

## Chapter 4

But my new generous mistress, for she exceeded the good woman I was with before, in everything, as well as in the matter of estate; I say, in everything except honesty; and for that, though this was a lady most exactly just, yet I must not forget to say on all occasions, that the first, though poor, was as uprightly honest as it was possible for any one to be.

I was no sooner carried away, as I have said, by this good gentlewoman, but the first lady, that is to say, the Mayoress that was, sent her two daughters to take care of me; and another family which had taken notice of me when I was the little gentlewoman, and had given me work to do, sent for me after her, so that I was mightily made of, as we say; nay, and they were not a little angry, especially madam the Mayoress, that her friend had taken me away from her, as she called it; for, as she said, I was hers by right, she having been the first that took any notice of me. But they that had me would not part with me; and as for me, though I should have been very well treated with any of the others, yet I could not be better than where I was.

Here I continued till I was between seventeen and eighteen years old, and here I had all the advantages for my education that could be imagined; the lady had masters home to the house to teach her daughters to dance, and to speak French, and to write, and other to teach them music; and I was always with them, I learned as fast as they; and though the masters were not appointed to teach me, yet I learned by imitation and inquiry all that

they learned by instruction and direction; so that, in short, I learned to dance and speak French as well as any of them, and to sing much better, for I had a better voice than any of them. I could not so readily come at playing on the harpsichord or spinet, because I had no instrument of my own to practice on, and could only come at theirs in the intervals when they left it, which was uncertain; but yet I learned tolerably well too, and the young ladies at length got two instruments, that is to say, a harpsichord and a spinet too, and then they taught me themselves. But as to dancing, they could hardly help my learning country-dances, because they always wanted me to make up even number; and, on the other hand, they were as heartily willing to learn me everything that they had been taught themselves, as I could be to take the learning.

By this means I had, as I have said above, all the advantages of education that I could have had if I had been as much a gentlewoman as they were with whom I lived; and in some things I had the advantage of my ladies, though they were my superiors; but they were all the gifts of nature, and which all their fortunes could not furnish. First, I was apparently handsomer than any of them; secondly, I was better shaped; and, thirdly, I sang better, by which I mean I had a better voice; in all which you will, I hope, allow me to say, I do not speak my own conceit of myself, but the opinion of all that knew the family.

I had with all these the common vanity of my sex, viz. that being really taken

for very handsome, or, if you please, for a great beauty, I very well knew it, and had as good an opinion of myself as anybody else could have of me; and particularly I loved to hear anybody speak of it, which could not but happen to me sometimes, and was a great satisfaction to me.

Thus far I have had a smooth story to tell of myself, and in all this part of my life I not only had the reputation of living in a very good family, and a family noted and respected everywhere for virtue and sobriety, and for every valuable thing; but I had the character too of a very sober, modest, and virtuous young woman, and such I had always been; neither had I yet any occasion to think of anything else, or to know what a temptation to wickedness meant.

But that which I was too vain of was my ruin, or rather my vanity was the cause of it. The lady in the house where I was had two sons, young gentlemen of very promising parts and of extraordinary behaviour, and it was my misfortune to be very well with them both, but they managed themselves with me in a quite different manner.

The eldest, a gay gentleman that knew the town as well as the country, and though he had levity enough to do an ill-natured thing, yet had too much judgment of things to pay too dear for his pleasures; he began with the unhappy snare to all women, viz. taking notice upon all occasions how pretty I was, as he called it, how agreeable, how well-carriaged, and the like;

and this he contrived so subtly, as if he had known as well how to catch a woman in his net as a partridge when he went a-setting; for he would contrive to be talking this to his sisters when, though I was not by, yet when he knew I was not far off but that I should be sure to hear him. His sisters would return softly to him, 'Hush, brother, she will hear you; she is but in the next room.' Then he would put it off and talk softer, as if he had not know it, and begin to acknowledge he was wrong; and then, as if he had forgot himself, he would speak aloud again, and I, that was so well pleased to hear it, was sure to listen for it upon all occasions.

