

## Chapter 19

He began with a calm expostulation upon my being so resolute to go to England; I defended it, and one hard word bringing on another, as is usual in all family strife, he told me I did not treat him as if he was my husband, or talk of my children as if

I was a mother; and, in short, that I did not deserve to be used

as a wife; that he had used all the fair means possible with me;

that he had argued with all the kindness and calmness that a

husband or a Christian ought to do, and that I made him such a vile return, that I treated him rather like a dog than a man, and rather like the most contemptible stranger than a husband; that he was very loth to use violence with me, but that, in short, he saw a necessity of it now, and that for the future he should be obliged to take such measures as should reduce me to my duty.

My blood was now fired to the utmost, though I knew what he had said was very true, and nothing could appear more provoked. I told him, for his fair means and his foul, they were equally contemned by me; that for my going to England, I was resolved on it, come what would; and that as to treating him not like a husband, and not showing myself a mother to my children,

there might be something more in it than he understood at present; but, for his further consideration, I thought fit to tell him thus much, that he neither was my lawful husband, nor they lawful children, and that I had reason to regard neither of them more than I did.

I confess I was moved to pity him when I spoke it, for he turned pale as death, and stood mute as one thunderstruck, and once or twice I thought he would have fainted; in short, it put him in a fit something like an apoplex; he trembled, a sweat or dew ran off his face, and yet he was cold as a clod, so that I was forced to run and fetch something for him to keep life in him. When he recovered of that, he grew sick and vomited, and in a little after was put to bed, and the next morning was, as he had been indeed all night, in a violent fever.

However, it went off again, and he recovered, though but slowly, and when he came to be a little better, he told me I had given him a mortal wound with my tongue, and he had only one thing to ask before he desired an explanation. I interrupted him, and told him I was sorry I had gone so far, since I saw what disorder it put him into, but I desired him not to talk to me of explanations, for that would but make things worse.

This heightened his impatience, and, indeed, perplexed him beyond all bearing; for now he began to suspect that there was some mystery yet unfolded, but could not make the least guess at the real particulars of it; all

that ran in his brain was, that I had another husband alive, which I could not say in fact might not be true, but I assured him, however, there was not the least of that in it; and indeed, as to my other husband, he was effectually dead in law to me, and had told me I should look on him as such, so I had not the least uneasiness on that score.

But now I found the thing too far gone to conceal it much longer, and my husband himself gave me an opportunity to ease myself of the secret, much to my satisfaction. He had laboured with me three or four weeks, but to no purpose, only to tell him whether I had spoken these words only as the effect of my passion, to put him in a passion, or whether there was anything of truth in the bottom of them. But I continued inflexible, and would explain nothing, unless he would first consent to my going to England, which he would never do, he said, while he lived; on the other hand, I said it was in my power to make him willing when I pleased--nay, to make him entreat me to go; and this increased his curiosity, and made him importunate to the highest degree, but it was all to no purpose.

At length he tells all this story to his mother, and sets her upon me to get the main secret out of me, and she used her utmost skill with me indeed; but I put her to a full stop at once by telling her that the reason and mystery of the whole matter lay in herself, and that it was my respect to her that had made me conceal it; and that, in short, I could go no farther, and therefore conjured her not to insist upon it.

She was struck dumb at this suggestion, and could not tell what to say or to think; but, laying aside the supposition as a policy of mine, continued her importunity on account of her son, and, if possible, to make up the breach between us two. As to that, I told her that it was indeed a good design in her, but that it was impossible to be done; and that if I should reveal to her the truth of what she desired, she would grant it to be impossible, and cease to desire it. At last I seemed to be prevailed on by her importunity, and told her I dared trust her with a secret of the greatest importance, and she would soon see that this was so, and that I would consent to lodge it in her breast, if she would engage solemnly not to acquaint her son with it without my consent.

She was long in promising this part, but rather than not come at the main secret, she agreed to that too, and after a great many other preliminaries, I began, and told her the whole story. First I told her how much she was concerned in all the unhappy breach which had happened between her son and me, by telling me her own story and her London name; and that the surprise she saw I was in was upon that occasion. Then I told her my own story, and my name, and assured her, by such other tokens as she could not deny, that I was no other, nor more or less, than her own child, her daughter, born of her body in Newgate; the same that had saved her from the gallows by being in her belly, and the same that she left in such-and-such hands when she was transported.

It is impossible to express the astonishment she was in; she was not inclined to believe the story, or to remember the particulars, for she immediately foresaw the confusion that must follow in the family upon it. But everything concurred so exactly with the stories she had told me of herself, and which, if she had not told me, she would perhaps have been content to have denied, that she had stopped her own mouth, and she had nothing to do but to take me about the neck and kiss me, and cry most vehemently over me, without speaking one word for a long time together. At last she broke out: 'Unhappy child!' says she, 'what miserable chance could bring thee hither? and in the arms of my own son, too! Dreadful girl,' says she, 'why, we are all undone! Married to thy own brother! Three children, and two alive, all of the same flesh and blood! My son and my daughter lying together as husband and wife! All confusion and distraction for ever! Miserable family! what will become of us? What is to be said? What is to be done?' And thus she ran on for a great while; nor had I any power to speak, or if I had, did I know what to say, for every word wounded me to the soul. With this kind of amazement on our thoughts we parted for the first time, though my mother was more surprised than I was, because it was more news to her than to me. However, she promised again to me at parting, that she would say nothing of it to her son, till we had talked of it again.

It was not long, you may be sure, before we had a second conference upon the same subject; when, as if she had been willing to forget the story she

had told me of herself, or to suppose that I had forgot some of the particulars, she began to tell them with alterations and omissions; but I refreshed her memory and set her to rights in many things which I supposed she had forgot, and then came in so opportunely with the whole history, that it was impossible for her to go from it; and then she fell into her rhapsodies again, and exclamations at the severity of her misfortunes. When these things were a little over with her, we fell into a close debate about what should be first done before we gave an account of the matter to my husband. But to what purpose could be all our consultations? We could neither of us see our way through it, nor see how it could be safe to open such a scene to him. It was impossible to make any judgment, or give any guess at what temper he would receive it in, or what measures he would take upon it; and if he should have so little government of himself as to make it public, we easily foresaw that it would be the ruin of the whole family, and expose my mother and me to the last degree; and if at last he should take the advantage the law would give him, he might put me away with disdain and leave me to sue for the little portion that I had, and perhaps waste it all in the suit, and then be a beggar; the children would be ruined too, having no legal claim to any of his effects; and thus I should see him, perhaps, in the arms of another wife in a few months, and be myself the most miserable creature alive.

My mother was as sensible of this as I; and, upon the whole, we knew not what to do. After some time we came to more sober resolutions, but then it

was with this misfortune too, that my mother's opinion and mine were quite different from one another, and indeed inconsistent with one another; for my mother's opinion was, that I should bury the whole thing entirely, and continue to live with him as my husband till some other event should make the discovery of it more convenient; and that in the meantime she would endeavour to reconcile us together again, and restore our mutual comfort and family peace; that we might live as we used to do together, and so let the whole matter remain a secret as close as death. 'For, child,' says she, 'we are both undone if it comes out.'

To encourage me to this, she promised to make me easy in my circumstances, as far as she was able, and to leave me what she could at her death, secured for me separately from my husband; so that if it should come out afterwards, I should not be left destitute, but be able to stand on my own feet and procure justice from him.

This proposal did not agree at all with my judgment of the thing, though it was very fair and kind in my mother; but my thoughts ran quite another way.