

## Chapter 16

It was enough to tell her husband this; there needed nothing on my side. I was but to sit still and wait the event, for it presently went all over the neighbourhood that the young widow at Captain ----'s was a fortune, that she had at least #1500, and perhaps a great deal more, and that the captain said so; and if the captain was asked at any time about me, he made no scruple to affirm it, though he knew not one word of the matter, other than that his wife had told him so; and in this he thought no harm, for he really believed it to be so, because he had it from his wife: so slender a foundation will those fellows build upon, if they do but think there is a fortune in the game. With the reputation of this fortune, I presently found myself blessed with admirers enough, and that I had my choice of men, as scarce as they said they were, which, by the way, confirms what I was saying before. This being my case, I, who had a subtle game to play, had nothing now to do but to single out from them all the properest man that might be for my purpose; that is to say, the man who was most likely to depend upon the hearsay of a fortune, and not inquire too far into the particulars; and unless I did this I did nothing, for my case would not bear much inquiry.

I picked out my man without much difficulty, by the judgment I made of his way of courting me. I had let him run on with his protestations and oaths that he loved me above all the world; that if I would make him happy, that was enough; all which I knew was upon supposition, nay, it was upon a full satisfaction, that I was very rich, though I never told him a word of it myself.

This was my man; but I was to try him to the bottom, and indeed in that consisted my safety; for if he baulked, I knew I was undone, as surely as he was undone if he took me; and if I did not make some scruple about his fortune, it was the way to lead him to raise some about mine; and first, therefore, I pretended on all occasions to doubt his sincerity, and told him, perhaps he only courted me for my fortune. He stopped my mouth in that part with the thunder of his protestations, as above, but still I pretended to doubt.

One morning he pulls off his diamond ring, and writes upon the glass of the sash in my chamber this line-- 'You I love, and you alone.'

I read it, and asked him to lend me his ring, with which I wrote under it, thus--

'And so in love says every one.'

He takes his ring again, and writes another line thus--

'Virtue alone is an estate.'

I borrowed it again, and I wrote under it--

'But money's virtue, gold is fate.'

He coloured as red as fire to see me turn so quick upon him, and in a kind of a rage told me he would conquer me, and writes again thus--

'I scorn your gold, and yet I love.'

I ventured all upon the last cast of poetry, as you'll see, for I wrote boldly under his last--

'I'm poor: let's see how kind you'll prove.'

This was a sad truth to me; whether he believed me or no, I could not tell; I supposed then that he did not. However, he flew to me, took me in his arms, and, kissing me very eagerly, and with the greatest passion imaginable, he held me fast till he called for a pen and ink, and then told me he could not wait the tedious writing on the glass, but, pulling out a piece of paper, he began and wrote again--

'Be mine, with all your poverty.'

I took his pen, and followed him immediately, thus--

'Yet secretly you hope I lie.'

He told me that was unkind, because it was not just, and that I put him upon contradicting me, which did not consist with good manners, any more than with his affection; and therefore, since I had insensibly drawn him into this poetical scribble, he begged I would not oblige him to break it off; so he writes again--

'Let love alone be our debate.'

I wrote again--

'She loves enough that does not hate.'

This he took for a favour, and so laid down the cudgels, that is to say, the pen; I say, he took it for a favour, and a mighty one it was, if he had known all. However, he took it as I meant it, that is, to let him think I was inclined to go on with him, as indeed I had all the reason in the world to do, for he was the best-humoured, merry sort of a fellow that I ever met with, and I often reflected on myself how doubly criminal it was to deceive such a man; but that necessity, which pressed me to a settlement suitable to my condition, was my authority for it; and certainly his affection to me, and the goodness of his temper, however they might argue against using him ill, yet they strongly argued to me that he would better take the disappointment than some fiery-tempered wretch, who might have nothing to recommend

him but those passions which would serve only to make a woman miserable all her days.