After he had thus baited his hook, and found easily enough the method how to lay it in my way, he played an opener game; and one day, going by his sister's chamber when I was there, doing something about dressing her, he comes in with an air of gaiety. 'Oh, Mrs. Betty,' said he to me, 'how do you do, Mrs. Betty? Don't your cheeks burn, Mrs. Betty?' I made a curtsy and blushed, but said nothing. 'What makes you talk so, brother?' says the lady. 'Why,' says he, 'we have been talking of her below-stairs this half-hour.' 'Well,' says his sister, 'you can say no harm of her, that I am sure, so 'tis no matter what you have been talking about.' 'Nay,' says he, 'tis so far from talking harm of her, that we have been talking a great deal of good, and a great many fine things have been said of Mrs. Betty, I assure you; and particularly, that she is the handsomest young woman in Colchester; and, in short, they begin to toast her health in the town.'

'I wonder at you, brother,' says the sister. Betty wants but one thing, but she had as good want everything, for the market is against our sex just now; and if a young woman have beauty, birth, breeding, wit, sense, manners, modesty, and all these to an extreme, yet if she have not money, she's nobody, she had as good want them all for nothing but money now recommends

a woman; the men play the game all into their own hands.'

Her younger brother, who was by, cried, 'Hold, sister, you run too fast; I am an exception to your rule. I assure you, if I find a woman so accomplished as you talk of, I say, I assure you, I would not trouble myself about the money.'

'Oh,' says the sister, 'but you will take care not to fancy one, then, without the money.'

'You don't know that neither,' says the brother.

'But why, sister,' says the elder brother, 'why do you exclaim so at the men for aiming so much at the fortune? You are none of them that want a fortune, whatever else you want.'

'I understand you, brother,' replies the lady very smartly; 'you suppose I have the money, and want the beauty; but as times go now, the first will do

without the last, so I have the better of my neighbours.'

'Well,' says the younger brother, 'but your neighbours, as you call them, may be even with you, for beauty will steal a husband sometimes in spite of money, and when the maid chances to be handsomer than the mistress, she oftentimes makes as good a market, and rides in a coach before her.'

I thought it was time for me to withdraw and leave them, and I did so, but not so far but that I heard all their discourse, in which I heard abundance of the fine things said of myself, which served to prompt my vanity, but, as I soon found, was not the way to increase my interest in the family, for the sister and the younger brother fell grievously out about it; and as he said some very disobliging things to her upon my account, so I could easily see that she resented them by her future conduct to me, which indeed was very unjust to me, for I had never had the least thought of what she suspected as to her younger brother; indeed, the elder brother, in his distant, remote way, had said a great many things as in jest, which I had the folly to believe were in earnest, or to flatter myself with the hopes of what I ought to have supposed he never intended, and perhaps never thought of.

It happened one day that he came running upstairs, towards the room where his sisters used to sit and work, as he often used to do; and calling to them before he came in, as was his way too, I, being there alone, stepped to the door, and said, 'Sir, the ladies are not here, they are walked down the

garden.' As I stepped forward to say this, towards the door, he was just got to the door, and clasping me in his arms, as if it had been by chance, 'Oh, Mrs. Betty,' says he, 'are you here? That's better still; I want to speak with you more than I do with them'; and then, having me in his arms, he kissed me three or four times.

I struggled to get away, and yet did it but faintly neither, and he held me fast, and still kissed me, till he was almost out of breath, and then, sitting down, says, 'Dear Betty, I am in love with you.'

His words, I must confess, fired my blood; all my spirits flew about my heart and put me into disorder enough, which he might easily have seen in my face. He repeated it afterwards several times, that he was in love with me, and my heart spoke as plain as a voice, that I liked it; nay, whenever he said, 'I am in love with you,' my blushes plainly replied, 'Would you were, sir.'

However, nothing else passed at that time; it was but a sur-

prise, and when he was gone I soon recovered myself again. He had stayed longer with me, but he happened to look out at the window and see his sisters coming up the garden, so he took his leave, kissed me again, told me he was very serious, and I should hear more of him very quickly, and away he went, leaving me infinitely pleased, though surprised; and had there not

been one misfortune in it, I had been in the right, but the mistake lay here, that Mrs. Betty was in earnest and the gentleman was not.