for the kind of books that filled the mind with feeling and adventure. She did not care much for books of instruction, but if a book gave her story, love, danger, sadness, and surprise, she was ready enough to read it. Between fifteen and seventeen she learned many lines from poets and plays, and these stayed in her memory, as such lines often do in the minds of young people who feel life opening before them. She could not write verses, and she could not draw a lover’s face, but she could listen to music patiently, read with pleasure, and dream a little. Still, no lover had yet appeared. There was no lord nearby, no strange young man with a hidden birth, no rich guardian, no secret sorrowful hero walking sadly through the neighborhood.

But when a girl is meant to be a heroine, events will come somehow. In Catherine’s case, the event came in a simple form. Mr. Allen, who owned much of the land near Fullerton, was ordered to Bath because of his health. His wife liked Catherine and said kindly, “Why should she not come with us?” Catherine’s parents had no objection at all. Mrs. Morland said, “Yes, certainly, if she will be useful and happy.” Mr. Morland agreed at once, and Catherine herself was full of joy before the plan was half finished.

It may be supposed that when the hour of leaving came, Catherine’s mother gave her deep warnings about dangerous men, false friends, and great city wickedness. Nothing of the kind happened. Mrs. Morland knew very little about lords and baronets carrying girls away by force, and she had no taste for dramatic fears. What she said was much more practical. “My dear Catherine,” she told her, “wrap your throat up well when you come home at night, and do try to keep an account of your money. Here is a little book for it.” That was the chief part of her advice. Her sister Sarah did not demand long letters every day, and her father did

not press large sums of money into her hand. He gave her ten guineas and said, “Write if you need more.”

So the journey began without tears, storms, robberies, or overturned carriages. Nothing happened that could help a romance. Mrs. Allen was troubled for a short time by the fear that she had left her clogs at an inn, but even that turned out well. Catherine sat in the carriage, looked out eagerly, and felt that the world was changing as the miles passed. Every road seemed to lead toward pleasure. Every inn, hill, and town on the way appeared to belong to the beginning of a new life. She had never been far from home before, and the thought of Bath, with its rooms, dresses, music, and company, filled her mind completely.

When they came near the city, Catherine could hardly sit still. She looked first one way and then the other, taking in every house, every street, every sign of movement and elegance. “How beautiful it is!” she said. “How many people there must be! How much there is to see!” Mrs. Allen, who was already thinking about clothes and shops, answered calmly, “Yes, my dear, Bath is a very fine place. I dare say we shall find out what is worn here before long.” They drove through the streets to the hotel, and Catherine felt that she had at last reached the true place where adventures begin.

Soon they were comfortably settled in Pulteney Street. Catherine’s heart was light, her hopes were high, and her mind was full of images gathered from all the stories she had read. She had come to a city where people met, judged, admired, loved, and perhaps suffered. She believed she would now see many wonderful things, and it did not occur to her that some of the most important lessons before her would come not from dark secrets or terrible dangers, but from ordinary people speaking, smiling, boasting, lying, and choosing badly. For the moment, however, none of that troubled her. She had come to Bath to be happy, and already she was.

Part 2

Bath life soon fell into a regular pattern. Every morning there were shops to

visit, streets to walk through, and the Pump Room to attend, where they moved among many people, looked at everyone, and spoke to almost no one. Mrs. Allen still said many times, “How pleasant Bath would be if only we knew somebody here!” Catherine agreed, though her spirits were still high enough to take pleasure even in watching strangers. She liked the motion, the noise, the fine clothes, and the sense that something important might happen at any hour. Yet after several days of this, with no real acquaintance and no adventure, even she began to feel that Bath was less easy to enjoy than she had first imagined.

At last they went to the Lower Rooms, and there fortune was kinder. The master of the ceremonies brought a young man to Catherine and introduced him as Mr. Tilney. He was about twenty-four or twenty-five, tall, lively, and pleasant-looking, with an intelligent face and a manner at once easy and amused. Catherine thought at once, “I am in great luck.” There was not much time for talking while they danced, but when they sat down together afterward, she found him as agreeable as she had hoped. He spoke with spirit and humor, and though she did not always understand the turn of his wit, she liked it and listened with pleasure.

After some lighter conversation, he suddenly said, “I have been a very careless partner, Miss Morland. I have not yet asked how long you have been in Bath, whether you were ever here before, whether you have been to the Upper Rooms, the theatre, or the concert, and whether you like the place at all. Shall I begin now?” Catherine answered, “You need not trouble yourself, sir.” “No trouble at all,” he replied, and then, changing his voice and smiling in mock formality, he asked, “Have you been long in Bath, madam?” She answered his questions one by one, trying not to laugh, while he pretended amazement at every reply, and at last said in his natural tone, “There, now I have done what society demands, and we may be rational again.”

Soon after this he began to tease her about keeping a journal. “I know very well what you will write tonight,” he said. “You will say, ‘Went to the Lower Rooms, wore my sprigged muslin, and was much troubled by a strange half-witted man who made me dance with him and talked nonsense the whole evening.’” Catherine laughed and said, “Indeed, I shall write no such thing.” “Then write

this," he answered. "'I danced with a very agreeable young man, a most uncommon genius, and I hope to know more of him.' That is what I wish you to say." She told him perhaps she kept no journal at all, but he only replied, "Not keep a journal? How are all your dresses, feelings, and important daily events to be remembered without one?"

Catherine, who was innocent enough to answer seriously, said she was not sure ladies always wrote better letters than gentlemen. "In my opinion," said Henry, "their style is perfect, except for three small faults. They often have little to say, they pay no attention to stops, and they are sometimes quite careless of grammar." Catherine cried, "Then I need not be proud of the compliment you pay us." He smiled and answered that excellence was divided fairly between men and women in all things of taste. At that moment Mrs. Allen came up and asked Catherine to remove a pin from her sleeve, fearing it had torn her gown. Mr. Tilney looked gravely at the muslin and spoke of its price, texture, and likely washing with such seriousness that Mrs. Allen was deeply impressed and began speaking to him eagerly of gowns, shops, and Indian muslin.

"You must be a great comfort to your sister," said Mrs. Allen. "Mr. Allen never notices one gown from another." Henry answered politely, "I hope I am useful to her, madam. I buy my own cravats, and I am thought to judge tolerably well." Catherine listened with a mixture of amusement and doubt, for she began to suspect that he enjoyed laughing gently at the little foolishness of other people. As they walked back toward the ballroom, he asked, "What were you thinking about so earnestly?" She colored and said, "I was not thinking of anything." "That is a very deep answer," he replied. "But now that you refuse to tell me, I shall be free to tease you about it whenever we meet, and nothing helps acquaintance forward so much as that."

They danced again, and when the evening ended, Catherine left him with a strong wish to meet him again. The next morning she hurried to the Pump Room earlier than usual, quite sure that she would see him there. She was ready to greet him with a smile and to feel at once at her ease in his company. But he did not appear. Many people came and went, and still he did not come; and the more

Catherine looked for him, the more certain she grew that he alone was missing from the whole city of Bath. Mrs. Allen, after they had walked about until they were tired, sat down and said once more, “What a delightful place Bath would be if only we had some acquaintance here.”

Strangely enough, this wish was granted almost at once. A lady near Mrs. Allen looked at her with attention and then said, “I think I cannot be mistaken. Is not your name Allen?” She turned out to be Mrs. Thorpe, an old school friend whom Mrs. Allen had scarcely seen for many years, and both ladies showed great pleasure at the meeting. They exchanged compliments, talked over the long time since they had met, and asked after families, sisters, and children, though each seemed more eager to speak than to listen. Mrs. Thorpe had the advantage, because she had many children to describe and praise, and she did so with great energy. Mrs. Allen could only hear about sons at school and at sea, and daughters full of beauty and merit, while privately consoling herself with the thought that the lace on Mrs. Thorpe’s pelisse was not nearly so handsome as her own.

“Here come my girls,” cried Mrs. Thorpe at last, and she pointed to three young women approaching arm in arm. The tallest was Isabella, her eldest daughter, whom she praised warmly before the girls had even reached them. Introductions followed, and Catherine herself was introduced as well. At her name, the Miss Thorpes all cried out that she was the very image of her brother James. Catherine was surprised only for a moment, until Mrs. Thorpe explained that her son John, who was at Oxford, had become intimate there with James Morland and had recently had him as a guest. This discovery made everything easier, and many friendly things were immediately said. Isabella spoke with warmth, asked to consider Catherine a friend already, and soon invited her to walk about the room arm in arm.

Catherine accepted with delight. Isabella was older, handsomer, more confident, and much better practiced in the language of quick friendship than Catherine herself. She talked freely of dress, balls, flirtations, and fashionable judgments, and Catherine listened with admiration to knowledge that seemed entirely new and elegant. Yet Isabella’s lively manner softened any feeling of

distance, and before long Catherine was pleased rather than overpowered, and answered as well as she could. When they left the Pump Room, Isabella would not part from her at once, but walked with her all the way to the Allens' door, where they shook hands with affectionate length and fixed on meeting again at the theatre that evening and at chapel the next morning. Catherine then ran upstairs, watched Isabella's graceful walk down the street from the window, and felt deeply grateful for the good luck that had brought her such a friend.

Part 3

That evening at the theatre, Catherine smiled and nodded to Isabella as often as friendship required, but she still looked from box to box in hope of seeing Mr. Tilney. He was nowhere there. The next morning was bright and fine, and she felt sure such weather must bring everyone out, including him. After chapel, the Thorpes and the Allens met as usual and then went out to walk, for Bath on a Sunday seemed to empty itself into the streets. Catherine kept her eyes busy all the while, but no Henry Tilney appeared among the walkers, the riders, the carriages, or the crowds near the Pump Room. At last she was forced to think, with some sadness, that he must have left Bath already.

