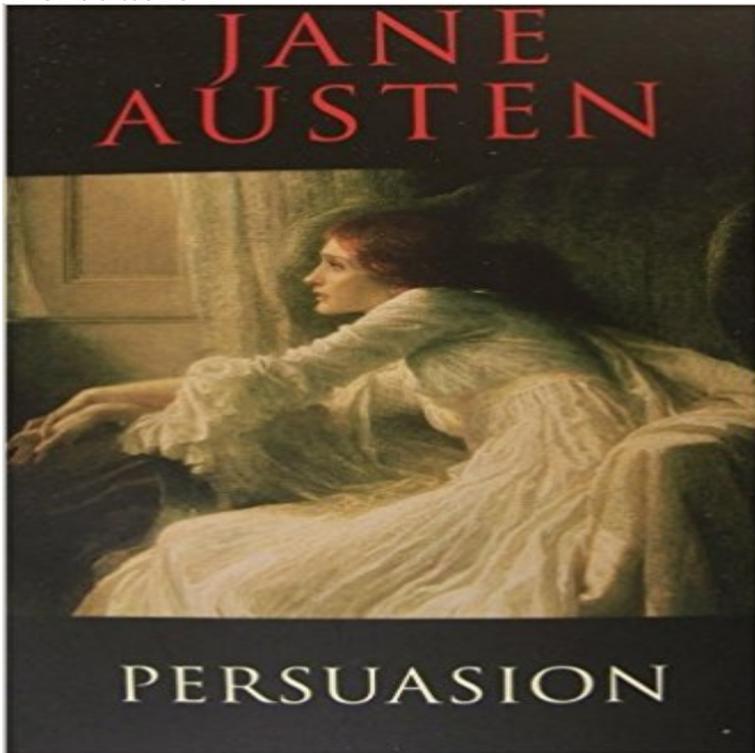


Persuasion



Anne Elliot is the overlooked middle daughter of the vain Sir Walter, a spendthrift baronet who is all too conscious of his good looks and rank. Annes mother, a loving, intelligent woman, is long dead. Annes older sister, Elizabeth, takes after her father, and her younger sister, Mary, is a nervous, attention-seeking fretful woman who is married to Charles Musgrove of nearby Uppercross Hall, the heir to a rustic but respected local squire. None of her family can provide much companionship for the refined, sensitive Anne, who is still unmarried at 27 and seems destined for spinsterhood. Nearly seven years after breaking her engagement and subsequently turning down a proposal from Charles Musgrove, who went on to marry her sister, she has still not forgotten Frederick Wentworth. Wentworth reenters Annes life when Sir Walter is forced by his own financial irresponsibility to rent out Kellynch Hall, the family estate. He and Elizabeth move to pricey rental lodgings in the fashionable resort of Bath, while Anne remains behind in Uppercross with her younger sisters family. Kellynchs tenants turn out to be none other than Wentworths sister, Sophia, and her husband, the recently retired Admiral Croft. Wentworths successes in the Napoleonic Wars have won him promotions and wealth amounting to about ?25,000 (around ?2.5 million in todays money) from prize money awarded for capturing enemy vessels, and he is now an eminently eligible bachelor. The Musgroves, including Mary, Charles, and Charless younger sisters, Henrietta and Louisa, are happy to welcome the Crofts and Wentworth. He is deliberately cool and formal with Anne, whom he describes as altered almost beyond recognition, but extremely friendly and attentive with the Musgrove girls, who both respond in kind. Although Henrietta is nominally engaged to her clergyman cousin Charles Hayter, nothing is official, and both the Crofts and

Musgroves, who know nothing of Anne and Fredericks previous relationship, enjoy speculating about which sister Wentworth might marry. All this is hard on Anne, who has spent the last several years bitterly regretting that she was ever persuaded to reject him and realises that he still holds her refusal against her. To avoid watching him keep company with the Musgrove sisters, particularly Louisa, whom he seems to prefer, she does her best to stay out of his way. When they do meet, his conspicuous indifference nearly breaks her heart. The sad slow pace of Annes life suddenly picks up when the younger adult members of the Uppercross family decide to accompany Captain Wentworth on a visit to one of his brother officers, Captain Harville, in the coastal town of Lyme Regis. There Anne meets yet a third officer, Captain James Benwick, a passionate admirer of the Romantic poets, who is in mourning for the death of his fiancée, Captain Harvilles sister, and appreciates Annes sympathy and understanding. The new location, new acquaintances, and fresh ocean air all agree with Anne, who begins to regain some of the life and sparkle that Captain Wentworth remembered, and she attracts the attention of another gentleman, who turns out to be the Elliots long-estranged cousin, her fathers heir, William Elliot. Louisa Musgrove sustains a serious concussion in a fall brought about by her own impetuous behaviour. Anne coolly administers first aid and summons assistance. Wentworth is both confused and impressed, and begins to re-examine his feelings about Anne.

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