

## Chapter 27

He told me I might lodge the money in the bank as an account, and its being entered into the books would entitle me to the money at any time, and if I was in the north I might draw bills on the cashier and receive it when I would; but that then it would be esteemed as running cash, and the bank would give no interest for it; that I might buy stock with it, and so it would lie in store for me, but that then if I wanted to dispose of it, I must come up to town on purpose to transfer it, and even it would be with some difficulty I should receive the half-yearly dividend, unless I was here in person, or had some friend I could trust with having the stock in his name to do it for me, and that would have the same difficulty in it as before; and with that he looked hard at me and smiled a little. At last, says he, 'Why do you not get a head steward, madam, that may take you and your money together into keeping, and then you would have the trouble taken off your hands?' 'Ay, sir, and the money too, it may be,' said I; 'for truly I find the hazard that way is as much as 'tis t'other way'; but I remember I said secretly to myself, 'I wish you would ask me the question fairly, I would consider very seriously on it before I said No.'

He went on a good way with me, and I thought once or twice he was in earnest, but to my real affliction, I found at last he had a wife; but when he owned he had a wife he shook his head, and said with some concern, that indeed he had a wife, and no wife. I began to think he had been in the condition of my late lover, and that his wife had been distempered or

lunatic, or some such thing. However, we had not much more discourse at that time, but he told me he was in too much hurry of business then, but that if I would come home to his house after their business was over, he would by that time consider what might be done for me, to put my affairs in a posture of security. I told him I would come, and desired to know where he lived. He gave me a direction in writing, and when he gave it me he read it to me, and said, 'There 'tis, madam, if you dare trust yourself with me.' 'Yes, sir,' said I, 'I believe I may venture to trust you with myself, for you have a wife, you say, and I don't want a husband; besides, I dare trust you with my money, which is all I have in the world, and if that were gone, I may trust myself anywhere.'

He said some things in jest that were very handsome and mannerly, and would have pleased me very well if they had been in earnest; but that passed over, I took the directions, and appointed to attend him at his house at seven o'clock the same evening.

When I came he made several proposals for my placing my money in the bank, in order to my having interest for it; but still some difficult or other came in the way, which he objected as not safe; and I found such a sincere disinterested honesty in him, that I began to muse with myself, that I had certainly found the honest man I wanted, and that I could never put myself into better hands; so I told him with a great deal of frankness that I had never met with a man or woman yet that I could trust, or in whom I could

think myself safe, but that I saw he was so disinterestedly concerned for my safety, that I said I would freely trust him with the management of that little I had, if he would accept to be steward for a poor widow that could give him no salary.

He smiled and, standing up, with great respect saluted me. He told me he could not but take it very kindly that I had so good an opinion of him; that he would not deceive me, that he would do anything in his power to serve me, and expect no salary; but that he could not by any means accept of a trust, that it might bring him to be suspected of self-interest, and that if I should die he might have disputes with my executors, which he should be very loth to encumber himself with.

I told him if those were all his objections I would soon remove them, and convince him that there was not the least room for any difficulty; for that, first, as for suspecting him, if ever I should do it, now is the time to suspect him, and not put the trust into his hands, and whenever I did suspect him, he could but throw it up then and refuse to go any further. Then, as to executors, I assured him I had no heirs, nor any relations in England, and I should alter my condition before I died, and then his trust and trouble should cease together, which, however, I had no prospect of yet; but I told him if I died as I was, it should be all his own, and he would deserve it by being so faithful to me as I was satisfied he would be.

He changed his countenance at this discourse, and asked me how I came to have so much good-will for him; and, looking very much pleased, said he might very lawfully wish he was a single man for my sake. I smiled, and told him as he was not, my offer could have no design upon him in it, and to wish, as he did, was not to be allowed, 'twas criminal to his wife.

He told me I was wrong. 'For,' says he, 'madam, as I said before, I have a wife and no wife, and 'twould be no sin to me to wish her hanged, if that were all.' 'I know nothing of your circumstances that way, sir,' said I; 'but it cannot be innocent to wish your wife dead.' 'I tell you,' says he again, 'she is a wife and no wife; you don't know what I am, or what she is.'