This thought only made him more interesting to her imagination. "He did not say he was going away," she said to Isabella. "No," said Isabella warmly, "and that is the very reason he must come back. I am sure he admired you excessively." Catherine blushed and tried to laugh at such certainty, but Isabella encouraged it with great kindness. "He must be a charming man," she said. "And being a clergyman makes him still more agreeable, for I own I am particularly partial to that profession." She gave a little sigh as she spoke, and though Catherine noticed it, she was too innocent to ask what secret feeling might lie behind it.

Mrs. Allen, meanwhile, had become quite content with Bath now that she had found Mrs. Thorpe. She no longer said, "How pleasant it would be if we knew somebody here!" She now said instead, "How glad I am we met Mrs. Thorpe!" She spent hours beside her old friend in what both ladies called conversation,

though Mrs. Thorpe spoke mostly of her children and Mrs. Allen mostly of her gowns. Catherine and Isabella, however, needed no help in being pleased with each other. They were soon on Christian-name terms, always walked arm in arm, whispered together at balls, and found a rainy morning no misfortune if it gave them an excuse to sit indoors and read novels side by side.

They read with delight and without shame. Catherine had no patience with those who said lightly, “It is only a novel,” as if that were enough to make it foolish. To her, a good story was one of the greatest pleasures in the world, and Isabella agreed with her perfectly, at least in words. One morning, after eight or nine days of intimate friendship, they met by appointment in the Pump Room. Isabella cried out at once, “My dearest creature, what has made you so late? I have been waiting an age.” Catherine answered, “I am very sorry, but I thought I was in excellent time.” “Time!” said Isabella. “I have been here half an hour. Come away and sit down with me. I have a hundred things to say.”

They sat together, and Isabella began with weather, hats, and then novels. “Have you gone on with Udolpho?” she asked eagerly. “Yes,” said Catherine, her eyes brightening, “I have read it ever since I woke, and I am at the black veil.” Isabella pressed her arm. “Are you indeed? That is delightful. I would not tell you what is behind it for the world.” “Do not tell me,” cried Catherine. “I am wild to know, but I would not be told. I am sure it must be Laurentina’s skeleton.” Isabella laughed and promised, when Udolpho was finished, that they would read The Italian together and then go on to a whole list of other dreadful books. Catherine heard the names with delight and asked only one question: “Are they all horrid?” “Yes,” said Isabella, “all properly horrid, I assure you.”

Their talk then moved, as it often did, from books to beauty and from beauty to men. Isabella said, “Tell me truly, do you like a man best dark or fair?” Catherine, who had never thought much about it, answered slowly, “Something between both, perhaps. Brown, with dark eyes, but not very dark.” Isabella smiled quickly. “That is exactly your Mr. Tilney.” “He is not my Mr. Tilney,” said Catherine, blushing. Isabella only laughed more. “Well, my taste is different,” she said. “I like light eyes better, and as for complexion, I believe I like a sallow man

best of all. But you must not betray me if ever you meet such a person." Catherine stared and asked, "Betray you? What do you mean?" "Nothing, nothing," Isabella replied. "I have said too much. Let us change the subject."

Before Catherine could return to Laurentina's skeleton, Isabella suddenly became uneasy and whispered, "For heaven's sake, let us move from here. Two odious young men have been staring at me this half hour." They crossed the room to the book of arrivals, where Isabella pretended to examine names while Catherine watched obediently. "Are they following us?" asked Isabella. "Do tell me. I am determined not to look up." A moment later Catherine answered with perfect simplicity, "No, you need not fear them any longer. They have just left the room." Isabella turned round at once. "Which way did they go?" she asked quickly. "Toward the churchyard," said Catherine. "Then come," cried Isabella. "Let us go to Edgar's Buildings and look at my new hat."

They hurried away together, and soon reached the troublesome crossing where so many carts and carriages delayed ladies on urgent business. They had scarcely begun to wonder how they might pass when two young men came up behind them. One of them was James Morland. He was delighted to see his sister, took her hand with real affection, and said, "Why, Catherine, here you are at last! I came to Bath almost on purpose to find you." The other was John Thorpe, Isabella's brother, a loud, self-satisfied young man whose first manner toward Catherine was easy enough, though not especially pleasing. James at once joined Isabella, and the four began to walk together toward Pulteney Street.

Catherine was very glad to see her brother, and his pleasure in seeing her was sincere and strong. He asked after home, their parents, and all the younger children, and she answered with warmth and happiness. But John Thorpe soon took the chief place beside her and began to speak of his horse and gig, of what they had cost, of what they could do, and of what other men had offered for them. "I might have sold the gig for ten guineas more the next day," he said. "Jackson of Oriel would have given sixty at once." Then he asked suddenly, "Are you fond of an open carriage, Miss Morland?" She answered honestly, "Yes, very fond indeed." "Then that is settled," said he. "I will drive you out every day while I am

here."

Catherine did not know how to receive such an offer and could only say, "Thank you." But he went on as if the matter were fixed. "I will drive you up Lansdown Hill tomorrow." "But will not your horse want rest?" she asked seriously. John laughed at once. "Rest! nonsense. Nothing ruins a horse so much as rest." Catherine, who understood arithmetic better than horseflesh, said after a moment, "If you drive four hours every day, that must be forty miles, or more." He answered carelessly, "Fifty, if you like." Isabella turned round and cried, "How delightful! My dearest Catherine, I quite envy you." Catherine felt no delight at all. She was already a little tired of John Thorpe's way of talking, though she tried very hard to be civil.

After praising or condemning every woman they met, John gave Catherine a chance to change the subject, and she asked timidly, "Have you ever read Udolpho, Mr. Thorpe?" "Udolpho!" he cried. "Oh, Lord, no. I never read novels. There is no sense in them." Yet a moment later he began speaking about novels with great confidence, abused some he had hardly looked at, praised others by mistake, and showed that he knew very little of what he was judging. Catherine listened in confusion, not wishing to offend him and yet unable to admire his opinions. When they reached Mrs. Thorpe's lodgings, he rushed in loudly, shook his mother's hand, laughed at her hat, told his sisters they looked ugly, and made himself agreeable by being rude to everyone.

These manners shocked Catherine more than anything else had done. She could not think them pleasant, and she did not like to see such rough speech treated as wit. Still, he was James's friend and Isabella's brother, and before she could dwell too long on his faults, Isabella drew her away to look at the new hat and whispered, with great spirit, "John thinks you the most charming girl in the world." This was said as if it must naturally give pleasure. Soon after, John himself came forward and secured Catherine's hand for the evening dance. She could not refuse without seeming strange, and so the engagement was made. Thus her new circle in Bath grew larger, though she was not yet wise enough to know which of its members would bring her happiness and which would bring her trouble.

Part 4

In spite of dressmakers, ribbons, and the claims of Udolpho, the party from Pulteney Street reached the Upper Rooms in good time that evening. The Thorpes and James Morland were already there, and Isabella received Catherine with smiles, admiration, affection, and all the little warmth of quick friendship. They walked in together arm in arm, whispered over gowns and curls, and settled themselves with the happy belief that the evening would be spent side by side. Catherine was pleased, hopeful, and very ready to enjoy everything. She wanted to dance, to watch, to feel herself part of the room, and, if possible, to see Henry Tilney again.

But almost at once she was disappointed. James was eager to begin dancing with Isabella, and though Isabella said warmly, “I would not stand up without your dear sister for all the world,” this generous firmness lasted only a few minutes. She soon turned back to Catherine and whispered, “My dear creature, I am afraid I must leave you. Your brother is so amazingly impatient, and John will certainly be here in a moment.” Then, pressing Catherine’s hand, she hurried away with James and left her behind between Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Thorpe. Catherine tried to bear it well, but she felt vexed both at Isabella’s departure and at John Thorpe’s delay, for she was now one of the many young women sitting down without a partner, and she knew how little dignity there was in such a position.

She had, however, the comfort of being suddenly roused from this mortification by seeing Henry Tilney not far away. He looked as lively and agreeable as ever, and the young lady on his arm was soon guessed by Catherine to be his sister. This conclusion came so simply to her mind that she did not waste a moment in fearing he was married. He drew nearer, met her eye, and smiled; then, after greeting Mrs. Allen with proper civility, he spoke to Catherine with easy kindness and said he was happy to see her again. Mrs. Allen told him she had feared he had left Bath, and he answered that he had indeed been away for a week, but was now returned.

Soon afterward Mrs. Hughes asked for a little room to be made, that Miss Tilney might sit near Catherine, and this small accident gave her great pleasure. Before that happened, however, Henry had asked Catherine to dance, and she had been forced to refuse him, because John Thorpe at last appeared and claimed the right of an earlier engagement. Her denial, though necessary, was a true pain to her. John, who had no idea of delicacy, only said carelessly that he had kept her waiting, and then began speaking, while they danced, of horses, dogs, and terriers, as if no greater matter in life could be imagined. Catherine, meanwhile, looked as often as she dared toward the place where Henry had been, and thought her lot very unfortunate.

Yet the evening was not wholly lost. Miss Tilney now sat beside her, and Catherine found at once that she liked her. Eleanor was not so showy as Isabella, nor so quick to cry out with delight or distress, but she had more ease, more good sense, and a calmer elegance in all she did. Catherine spoke to her whenever she could, and though the dance and the noise of the room made real conversation difficult, enough passed between them to encourage further acquaintance. They talked of Bath, of music, of drawing, of riding, and of the common questions by which strangers begin to know one another. Catherine felt that Miss Tilney was exactly the sort of young woman she had hoped to find.

Isabella soon returned in high spirits and full of affectionate complaint. “At last I have got you, my dearest creature,” she cried. “I have been looking for you this whole hour. What could induce you to come into this set when you knew I was in the other?” Catherine answered with some justice, “How was it possible for me to get to you? I could not even see where you were.” Then, eager to point out Miss Tilney, she whispered, “Look there. That is Mr. Tilney’s sister.” Isabella showed great excitement, declared her beautiful, demanded instantly to see the brother, and then, when James wanted to dance with her again, resisted with equal spirit, saying it would be most improper to stand up twice with the same partner, though after much lively protest she allowed herself to be persuaded away.