Besides, though I jested with him (as he supposed it) so often about my poverty, yet, when he found it to be true, he had foreclosed all manner of objection, seeing, whether he was in jest or in earnest, he had declared he took me without any regard to my portion, and, whether I was in jest or in earnest, I had declared myself to be very poor; so that, in a word, I had him fast both ways; and though he might say afterwards he was cheated, yet he could never say that I had cheated him.

He pursued me close after this, and as I saw there was no need to fear losing him, I played the indifferent part with him longer than prudence might otherwise have dictated to me. But I considered how much this caution and indifference would give me the advantage over him, when I should come to be under the necessity of owning my own circumstances to him; and I managed it the more warily, because I found he inferred from thence, as indeed he ought to do, that I either had the more money or the more judgment, and would not venture at all.

I took the freedom one day, after we had talked pretty close to the subject, to tell him that it was true I had received the compliment of a lover from him, namely, that he would take me without inquiring into my fortune, and I would make him a suitable return in this, viz. that I would make as little

inquiry into his as consisted with reason, but I hoped he would allow me to ask a few questions, which he would answer or not as he thought fit; and that I would not be offended if he did not answer me at all; one of these questions related to our manner of living, and the place where, because I had heard he had a great plantation in Virginia, and that he had talked of going to live there, and I told him I did not care to be transported.

He began from this discourse to let me voluntarily into all his affairs, and to tell me in a frank, open way all his circumstances, by which I found he was very well to pass in the world; but that great part of his estate consisted of three plantations, which he had in Virginia, which brought him in a very good income, generally speaking, to the tune of #300, a year, but that if he was to live upon them, would bring him in four times as much. 'Very well,' thought I; 'you shall carry me thither as soon as you please, though I won't tell you so beforehand.'

I jested with him extremely about the figure he would make in Virginia; but I found he would do anything I desired, though he did not seem glad to have me undervalue his plantations, so I turned my tale. I told him I had good reason not to go there to live, because if his plantations were worth so much there, I had not a fortune suitable to a gentleman of #1200 a year, as he said his estate would be.

He replied generously, he did not ask what my fortune was; he had told me

from the beginning he would not, and he would be as good as his word; but whatever it was, he assured me he would never desire me to go to Virginia with him, or go thither

himself without me, unless I was perfectly willing, and made it my choice.

All this, you may be sure, was as I wished, and indeed nothing could have happened more perfectly agreeable. I carried it on as far as this with a sort of indifferency that he often wondered at, more than at first, but which was the only support of his courtship; and I mention it the rather to intimate again to the ladies that nothing but want of courage for such an indifferency makes our sex so cheap, and prepares them to be ill-used as they are; would they venture the loss of a pretending fop now and then, who carries it high upon the point of his own merit, they would certainly be less slighted, and courted more. Had I discovered really and truly what my great fortune was, and that in all I had not full #500 when he expected #1500, yet I had hooked him so fast, and played him so long, that I was satisfied he would have had me in my worst circumstances; and indeed it was less a surprise to him when he learned the truth than it would have been, because having not the least blame to lay on me, who had carried it with an air of indifferency to the last, he would not say one word, except that indeed he thought it had been more, but that if it had been less he did not repent his bargain; only that he should not be able to maintain me so well as he intended.

In short, we were married, and very happily married on my side, I assure you, as to the man; for he was the best-humoured man that every woman had, but his circumstances were not so good as I imagined, as, on the other hand, he had not bettered himself by marrying so much as he expected.

When we were married, I was shrewdly put to it to bring him that little stock I had, and to let him see it was no more; but there was a necessity for it, so I took my opportunity one day when we were alone, to enter into a short dialogue with him about it. 'My dear,' said I, 'we have been married a fortnight; is it not time to let you know whether you have got a wife with something or with nothing?' 'Your own time for that, my dear,' says he; 'I am satisfied that I have got the wife I love; I have not troubled you much,' says he, 'with my inquiry after it.'

'That's true,' says I, 'but I have a great difficulty upon me about it, which I scarce know how to manage.'