'That's true,' said I; 'sir, I do not know what you are, but I believe you to be an honest man, and that's the cause of all my confidence in you.'

'Well, well,' says he, 'and so I am, I hope, too. but I am something else too, madam; for,' says he, 'to be plain with you, I am a cuckold, and she is a whore.' He spoke it in a kind of jest, but it was with such an awkward smile, that I perceived it was what struck very close to him, and he looked dismally when he said it.

'That alters the case indeed, sir,' said I, 'as to that part you were speaking of; but a cuckold, you know, may be an honest man; it does not alter that

case at all. Besides, I think,' said I, 'since your wife is so dishonest to you, you are too honest to her to own her for your wife; but that,' said I, 'is what I have nothing to do with.'

'Nay,' says he, 'I do not think to clear my hands of her; for, to be plain with you, madam,' added he, 'I am no contended cuckold neither: on the other hand, I assure you it provokes me the highest degree, but I can't help myself; she that will be a whore, will be a whore.'

I waived the discourse and began to talk of my business; but I found he could not have done with it, so I let him alone, and he went on to tell me all the circumstances of his case, too long to relate here; particularly, that having been out of England some time before he came to the post he was in, she had had two children in the meantime by an officer of the army; and that when he came to England and, upon her submission, took her again, and maintained her very well, yet she ran away from him with a linen-draper's apprentice, robbed him of what she could come at, and continued to live from him still. 'So that, madam,' says he, 'she is a whore not by necessity, which is the common bait of your sex, but by inclination, and for the sake of the vice.'

Well, I pitied him, and wished him well rid of her, and still would have talked of my business, but it would not do. At last he looks steadily at me. 'Look you, madam,' says he, 'you came to ask advice of me, and I will serve

you as faithfully as if you were my own sister; but I must turn the tables, since you oblige me to do it, and are so friendly to me, and I think I must ask advice of you. Tell me, what must a poor abused fellow do with a whore? What can I do to do myself justice upon her?'

'Alas! sir,' says I, 'tis a case too nice for me to advise in, but it seems she has run away from you, so you are rid of her fairly; what can you desire more?' 'Ay, she is gone indeed,' said he, 'but I am not clear of her for all that.'

'That's true,' says I; 'she may indeed run you into debt, but the law has furnished you with methods to prevent that also; you may cry her down, as they call it.'

'No, no,' says he, 'that is not the case neither; I have taken care of all that; 'tis not that part that I speak of, but I would be rid of her so that I might marry again.'

'Well, sir,' says I, 'then you must divorce her. If you can prove what you say, you may certainly get that done, and then, I suppose, you are free.'

'That's very tedious and expensive,' says he.

'Why,' says I, 'if you can get any woman you like to take your word, I

suppose your wife would not dispute the liberty with you that she takes herself.'

'Ay,' says he, 'but 'twould be hard to bring an honest woman to do that; and for the other sort,' says he, 'I have had enough of her to meddle with any more whores.'

It occurred to me presently, 'I would have taken your word with all my heart, if you had but asked me the question'; but that was to myself. To him I replied, 'Why, you shut the door against any honest woman accepting you, for you condemn all that should venture upon you at once, and conclude, that really a woman that takes you now can't be honest.'

'Why,' says he, 'I wish you would satisfy me that an honest woman would take me; I'd venture it'; and then turns short upon me, 'Will you take me, madam?'

'That's not a fair question,' says I, 'after what you have said;

however, lest you should think I wait only for a recantation of it, I shall answer you plainly, No, not I; my business is of another kind with you, and I did not expect you would have turned my serious application to you, in my own distracted case, into a comedy.'

'Why, madam,' says he, 'my case is as distracted as yours can be, and I stand in as much need of advice as you do, for I think if I have not relief somewhere, I shall be made myself, and I know not what course to take, I protest to you.'

'Why, sir,' says I, 'tis easy to give advice in your case, much easier than it is in mine.' 'Speak then,' says he, 'I beg of you, for now you encourage me.'