This left Catherine free once more, and she lost no time in making her way back to Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Thorpe, hoping Henry might still be near them and

might ask her again. But she was too late. “Did you meet Mr. Tilney, my dear?” asked Mrs. Allen. “No,” said Catherine quickly, “where is he?” “He was here just now,” replied Mrs. Allen, “and said he was tired of standing about and meant to dance, so I thought perhaps he would ask you.” Catherine looked round at once, and almost at once she saw him leading another young lady to the set. Mrs. Allen said kindly, “I wish he had asked you,” and then added, “he is a very agreeable young man.” Mrs. Thorpe, misunderstanding her, answered with complacency, “Indeed he is, though I am his mother.” Catherine was disappointed enough already, and this mistake did not improve her humor.

When John Thorpe came up again and said, “Well, Miss Morland, I suppose you and I are to stand up and jig it together again,” she refused him at once. “No,” she said, “our two dances are over, and besides, I am tired and do not mean to dance any more.” He then proposed walking about and laughing at people, but she refused that too, and he went off at last to amuse himself elsewhere. The rest of the evening was dull. Henry was drawn away at tea by the lady with whom he had danced, Eleanor was not near enough for more than an occasional word, and Isabella had scarcely anything left for Catherine beyond a smile, a squeeze of the hand, and one fond “dearest Catherine.” By the time she got home, she was out of spirits with almost everybody.

Her unhappiness, however, did not last very long. First it turned into hunger, then into sleep, and after nine good hours of rest she woke in excellent condition, with fresh hopes and new plans. Her chief wish now was to improve her acquaintance with Miss Tilney, and she resolved to seek her in the Pump Room at noon. She sat quietly with her book all morning while Mrs. Allen made observations on threads, needles, gowns, and sounds in the street, as she always did. At about half past twelve there came so loud a knock at the door that Mrs. Allen ran to the window, and before Catherine fully knew what was happening, John Thorpe came rushing upstairs calling, “Well, Miss Morland, here I am. Have you been waiting long? Come, be quick. The others are in a confounded hurry to be off.”

Catherine stared at him and asked, “Where are you all going?” He answered,

as if the thing were beyond doubt, “Why, have you forgot our engagement? We are going up Claverton Down.” Something had indeed been said of a drive, though she had not expected it to be taken so seriously. She looked to Mrs. Allen for advice, but Mrs. Allen only replied with her usual calm indifference, “Do just as you please, my dear.” Catherine’s desire of seeing Miss Tilney was strong, but she did not think there would be any impropriety in going, since Isabella was to go with James, and so she allowed herself to be hurried away. Isabella cried from the carriage, “My dearest creature, I have a thousand things to say to you, but make haste and get in,” and Catherine, hearing her friend call her “a sweet girl” as she turned away, felt pleased enough to go.

At first the drive did not alarm her. John had spoken grandly of his horse’s wild spirits and possible plunges, but the animal moved off in perfect quiet, and Catherine, delighted to find herself safe, thanked him almost warmly for his care. He immediately gave all the credit to his own skill as a driver, and then began talking in a different style. He asked abruptly whether Mr. Allen was rich, whether he had children, and whether Catherine was to inherit anything from him, which shocked and puzzled her. From that he passed to drink, horses, carriages, Oxford, dogs, and every subject on which he could praise himself. He first declared James’s gig likely to break down at any moment, then swore he could drive it safely to York and back himself, and Catherine, who had not been brought up among vain and careless talkers, could not understand how the same man could speak so boldly in two opposite ways.

By degrees one conclusion forced itself upon her. Whatever James or Isabella or anyone else might say, John Thorpe was not agreeable. She was tired of his voice, tired of his boasting, tired of admiring what she did not care for, and tired of agreeing where she did not believe. When at last they returned to Pulteney Street, Isabella was in despair that the time had gone so quickly, but Catherine had no difficulty in thinking it had lasted quite long enough. Mrs. Allen received her with mild questions, then told her that while Catherine had been out she had met Mrs. Hughes walking with Mr. and Miss Tilney in the Crescent. This was a cruel piece of news. Catherine saw at once that if she had stayed quietly at home and

gone to the Pump Room as she planned, she might have met them, spoken with them, and perhaps become better known to Eleanor. Instead of that, she had spent the morning listening to John Thorpe, and before the day ended she had fully decided that the drive had not been pleasant and that Mr. John Thorpe was very disagreeable indeed.

Part 5

The news that she had missed the Tilneys while she was shut up in the carriage with John Thorpe remained painful to Catherine long after the drive was over. She could not think of it without shame. “They must believe me rude,” she said to herself. “They must suppose I preferred such a party as this, and that I passed them by on purpose.” Mrs. Allen, though kindly disposed, could offer little comfort except to say that things often turned out better than one expected, and that perhaps Miss Tilney would not mind it much. Catherine, however, minded it enough for both of them, and resolved that she would explain herself at the first possible moment.

Fortune soon seemed willing to help her. Not long afterward she met Henry and Eleanor again, and the ease with which they spoke to her removed much of her fear. Eleanor’s manner was gentle and friendly, Henry’s lively as ever, and Catherine felt once more how much she liked them both. Their conversation was pleasant, light, and natural, and so different from the loud vanity of the Thorpes that she was happier every minute she remained with them. At parting, a plan was made for another meeting, and Catherine went home persuaded that all was safe again and that she might yet stand well in their opinion.

This hope lasted only until the next morning, when John Thorpe arrived once more full of noise, decision, and self-importance. He came with a new proposal for an excursion and spoke as if acceptance were already certain. Catherine answered at once, “I cannot go, for I am engaged to walk with Miss Tilney.” Isabella and James both joined in persuasion. John laughed at her scruples, called the walk a trifle, and then suddenly declared, with the greatest confidence, that he

had seen the Tilneys already driving out of town and that her engagement was therefore at an end.

Catherine hesitated, resisted, and was half persuaded, half hurried into the carriage before she knew what she was doing. “I do not like this,” she said repeatedly. “I am not sure that you are right. I had rather not go.” But Thorpe only answered with louder certainty. “Nonsense,” he cried. “I tell you they are gone. Tilney and his sister were driving up Lansdown Road in a phaeton not ten minutes ago.” Isabella pressed Catherine’s hand and said, “My dearest creature, do not make yourself uneasy. It is all perfectly settled.” Catherine, though unconvinced, found herself once more carried off against her better judgment.

Her uncertainty soon became misery. As they drove on, she suddenly saw Henry and Eleanor walking quietly along the street and looking back toward the carriage. “Stop, stop, Mr. Thorpe,” she cried instantly. “It is Miss Tilney. It is indeed. Pray stop. I must go back to them this moment.” But Thorpe only drove faster. Catherine begged again. “Pray stop. I cannot go on. I will not go on. I must return and speak to Miss Tilney.” He laughed, smacked his whip, pretended to mistake one person for another, and took no notice of her distress except to amuse himself with it.

From that moment the excursion had no pleasure for her. Even Blaize Castle, which had long lived in her imagination as a place of dark passages, ancient rooms, and delightful fear, could not comfort her as it had done before. She thought less of old walls and hidden chambers than of Eleanor’s opinion and Henry’s disappointment. At last, before they reached their end, another trouble came. James called from the carriage behind that one horse was going lame, and after noise, consultation, and ill-humor, it was decided that the party must give up the scheme and return to Bath. Catherine was sorry to lose Blaize Castle, but she was far more sorry for the false step into which she had again been pushed.

She was now determined to lose no more time. The next day she told Mrs. Allen, “I shall not be easy till I have explained everything to Miss Tilney.” Mrs. Allen, who always mixed advice with dress, answered, “Go, by all means, my dear. Only wear your white gown. Miss Tilney always wears white.” Catherine

obeyed at once, learned the Tilneys' address in Milsom Street, and set out with a beating heart. She reached the house, sent up her card, and waited anxiously, but the servant returned to say that Miss Tilney was out. Catherine left the door with a face full of mortification, almost certain that Miss Tilney must be at home and had refused to see her.

Before she had gone far, she looked back and saw Eleanor herself coming from the house with a gentleman whom Catherine took to be General Tilney. This seemed a complete proof that she had been denied on purpose. Hurt, ashamed, and deeply discouraged, she went home in very low spirits. Even at the theatre that night, though the play interested her for a time, she could not wholly forget it. No Tilneys appeared there to explain, soften, or worsen the case. Their absence only strengthened her belief that they were offended, and when she went to bed she was convinced that she had managed, in a few short days, to lose the regard of the people whose good opinion she valued most.

The following morning, however, brought a change so quick and pleasant that she could hardly believe it real. Henry himself approached her in the Pump Room and spoke with his usual ease. Very soon Eleanor joined them, and all mystery disappeared. They had not seen Catherine's card until too late, and when she had called at the house they were in the act of going out with their father. They had never been offended. Catherine's face brightened at once. "Then you did not think me rude?" she asked. "No," said Eleanor warmly, "only unfortunate." Henry smiled and added that if she had committed any fault at all, it was merely in allowing herself to be governed for a moment by Mr. Thorpe.

Catherine had scarcely recovered from the relief of this reconciliation when a new surprise raised her happiness still higher. General Tilney himself now appeared, full of ceremony, attention, and flattering civility. He spoke of Eleanor's regard for her, praised her modesty, and then, with grand politeness, asked whether she might be persuaded to leave Bath with them when they returned home and spend some weeks at Northanger Abbey. The words struck Catherine with delight. "Northanger Abbey!" she repeated inwardly, as if she had heard the opening of a dream. She answered with as much calmness as she could command,

said that if her father and mother gave permission she should be very happy to go, and then hurried home with Henry in her heart and Northanger Abbey in her head, more certain than ever that the world had suddenly become exactly as wonderful as a heroine could wish.

Part 6

Catherine went home in a state that made ordinary life seem too small for her feelings. She wrote to Fullerton at once, told her father and mother of the invitation, and waited for their answer with as much patience as she could. In truth, she had little fear of refusal. The Allens approved the plan, the Tilneys were everything that was agreeable and respectable, and Mrs. Morland had never made a practice of opposing happiness without reason. When the consent came, ready and kind, Catherine felt that fortune had done all for her that fortune could do.

Her pleasure did not rest only on the thought of being more with Henry and Eleanor. Northanger Abbey itself filled her mind almost as much as Henry did. The word “abbey” had a sound in it that seemed to open long passages, old doors, ruined chapels, and hidden rooms before her eyes. She asked Eleanor question after question. “Was it really an old convent?” “Does much of the ancient building remain?” “Does it stand low in a valley?” “Are there woods near it?” Eleanor answered gently and simply, while Henry smiled at Catherine’s eagerness and seemed to enjoy it.

Yet even after all the answers were given, Catherine’s imagination remained busier than her knowledge. She understood that the house had once been a rich religious building, that part of the old structure still belonged to the present dwelling, and that it stood in a sheltered place with woods around it. But facts of that sort could not quiet her mind. She still saw, as clearly as before, damp galleries, narrow stairs, and perhaps some old story not fully forgotten. “At least,” she thought, “there must be something to make it different from common houses.” She was too much delighted to wish it more exact.

The Tilneys, meanwhile, did everything to keep alive her happiness.

Eleanor's kindness was steady and sincere, Henry's conversation was as pleasant as ever, and even General Tilney seemed resolved to distinguish her in every possible way. His politeness was so marked, his attention to her comfort so exact, that Catherine often felt embarrassed by it. She could not understand why a man of his consequence should care so much whether she was well seated, well served, or well amused. But as she saw in it only kindness, she was grateful and tried to answer it with modest respect. The whole family, in short, seemed to wish her well.

This made the contrast with the Thorpes more and more visible. James Morland's attachment to Isabella now moved forward so far that there could be no doubt of his serious intentions, and Catherine, who loved her brother well, was ready to rejoice in anything that promised him happiness. Isabella talked of James with all her old warmth when she chose to do so, and at such moments Catherine believed everything right again. There were still embraces, tender names, and sudden declarations of unchanging friendship. Yet some part of Isabella's manner had grown less simple than before. She was sometimes absent when Catherine expected her most and sometimes affectionate in a way that felt less natural because it was more eager.

John Thorpe also continued to behave as if he had claims which Catherine had never given him. He talked in a rough, confident way of things being settled that had never been mentioned seriously between them. Once or twice he spoke so plainly, or Isabella spoke for him so plainly, that Catherine understood she was supposed to accept him if he offered himself. This astonished her far more than it pleased her. She could not think him agreeable, admired nothing in his mind, and disliked his manner more every day. To be told that he admired her was therefore not a triumph but a burden.

Still, such matters would have troubled her less if Isabella had gone on in her old way. But within a few days Catherine became aware that their meetings were shorter and less satisfying. Isabella was often in haste, often looking another way, often eager to choose a seat from which she could watch the doors of the Pump Room. One morning, after not having enjoyed her friend's society properly for

several days, Catherine was delighted to be called aside by her into a little corner. “This is my favorite place,” said Isabella as they sat down. “It is so out of the way.” Catherine, seeing that Isabella’s eyes were fixed on every entrance, said playfully, “Do not be uneasy. James will soon be here.”

Isabella answered with a quick little laugh and denied caring to keep James always at her elbow. Her words were light, but they did not sound quite like themselves. She talked of many things, yet seemed to listen for something else. At last Captain Tilney appeared, and whatever Catherine had not understood before, she now began dimly to fear. Isabella’s manner changed at once. Her voice grew softer, her attention livelier, her pleasure more visible, and Catherine, who had no skill in worldly tricks, could only sit still and feel confused by what she saw. “Surely,” she thought, “she cannot mean anything wrong.”

Because she wished to think as well of her friend as possible, she tried to excuse what troubled her. Isabella might be only thoughtless. She might enjoy admiration without understanding the pain it gave. She might not see that Captain Tilney’s attentions, received so willingly, could wound James and mislead another man at the same time. Catherine even began to feel pity for Captain Tilney himself. If he did not know Isabella was engaged, he was in danger of a real disappointment, and if he did know it, his conduct was very strange. In either case, the whole matter grew more uneasy every day.

Her best comfort in this disturbance was the thought that the Tilneys would soon leave Bath and that Captain Tilney was likely to go with them. “When they are all gone to Northanger,” she thought, “everything must become quiet again.” But this hope was soon shaken. Captain Tilney, she learned, was not to be one of the party. He was to remain in Bath while General Tilney, Eleanor, Henry, and Catherine went on to the abbey. This news alarmed her at once, for it seemed to leave James in danger and Isabella in temptation. With her usual openness, she resolved to speak to Henry on the subject as soon as she could, persuaded that if he understood the whole case clearly, he would surely see, as she did, that somebody ought to put an end to it.

Part 7

Catherine soon found a chance to speak to Henry exactly as she had planned. She told him with great seriousness that she feared his brother was in danger, that Isabella was engaged to James, and that something ought to be done before more pain was caused. Henry listened, smiling a little, and then said quietly, “My brother knows very well that Miss Thorpe is engaged.” Catherine stopped and stared at him. “He knows it?” she said. “Then why does he stay here?” Henry answered, “Because he chooses to stay. I have told him the truth, and he is old enough to act for himself.”

Catherine could not be satisfied by so calm a reply. “But you ought to persuade him to go away,” she said. “The longer he remains, the worse it will be. He can have no hope, and my brother is made uncomfortable every day.” Henry looked at her with amused patience and asked, “Is it my brother’s admiration that gives the pain, or Miss Thorpe’s manner in receiving it?” Catherine colored at once. “Is not it the same thing?” she asked. “No,” he replied. “No man suffers merely because another admires the woman he loves. It is her encouragement alone that makes it painful.”

This was not pleasant to hear, because it placed the blame where Catherine least wished it to fall. She tried to defend Isabella. “She is very much attached to James,” she said earnestly. “Indeed she is. She has loved him from the beginning.” Henry answered, “Then she loves him and flirts with my brother at the same time.” “Oh no,” cried Catherine quickly. “Do not call it flirting. She does not mean wrong.” “Perhaps not,” said Henry. “But if she means only to please herself by receiving admiration from both, the effect is much the same.” Catherine could say little more, for she was too honest to deny what she had herself begun to fear.

After this conversation she watched Isabella even more closely, though still with a strong wish to think her innocent. The more she watched, the less easy she felt. In private, Isabella could still be affectionate, tender, and full of protestations. But in public she was plainly altered. Captain Tilney’s attentions were received with smiles, softness, and visible pleasure, while James, standing near her, often

looked grave, doubtful, and unhappy. Catherine's heart was much more with her brother than with her friend now, and every new proof of Isabella's unsteadiness made her more uneasy for him.

James himself soon justified all her concern. One day he came to Catherine in visible trouble and spoke with a seriousness that frightened her. "Catherine," he said, "I do not know what to think. Isabella seems changed. She is not to me what she was." Catherine tried to comfort him. "Perhaps you are mistaken," she said. "Perhaps she is only thoughtless." But James shook his head. "Thoughtless or not, it is hard to bear. If she loved me, she could not act so." His voice was full of pain, and Catherine, hearing him, felt that Henry had judged the matter more truly than she had wished.

The next shock came from John Thorpe. He had long behaved as if Catherine must naturally belong to him, but now his vanity went further than hints and rough compliments. He spoke in a way that made it plain he believed himself almost accepted, and even Isabella talked as if a connection between them might soon be expected. Catherine was astonished, then offended. She had never encouraged him. She had never even liked him. To find that a man so little agreeable could not only admire her, but think himself encouraged, seemed almost absurd. Yet there was something unpleasant in the absurdity, for she saw that his conceit was great enough to make trouble.

Matters became still stranger at the theatre. While Catherine was speaking happily with Henry in Mrs. Allen's box, she noticed John Thorpe below in conversation with General Tilney. The two men seemed to be speaking of her. She could not hear their words, but she saw enough to make her uncomfortable. After the play, when they were waiting for chairs, she asked John directly, "How do you know General Tilney?" He answered with pride, "Know him? Why, as well as one gentleman knows another. He is an excellent old fellow, and I have told him what sort of family you belong to."

"What have you told him?" asked Catherine, uneasy at once. "Why, that your father is a very fine man, and that you are a great heiress," he said. "I told him all about the Allens too, and that you would have ten thousand pounds one

day, if not more.” Catherine was truly shocked. “You told him what was not true,” she cried. “I am not an heiress, and you had no right to say so.” Thorpe only laughed and answered, “Nonsense. People must say something. Besides, it is all much the same in the end.” Catherine turned from him in anger and disgust, but she could not undo the mischief.

Not many days later the consequences began to appear, though she did not yet understand them. General Tilney, who had already been polite, now became almost eagerly attentive. He praised everything connected with her. He asked questions about her family, her home, and her habits with a degree of interest that surprised even his children. He seemed pleased by the simplest answers she gave and looked at her as if she were far more important than she knew herself to be. Catherine, who could imagine kindness much more easily than calculation, believed only that she had somehow been fortunate enough to win his good opinion.

Meanwhile the time for leaving Bath came close. James, wounded and uncertain, was less with Isabella than before. Isabella herself alternated between softness and indifference in a way that now hurt Catherine almost as much as it hurt James. At last, when the final parting could no longer be delayed, Isabella embraced Catherine warmly and said, “My dearest creature, you do not know how wretched I shall be without you. Write to me every day. Remember, we must love one another forever.” Catherine returned the embrace and promised to write, but her heart no longer answered as simply as before. She still wished Isabella well, but trust had gone.

James parted from his sister in a much sadder state. He tried to speak cheerfully, yet his disappointment showed itself in every look. “I shall write soon,” he said. “Perhaps everything may still be well.” Catherine pressed his hand and could only answer, “I hope so with all my heart.” But when she saw him turn away, she felt that hope was becoming harder to hold. Henry and Eleanor, by contrast, brought her back to happier thoughts. Their company remained easy, steady, and sincere, and the nearer the journey came, the more natural it seemed to belong with them.

At last the morning arrived when Catherine was to leave Bath with the Tilneys for Northanger Abbey. Mrs. Allen, who was kind in her quiet way, wished her well and hoped she would enjoy herself very much. Catherine's own spirits rose again as soon as the carriage was ready. Bath, with all its balls, walks, confusions, and lessons, was now behind her. Before her lay Henry's company, Eleanor's friendship, a fine old abbey, and all the mystery and delight that such a name could awaken. She took her place in the carriage with a beating heart, and as they drove out of the city, she felt that one part of her story had closed and another, far more wonderful, had just begun.

Part 8

The journey began in excellent order and with a degree of importance which greatly pleased Catherine. She was placed in the chaise with Eleanor and her maid, while General Tilney followed in the curricle with Henry. The trunks were arranged, parcels pushed in, doors shut, and the whole party moved out of Milsom Street with the steady dignity of a well-managed household. Catherine, who had never before travelled in such style, was delighted by the fine horses, the liveried servants, and the regular rising of the postilions in their stirrups. As Bath disappeared behind them mile by mile, she felt no regret at leaving it, for all that mattered to her now was before her.

At first everything seemed charming. The road was new, the country pleasant, and Eleanor's company easy and agreeable. Catherine watched the milestones eagerly and thought each one came sooner than she expected. But after some time they stopped at Petty France, and there began a delay which made the grandeur of their travelling seem less perfect than it had at first appeared. There was little to do but wait, walk about a little, and eat without hunger. General Tilney, who was always civil to Catherine, showed another side of himself to the servants and the inn, for he was impatient, dissatisfied, and displeased with everything provided for them, and his children seemed more restrained in his presence than ever.

This long pause made Catherine more afraid of him than she had yet been.

She had thought him a most attentive and distinguished man, but now she saw that his attention had sharpness under it, and that his children were not wholly easy while he was near. She said little, and Eleanor said little too, while Henry, though perfectly respectful, appeared to guard his spirits. At last the order to continue the journey was given, and with it came an unexpected proposal. The General said that the day was fine and that Miss Morland ought to see as much of the country as possible. Then he added that she should take his place beside Henry in the curricle for the rest of the drive.

Catherine blushed deeply at the idea. Mr. Allen's opinion about young women in open carriages with young men came back to her at once, and her first feeling was to refuse. But General Tilney spoke as if nothing could be more proper, and she could not believe that he would suggest anything wrong. Before many minutes had passed, she found herself seated beside Henry, the light horse stepping out briskly, the open air fresh around her, and the whole world suddenly brighter than it had been before. She thought a curricle the prettiest thing possible, and Henry drove so quietly, so steadily, and with such complete command, that she was more pleased every minute.

"You are very kind to my sister," Henry said after they had gone on some little way. "She is truly grateful for your coming." Catherine answered at once, "It is I who should be grateful. I have wanted so much to come." Henry smiled and said, "Eleanor needs a companion. My father is often occupied, and I am not always at Northanger. I have my own house at Woodston, nearly twenty miles away, and part of my time must be spent there." Catherine turned to him in surprise. "Then you are often absent from the abbey?" she said. "Yes," he answered. "And whenever I go, I am always sorry to leave Eleanor."

"But even so," said Catherine, "you must be very fond of Northanger. After living in an abbey, an ordinary parsonage must seem dull indeed." Henry looked amused. "You have formed a very favorable picture of our home," he said. "To be sure I have," Catherine replied. "An abbey! I cannot hear the word without thinking of long galleries, old walls, and many strange things." "Then I ought to prepare you properly," said Henry. "For if your expectations are so high,

disappointment may be dangerous." Catherine laughed and answered, "No, pray do not lower them. I had rather arrive with all my hopes."

"Very well," said he. "Then I will help them higher. When you reach Northanger tonight, you will probably be placed in a gloomy room with a bed hung in dark curtains. The wind will roar through the trees, the rain will beat against the windows, and just as you are falling asleep, perhaps near midnight, you will hear a sudden noise. You will start up, take your candle, and see at the far end of the room a large old chest, black with age and terrible in appearance." Catherine listened with shining eyes. "And what will be inside it?" she asked. "That," said Henry gravely, "you must discover for yourself. But do not open it too quickly. The first attempt may fail. The lid may resist. The candle may go out. The storm may grow louder. Your heart may beat so violently that you can hardly stand."

Catherine was delighted rather than frightened. "You are laughing at me," she said, though she did not wish him to stop. "Not at all," he answered. "I am only telling you what may naturally happen in such a house. Or perhaps it will not be a chest. Perhaps you will find an old cabinet with secret drawers, and in one of them a roll of papers, stained with age and almost destroyed by time. You will carry them to bed, wait for the right moment, and unfold them with trembling hands. Then the lamp will suddenly expire, and you will be left in darkness with a manuscript that may explain the wrongs of a dead woman." Catherine clasped her hands and cried, "How delightful! I hope exactly that will happen."

Henry laughed now without disguise, and even while laughing he seemed pleased by her enjoyment. Their conversation then became lighter, though it always returned to Northanger. Catherine asked about the size of the house, the number of rooms, the old parts, the woods, the road, and the church. Henry answered readily, sometimes seriously and sometimes with the same playful turn which she had liked from the first evening of their acquaintance. By degrees the abbey itself came into view, and Catherine felt her heart beat with a new kind of excitement. It did not rise in complete ruin or black grandeur out of a lonely valley, as her imagination had often pictured it, but it was still large, old in part, and

unlike any house she had ever seen before.

She was received with every attention. General Tilney welcomed her with elaborate politeness, servants appeared in numbers, and Eleanor took her upstairs with affectionate care. The rooms through which she passed were handsome, comfortable, and far more cheerful than she had expected. Her own chamber especially surprised her. Instead of a narrow, dark room with painted glass and broken furniture, she found a large, well-kept apartment, bright curtains, a good fire, and every sign of present comfort. For a few moments she was almost ashamed of her own expectations. “This is like any other fine bedroom,” she thought. “There is nothing terrible in it at all.”

Yet imagination was not so easily dismissed. The evening was windy, the sky had darkened before night, and by the time she was alone the rain had begun. As she moved quietly about the room, putting away small things and looking at the unfamiliar furniture, Henry’s playful warnings returned to her mind one by one. The comfort of the chamber remained, but under the sound of the storm even comfort could look uncertain. The curtains seemed a little darker, the corners of the room less clear, and every piece of old furniture more important than before. Then, as she turned with her candle, her eye fell on a large old chest standing at a distance from the bed, and she stopped at once.

Part 9

Catherine stood still for a few moments, looking at the old chest as if it had suddenly become the most important object in the room. Her first disappointment at finding the chamber so modern and comfortable was gone at once. Here, at least, was something that seemed to belong to an older and stranger world. She moved toward it slowly, scarcely breathing, and looked at the silver lock, the broken handles, and the dark carved wood with growing excitement. “This must mean something,” she thought. “Why should such a chest be hidden here in this corner? Why should it look so old when everything else in the room is so ordinary?” Her hand shook as she touched the lid, yet curiosity grew stronger than

fear.

She tried to raise it and found that it resisted her. That resistance made the whole matter more alarming and more delightful at once. “I will know what is inside,” she said inwardly. “I must know it now, while there is still some daylight left.” Just as she had lifted it a little, there came a sudden knock at the door, and the lid fell back with a loud and violent sound that made her start from it. Miss Tilney’s maid had come to offer help in dressing, and though Catherine sent her away as quickly as she could, the interruption forced her to remember dinner, the General’s dislike of delay, and the danger of seeming foolish. Still, while she hurried into her gown, her eyes kept returning to the chest.

At last she could resist no longer. She rushed at it with sudden boldness, lifted the heavy lid, and looked within in a state of breathless expectation. A neatly folded white cotton counterpane lay inside, and nothing more. Catherine stared at it in silence. The whole mystery ended there. She had scarcely time to feel the full shame of such hopes when Eleanor entered and found her by the chest. “It is an odd old thing, is it not?” said Eleanor kindly. “I believe it has been here for many generations. I kept it because it is useful for hats and bonnets, though it is sadly heavy to open.” Catherine blushed deeply, shut the lid, and tried to look as if she had been thinking only of housekeeping. Then they hurried downstairs together, where General Tilney stood with his watch in his hand, impatient for dinner.

Catherine suffered almost as much from that dinner as if the chest had indeed held some dreadful secret. She was ashamed of herself, ashamed that Eleanor had seen her, and ashamed that Eleanor had then been scolded by her father for hurrying her guest. Yet the General soon recovered his politeness and became so attentive to Catherine’s comfort that she was gradually easier again. The room was noble, the servants were many, and the whole order of the table impressed her strongly. General Tilney spoke of dining rooms, comfort, and proper household arrangements, and she answered honestly that she had never seen so large a room in her life. By the end of the meal, her appetite and the General’s smiles had done much to restore her peace.

The evening afterward was cheerful enough, especially when the General

was out of the room, for then Henry and Eleanor both became easier, and Catherine herself felt less watched. But when night came, the weather, already rough before, grew violent indeed. The rain beat hard against the house, the wind swept round the old walls with strange force, and as Catherine crossed the hall she heard a distant door close with a sound that seemed far more solemn in such a place than it could ever have seemed at home. “Now I am really in an abbey,” she thought. The words gave her a thrill of awe and pleasure together. Yet she tried to reason with herself. “I have nothing to fear,” she said. “Henry was only laughing at me. This is a safe, comfortable house.”

With that brave thought she entered her chamber and tried to behave as if she believed it fully. The fire still burned brightly. She examined the curtains, looked behind them, pressed the shutters, and satisfied herself that the motion she had seen came only from the wind. “There is nothing here to frighten anyone,” she said aloud. She even decided not to mend the fire, because that would look cowardly. Then, just as she was preparing for bed, her eye fell on a tall black cabinet which she felt sure had escaped her notice before. In one instant Henry’s morning joke returned with full force. Here was the dark cabinet he had described, or something near enough to it to make the likeness alarming.

She took up her candle and went to it at once. The cabinet was not exactly ebony and gold, but the black and yellow shining surface looked near enough in that uncertain light. The key was in the door. “I do not expect to find anything,” she told herself. “Still, after what he said, it would be absurd not to look.” She tried the key, and for a long moment nothing moved. The wind roared, the rain fell more fiercely, and the whole room seemed to darken with expectation. She tried again, in another way, and at last the door yielded. Inside were rows of drawers, most of them small, with one locked space in the middle that seemed much more important than the rest. Catherine’s heart beat faster. She opened drawer after drawer and found them all empty.

The central compartment remained. She struggled with the lock and at last opened it. There, pushed back within, lay a small roll of paper. At the sight of written pages her blood ran cold with excitement. “A manuscript!” she thought.

“A real manuscript, hidden here all this time!” Her hands shook so much that she could hardly hold it. She took it up, resolved to read every word that instant. But when she turned to the candle and tried to make the flame clearer, she snuffed it too quickly and put it out in a moment. Darkness fell upon her all at once. A gust of wind rushed down the chimney, and in the silence that followed she fancied she heard steps far away and then the shutting of another door. Her courage gave way completely. The papers slipped from her hand, and she found her bed by touch alone and hid herself under the clothes like a frightened child.

Sleep seemed impossible. She lay trembling, listening to every sound. At one moment the curtains appeared to move, at another she thought the lock of the door was being tried. The storm continued for hours, and her mind gave every noise a terrible meaning. Again and again she thought of the manuscript lying somewhere on the floor and wondered what history of crime or sorrow it might contain. She did not know when fear gave way to exhaustion, but at some point before morning she fell asleep. When she woke, the shutters were open, the room was full of light, the fire had been relit, and all the horrors of the night seemed almost foolish in the brightness of the morning.

Yet the manuscript was remembered in an instant. She sprang from bed, gathered the scattered sheets, and hurried back to read them at last. Her eyes flew over the first page, then the next, then another, and her face changed from eagerness to astonishment and from astonishment to shame. What she held was not a hidden history, not an ancient confession, not even a private letter. It was a bundle of household papers: lists of linen, washing bills, and small expenses. One larger page seemed to concern a horse. That was all. Catherine sat still with the papers in her hand, humbled to the dust. “How could I be so foolish?” she thought. “How could I have believed such nonsense in a room like this?” She put every sheet carefully back in the cabinet and hoped with all her heart that no one would ever know what a night she had spent over old bills and a servant’s forgotten papers.

When she went down to breakfast, Henry was there alone, and his first words made her uneasy at once. “I hope the storm did not disturb you,” he said with a

slight smile. Catherine could not tell a direct falsehood, but she could not bear the truth to be guessed. “The wind kept me awake a little,” she answered. Then, eager to change the subject, she praised the hyacinths near the window and declared that she had only lately learned to care for such flowers. Henry, amused and gentle, began talking at once of flowers, gardens, and the pleasures of learning to love new things. Catherine listened with gratitude, glad to escape from darker subjects. But even while she answered him, she still felt the heat of her own foolishness in her face, and made a firm resolution that at Northanger Abbey, from this moment on, she would be wiser.

Part 10

Henry’s light talk about flowers could not last forever, and Catherine was thankful when the General entered and turned the conversation another way. He was in excellent spirits and seemed pleased with everything about him. The breakfast service drew Catherine’s eye at once, and when she said with simple admiration that it was very handsome, the General received her praise as if it were of real importance. He spoke of Staffordshire china, of old purchases and new improvements, and hinted so openly at future changes that anyone more experienced than Catherine might have understood him perfectly. Catherine heard him politely, but the meaning of such hints did not reach her, and she only thought him very grand and very attentive.

Soon after breakfast Henry left Northanger for Woodston, where business was to keep him for two or three days. The whole family stood in the hall to see him mount, and when he had ridden away Catherine went at once to the window, hoping for one more glimpse of him. The General noticed her and said to Eleanor, “This is a heavy day for your brother. Woodston will have a sad look after such company.” Catherine turned and asked quickly, “Is Woodston a pretty place?” That was enough for the General, who launched at once into a description of the house, the meadows, the kitchen garden, and the living itself, all of which belonged chiefly to him and had been managed, improved, or enriched by his own

wisdom. Catherine listened with respect, though she understood less of incomes and walls than he clearly wished.

After this, what she really wanted at last seemed about to begin. The General offered to show her over the house. Catherine accepted eagerly, though she would much rather have gone with Eleanor alone. Yet to see the abbey more fully was too great a pleasure to refuse under any conditions. The netting box was shut up in a moment, her bonnet was discussed, then dismissed, and everything pointed toward immediate enjoyment. But just as she thought they must start, the General proposed that they might perhaps do better to go out first, because the weather was fine and the abbey would always keep. Catherine was disappointed, but before she could speak Eleanor said, with a slight confusion that did not escape her, “I believe it is best to take the morning while it is so fair.”

Catherine did not know what to think. Why should Eleanor look embarrassed? Why should the General seem so certain that she preferred the grounds, when she had hardly said a word? And why, above all, should he be so eager to delay showing the house itself? Still, she said nothing, and followed where he led. Once outside, however, her disappointment was partly softened by the first full view of the abbey. It rose before her in Gothic beauty, enclosing a large court, with old trees and wooded hills behind it. “How beautiful it is!” she cried at once. “I have never seen anything like it.” The General looked gratified and answered warmly, “You do Northanger justice, Miss Morland. It is a place that can bear examination.”

From the lawn he took them toward the kitchen garden, and there Catherine was forced into a new kind of wonder. The size of it alone was astonishing. The walls seemed endless, the hot-houses innumerable, and there were so many men at work that it looked less like a garden than a village of gardeners. The General walked on in high satisfaction, explaining every improvement as if he had created the whole place with his own hands. “If I have a hobby,” he said, “it is a garden. I care nothing for myself, but my children and friends must have good fruit.” Catherine answered honestly that she had never seen such gardens before. He looked delighted and replied, “I believe there are few in England to equal them.”

When he asked about Mr. Allen's garden and heard how small and unimportant it was, he smiled with open contempt and called Mr. Allen "a happy man" for being free of such cares. Catherine was too tired by the time they had passed under every wall and into every division to admire much more, and she was grateful when Eleanor led the way toward a narrow path through a grove of dark fir trees. The General objected. "That path is damp," he said. "Miss Morland will get wet. The best way is across the park." But Catherine, struck at once by the gloom and secrecy of the place, said eagerly, "Oh no, I would rather go this way." The General, seeing her wish, gave in at last, though he excused himself from joining them and turned away by another route.

The relief Catherine felt at being left alone with Eleanor shocked her for a moment, but it was real. Free from the General's constant voice, she began to speak more happily of the grove itself. "How delightful this place is," she said. "It is so solemn and quiet." Eleanor sighed and answered, "I am particularly fond of it. It was my mother's favorite walk." These few words changed everything. Catherine had heard almost nothing of Mrs. Tilney before, and now all her attention fastened upon the subject at once. "You used to walk here with her?" she asked. "Very often," said Eleanor. "I did not care for it then as I do now, but her memory has made it dear to me."

Catherine waited for more, and when Eleanor was silent, she ventured, "Her death must have been a great affliction." Eleanor answered in a low voice, "A great and increasing one. I was only thirteen when she died, and then I could not understand fully what I had lost. I have no sister, you know, and though my brothers are affectionate, and Henry is here a great deal, it is impossible not to be often solitary." Catherine felt deeply touched. "A mother would always have been with you," she said. "Yes," Eleanor replied. "A mother would have been a constant friend." Catherine then poured out question after question. "Was she very handsome? Is there a picture of her in the abbey? And why did she love this grove so much?" Eleanor answered the first questions readily enough and promised to show the portrait, but the last were passed over.

To Catherine's excited mind, this silence was full of meaning. A favorite

walk not loved by the husband, a portrait not valued by him, a daughter left solitary, a dead mother remembered with such tenderness: all these things joined themselves into one dark picture. When Eleanor said the picture had once been meant for the drawing room, but that the General had been dissatisfied with it, Catherine's mind nearly settled the whole case. "He must have been cruel to her," she thought. "He never loved her as he ought. Perhaps he hated everything that reminded him of her." By the time they came out of the grove and met the General again, her earlier dislike had grown into something stronger. She smiled because she had to smile, but inwardly she felt real aversion.

The General now insisted on returning to the house and again delayed the promised tour of the abbey. He left them once more, but not before calling Eleanor back to forbid her, in the most pointed way, to take Miss Morland round the building till he returned. This second delay struck Catherine very strongly. "Something is certainly to be hidden," she thought. "Why else should he watch us so closely?" When at last he came back and led them through the house, her suspicions only changed their form; they did not disappear. The drawing room was magnificent, the library noble, and the furniture rich, but such things could not truly interest her. She wanted old passages, hidden chambers, marks of past suffering, some trace of the darker history she was now sure belonged to the place.

She was therefore far more excited by the little signs that seemed accidental than by all the General's grandeur. A dark room full of Henry's books and coats pleased her more than satin and carving. The remains of old cloisters, doors left unopened, passages imperfectly understood, and the thought of secret communication between one side of the house and another kept her imagination constantly at work. Even the kitchen, though full of modern comfort and servants, could not wholly drive romance from her mind. She noticed everything, but she interpreted only what suited her hopes. When the General stopped Eleanor from opening the farther end of the gallery and called her back rather sharply, Catherine felt almost certain that she was at last on the edge of discovery.

Then came the sentence that decided all. As they went downstairs, Eleanor said quietly, "I was going to take you into what was my mother's room—the room

in which she died." Catherine needed no more. That room, forbidden by the General, closed against curiosity, connected with his dead wife, and still unchanged after nine years, became instantly the center of all her thoughts. Later, when she asked Eleanor if the room remained exactly as it had been, and heard that it did, and that poor Eleanor had not even reached home before her mother was dead, horror rushed through her mind with new force. That evening, seeing the General pace the drawing room in gloomy silence, she thought, "It is the very walk of a guilty man." When he declared at night that he must stay up for hours over political pamphlets, she believed no such thing. "There is something else to be done," she thought. "Something that can be done only when the house is asleep."

Her ideas now went beyond death itself. Before she was half undressed, she had begun to imagine not murder, but imprisonment. The old passages, the unopened doors, the forbidden gallery, the late hours of the General, and Eleanor's absence at the time of her mother's illness all seemed to fit together too well to be accidental. "Mrs. Tilney may still be alive," Catherine thought, trembling at once with fear and excitement. "She may be hidden somewhere in that part of the abbey even now." She meant to watch at midnight for signs of light below, signs of movement, signs of secret cruelty. But though her thoughts were bold, her body was tired; and when the clock struck twelve, Catherine Morland had already been asleep for half an hour.

Part 11

The next morning did not bring Catherine the courage or the wisdom she had hoped for. The thoughts of the night still held her strongly, and instead of laughing at them in the light of day, she found them returning with almost equal force. The forbidden part of the house, Mrs. Tilney's room, the General's silence, Eleanor's sorrow, and every small circumstance that had fed her imagination seemed still to point in one dark direction. At last, finding herself alone and believing that she might safely satisfy her fears, she stole again into the gallery and made her way toward the room which had once belonged to Mrs. Tilney. Her heart beat violently,

but curiosity carried her on.

The room itself did not answer her hopes any better than the cabinet and the old chest had done. It was large, orderly, and rather melancholy than dreadful. There was nothing of violence in it, nothing of secret misery written upon the walls or hidden among the furniture. Catherine looked round with fearful attention and saw only the common marks of an apartment that had once been lived in and was now left almost untouched. She was still standing there, trying to force mystery out of what offered none, when a sound behind her made her turn. Henry Tilney was near her.

No sudden ghost could have struck her with deeper shame. Henry looked surprised, then grave, and asked gently what had brought her there. Catherine could hardly answer. He walked with her down the gallery, speaking quietly, but his quietness was more painful than anger would have been. By degrees, and with broken words, she let him see what wild thoughts she had admitted. “Mrs. Tilney died suddenly,” she said. “And none of you were all at home. And your father—I thought perhaps he had not been very fond of her.” Henry stopped her at last and answered with a seriousness that cut her to the heart.

He told her plainly how his mother had died, of a real illness, of the physicians who attended her, of the care given to her by her husband and sons, and of Eleanor’s absence only because she was too far away to return before all was over. “My father may have faults,” he said, “but not these. Dear Miss Morland, think what you have been supposing. Remember where and when you live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians, that such crimes are not hidden in the middle of common life.” Then he added, in words she could never forget, “Consult your own judgment. Consult what you know of the world. What ideas have you been admitting?” By the time they reached the end of the gallery, Catherine could bear no more and fled to her own room in tears of shame.

There the whole force of her error came upon her at once. The dreams in which she had so long delighted were broken completely. She saw now that her fancy had prepared the danger before she had found even the smallest sign of it, and that she had bent every common event to match what she wished to fear. Most

bitterly she cried. It was not only that she had been foolish. She had been unjust. She had dared to think evil of Henry's father, and worse still, she had shown enough of that thought for Henry to know it. "He must despise me," she said again and again. "He can never think well of me after this."

Yet when she came downstairs later, miserable and humbled, Henry did not punish her with coldness. On the contrary, he was more attentive than usual. He did not speak of the morning, did not force her to remember it, and seemed almost to watch for moments in which a little kindness might help her. Eleanor, seeing that something was wrong, was gentle without asking too many questions. The evening passed quietly, and though Catherine could not forgive herself, she began at least to hope that the fault might go no farther and that Henry's regard, if not what it had once seemed, was not entirely lost.

As she thought over everything more calmly, she understood better how the mistake had grown. It had not begun at Northanger. It had begun before she ever arrived, in the stories she had filled her mind with, in her delight in old buildings, dark passages, hidden papers, and cruel noblemen. She did not turn against such books altogether, for they had given her real pleasure; but she now saw that they were not guides to ordinary English life. In the middle of England, she thought, people might be proud, selfish, angry, or hard, but they were not carrying on secret murders and imprisonments in their own houses. The world was mixed, not made only of angels and devils. That lesson, painful as it was, sank deep into her mind.

The next few days were outwardly calmer, though not free from trouble. The subject of Isabella and Captain Tilney was often discussed among the three young people, and Catherine was surprised to find Henry and Eleanor fully persuaded that even if their brother had acted seriously, the General would strongly oppose such a marriage. "Isabella has neither fortune nor consequence," Eleanor said with regret. "My father would see that first of all." Catherine was struck by this at once, for the thought turned painfully back upon herself. She had no great fortune either. If such objections were strong against Captain Tilney, why should they not one day be used against Henry?

She tried to quiet herself by remembering the General's marked favor toward

her. His attentions had been constant from the beginning, and he had said more than once things so generous about money that she had been tempted to think his children misunderstood him. Still, the fear returned. When she spoke of it indirectly, Henry answered lightly at times, but not always in a way that truly reassured her. She even proposed that he should tell the General the whole truth of Isabella's conduct, so that any judgment made against her might at least be fair. Henry shook his head. "No," he said. "My father does not need help in objecting, and Frederick must tell his own story if he chooses to tell it at all."

Captain Tilney, however, remained absent, and his silence only made everyone more uncertain. Some hours they believed his absence proved the whole flirtation ended; at others they thought it the strongest proof that some secret understanding had taken place. The General himself, though he complained every morning that Frederick did not write, seemed much more concerned with Catherine's comfort than with his son. He feared she might find Northanger dull, wished there were more company in the neighborhood, spoke of dinners and dancing, and seemed anxious that no sameness should tire her. Catherine received all this civilly, but she often felt, in spite of herself, that his concern had something restless and watchful in it.

Even so, life at Northanger had not grown unhappy. Henry's company, Eleanor's affection, the beauty of the place, and the quiet rhythm of each day still gave Catherine much pleasure. But after the ruin of her great mistake, she was less easily carried away by appearances than before. She now looked more carefully, thought more seriously, and began, though slowly, to separate what she felt from what she only fancied. It was a hard lesson, and she had not yet learned all of it. But the Catherine who now walked through the rooms and gardens of Northanger Abbey was no longer the Catherine who had once looked at every closed door and hoped to find a crime behind it.

Part 12

After the shame of her great mistake, Catherine tried very earnestly to keep

her thoughts on safer ground; yet even safety had its troubles. The subject of Captain Tilney and Isabella came back again and again in the conversation of the three young people, and Catherine was surprised to find Henry and Eleanor perfectly agreed on one point. They believed that, even if their brother were serious, General Tilney would strongly oppose the match. “Miss Thorpe has neither fortune nor consequence,” Eleanor said gently, “and my father would think that of the first importance.” This, though said quietly, struck Catherine very deeply. She had no fortune either, and the thought could not but turn painfully toward herself.

She tried to comfort her mind by remembering the General’s marked favor and by trusting the generous things she had heard him say on the subject of money. Still, the fear would return. Henry and Eleanor were so sure that their brother would never come to Northanger to ask his father’s consent, and so sure that no sudden event need force Catherine to leave the abbey, that she was at last quieted on that point. She even proposed once more that Henry should explain the whole truth about Isabella to the General, so that any judgment of her might at least be fair. But Henry answered, “My father does not need help in objecting, and Frederick must tell his own story, if he chooses to tell one at all.”

A few days passed in this uncertain state. Captain Tilney still did not appear, and his silence puzzled everyone. Sometimes it seemed to prove that all was ended; at other moments it appeared only stranger and more suspicious. General Tilney, meanwhile, gave himself up to one concern above all others, that of making Catherine’s stay agreeable. He feared the sameness of their quiet life would tire her, wished more neighbors were in the country, talked now and then of dinners and dancing, and appeared truly uneasy lest Northanger should fail to entertain her. Catherine could not but be touched by such attention, though there was still something restless in it that she did not fully understand.

At last a letter came from James, and one glance at it was enough to tell Catherine that it brought bad news. She opened it with trembling hands and soon saw that all was over between him and Isabella. He wrote not angrily, but in deep pain. Her affection, once so warm and so ready in speech, had failed under trial.

Mrs. Thorpe, learning that Mr. Morland could not at present settle a larger income upon his son than had first been expected, had suddenly altered her manner; Isabella had altered with her; and words had been spoken which left James no hope that she loved him for himself. He did not accuse her of open falsehood, but her conduct had been enough. The engagement was at an end.

Catherine cried over the letter as much for her brother's suffering as for her own disappointment. She had loved Isabella with real warmth, and though that love had long been weakening, the final fall of it was still painful. "How could she do this?" she said to herself. "How could she say so much, promise so much, and then give way for the sake of money?" Yet the more she thought, the less she could defend her former friend. Isabella had been vain, changeable, and eager for admiration almost from the first. Catherine now saw that what she had once called warmth of heart had often been only quickness of manner and pleasure in being loved.

She had hardly recovered from James's letter when a second arrived, this time from Isabella herself. It was full of tender names, pretty excuses, sudden tears, and easy contradictions. Isabella declared she had been cruelly misrepresented, protested that her feelings were unchanged where they ought to be strongest, and then in the next lines wrote of Captain Tilney in a way that betrayed far more concern for him than for James. She begged Catherine to write at once, to explain everything to her brother, to keep his heart soft toward her, and to think kindly of a friend who had never ceased to love her. All this was mixed with little remarks on dress, compliments she had received, and even the colors she wore because they suited James's taste. The artifice was so thin that even Catherine could not be deceived by it for a moment.

Instead of softening her, the letter filled her with shame and anger. She was ashamed that she had once admired such a character, and ashamed too that Isabella should think her simple enough to be persuaded by such writing. "Write to James for her!" she cried. "No. James shall never hear her name from me in that way again." The old friendship was now not only broken but hateful in memory. She could not forget the hours they had spent together, but she could no longer bear to

think of them with tenderness. Isabella's professions, once delightful, now seemed empty; her demands, once flattering, now appeared only bold and selfish.

When Henry returned from Woodston, Catherine at once told him and Eleanor all that had happened. She read aloud the most important parts of Isabella's letter with honest indignation, and when she had done she said, "So much for Isabella and all our intimacy. She must think me an idiot, or she could never have written like this." Henry heard her with great attention and very little surprise. He did not try to excuse his brother. On the contrary, he admitted calmly that Frederick's behavior had probably come from vanity and carelessness, not from any real attachment. "If the effect of his conduct does not justify him," he said, "we had better not look too hard for the cause."

Catherine answered at once, "Then he never truly cared for her?" Henry shook his head. "I do not believe he did," he said. "He liked being admired, and Miss Thorpe liked admiring where it might profit her." Catherine, though relieved on one side, was not disposed to be gentle on the other. "Then I do not like him at all," she said warmly. "Even if no great harm is done in the end, such conduct is wrong." Henry replied with brotherly fairness but without blind defense. He would not call Frederick good where he had been foolish, but he reminded Catherine that Isabella too had no steady heart to be ruined. This did not make her kinder to either of them, but it helped her see the whole matter more clearly.

After some silence, Henry began speaking in his lighter way and turned the conversation from her brother's pain to her own supposed misery. "You have lost half yourself, I imagine," he said. "You must feel a dreadful emptiness. Society can never again amuse you. You will never go to a ball again, and no friend can ever replace the confidence you had in Miss Thorpe." Catherine, though still grave, could not help smiling. She thought a little and then answered with perfect truth, "No. I am hurt and sorry, and I cannot love her now. But I do not feel so very miserable as one might expect." Henry looked pleased and said, "You feel exactly what does credit to your good sense and your heart."

His playful kindness did her real service. By making her examine her feelings honestly, he relieved them. She saw that she had been deceived, but not ruined;

that she had lost an illusion more than a necessary part of herself; and that a false friendship, once clearly known to be false, could not leave the same deep wound as a true one. James's sorrow still moved her strongly, and Isabella's conduct still disgusted her, but she was no longer overwhelmed. Her mind had become steadier than it once was. She did not excuse evil, but neither did she dress it up in impossible colors. And while she sat with Henry and Eleanor that evening, speaking more calmly than before, she little guessed how soon another blow, far sharper and far stranger than Isabella's letter, was about to fall upon her.

Part 13

That very night, after Henry had gone to Woodston and the two young ladies had sat together till a late hour, the sound of a carriage at the door broke the quiet of the abbey. Eleanor, thinking at first that it must be her eldest brother, hurried downstairs, while Catherine went on to her room and tried to prepare herself for meeting Captain Tilney again. She had hardly had time to settle her thoughts when she heard a cautious movement near her door and then saw the lock turn softly. She opened it at once and found Eleanor standing there, pale, trembling, and hardly able to speak. Catherine caught her hand and cried, "My dear Eleanor, what is the matter? Is anything wrong at Woodston?" Eleanor shook her head and answered, "No, not Woodston. It is my father. I come on the most miserable errand in the world."

Then, with broken words and eyes fixed on the ground, Eleanor gave her message. General Tilney had returned unexpectedly, and Catherine must leave Northanger the next morning. No explanation was offered. No apology was possible. It was not a request, but an order. Catherine, though struck to the heart, still tried at first to understand it in the mildest way. "If you are all going away," she said, "I can go very well. I need only take leave of you all tomorrow." Eleanor burst into tears and was forced at last to confess the truth more plainly: Catherine was not to wait for any farewell, not even for a later hour, but was to leave in the morning by post, almost at once, as if her company had become hateful in a single

night.

In Eleanor's presence Catherine restrained herself and even tried to comfort her. "Do not grieve so much for me," she said. "You have done nothing wrong. I know you are only suffering with me." But when she was left alone, all her courage failed. She wept bitterly over the insult, the cruelty, the complete mystery of it, and most of all over leaving Henry without a word. The same room which had once been the scene of childish Gothic fears now held a far more real misery. The wind might shake the house as it pleased, but Catherine did not hear it with terror. She had no room in her mind now for imaginary horrors. Real pain had driven them all away.

Before six in the morning Eleanor was with her again, eager to help where help was hardly possible. Catherine was nearly dressed already, for she had not slept. She had hoped, even then, for some change, some softer message, some sign that the General's anger had passed in the night. None came. They went downstairs together in miserable silence and found breakfast ready, though no one else appeared. General Tilney had taken care to spare himself the sight of the guest whom he was sending away. His daughter could only press Catherine's hand, embrace her with tears, and whisper, "Write to me, if you can forgive us." Catherine answered, "There is nothing for me to forgive in you."

She was then placed in a post-chaise with only a servant to direct the way as far as the next stage, and thus sent from Northanger Abbey with a harshness that would have been painful in any case and was almost shocking in hers. She had never travelled so before. No friend was with her, no proper arrangements had been made for her comfort, and the distance was long. As the miles passed, her pain changed form many times. At one moment she thought only of Henry and felt certain she had lost him forever. At another, she was consumed by shame and anger toward the General. Then again she was overcome by simple weariness and wanted only to reach home and see her mother's face. The journey seemed endless, yet by slow degrees Fullerton came at last.

Her family saw her arrive with astonishment, for they had expected no such thing. Mrs. Morland ran to her at once and cried, "My dear child, what brings you

home so suddenly?" Catherine could not answer for a moment, but burst into tears upon her mother's shoulder. Yet nothing in the reception that followed resembled the violent scenes that fancy might have imagined. Her parents were alarmed for her comfort and safety far more than offended for their dignity. When enough had been understood to show that she had been sent away suddenly and without proper attention, Mr. Morland said warmly, "This is not well done. This is not the conduct of a gentleman." Mrs. Morland, after hearing all, thought the whole affair strange and rude, but was chiefly thankful that her daughter was safe at home again.

The quiet good sense of her family soothed Catherine more than any dramatic display could have done. Little by little she told them everything except the one part of her suffering that she could not yet speak of freely—Henry. She spoke of Eleanor with tenderness, of the General with pain and bewilderment, and of her own departure with shame. Her parents listened kindly and judged as kindly as they could. At home she was surrounded once more by simple habits, familiar rooms, younger brothers and sisters, and all the plain comfort of common life. This did not cure her grief, but it held her up under it. She cried a great deal in private, thought of Henry continually, and had many moments in which she believed that all was ended; still, she was no longer alone with her distress.

Days passed in this state, and then one morning the most impossible event of all took place. Henry Tilney came to Fullerton. Catherine could hardly believe her own eyes when she saw him. He had ridden over in haste, and when at last they were allowed a little time together, he told her everything. On his return from Woodston, he had been met by his father in anger and ordered to think of Miss Morland no more. "And what did you answer?" Catherine asked, trembling. Henry smiled and said, "I did not obey." Then, with warmth more serious than she had ever yet seen in him, he told her that he loved her, that his father's injustice had only made him more certain of himself, and that he had come to ask for her hand before anything else could happen.

Catherine, in the joy of hearing this, could scarcely attend at first to the rest of the story. Yet it soon appeared that the whole affair had come from the same foolish source that had caused so much mischief before. John Thorpe, proud of

his supposed knowledge and eager to magnify everyone connected with himself, had first given the General a false idea of the Morlands' fortune and of Catherine's future expectations from the Allens. Later, offended by Catherine's clear dislike of him and by James's broken engagement with Isabella, he had told another story just as false in the opposite direction, making the family appear poor and insignificant. The General, who had welcomed Catherine under one mistake and cast her off under another, had shown himself guided not by justice or affection but by pride and money. Catherine heard this with indignation, but Henry's presence turned even indignation into triumph. She was loved, and loved truly. That was enough to color everything else.

Their happiness, however, was not complete at once. Mr. and Mrs. Morland approved Henry from the heart. They saw his worth, believed his affection, and thought the match in every way good and honorable. But they would not encourage a secret marriage or a defiance of parental authority. "His father must consent in some decent form," said Mr. Morland. "We do not ask his money, but we cannot wholly overlook his place." Henry knew that this was reasonable, and though the lovers grieved at the delay, neither of them could resent it. So he went back to Woodston and Catherine remained at Fullerton, to hope, to suffer a little, and to receive letters often enough to keep hope alive.

The change, when it came, came not from argument but from another event in the family. Eleanor Tilney married at last the man she had long wished to marry, a man of fortune and consequence whom the General could now welcome without shame. This increase of dignity threw him into such good humor that Henry's offense, which had before seemed unforgivable, suddenly became pardonable. Eleanor, happy in her new home and free at last from the oppression of the old one, used her influence well. She pleaded for her brother, and the General, still proud, still absurd, but no longer violent, gave him permission "to be a fool if he liked." That was enough. It was all the consent the Morlands required.

Thus the obstacles ended, and Catherine, who had once gone to Bath knowing almost nothing of the world, found at last that she had learned something real from all she had suffered. She had learned that a pleasant manner is not the

same as a good heart, that lively professions do not always mean true attachment, that imagination can deceive, and that ordinary life contains enough pain and happiness without borrowed horrors. Yet she had also learned that sincerity may be trusted, that kindness may survive misunderstanding, and that love can remain steady under trial. Henry and Catherine were married, and if their happiness was not won in the dark manner of a Gothic tale, it was won in a better one, by truth, patience, and affection. And after all the mistakes, alarms, vanities, and sorrows that had troubled them, they had every reason to be glad that their story belonged not to Italy or an old romance, but to England, to home, and to one another.