

Chapter 30

'And now, dear sir,' said I, turning myself to my new spouse again, 'be so just to me as to tell me who has abused both you and me so much as to make you believe I was a fortune, and prompt you to court me to this marriage?' He could not speak a word, but pointed to her; and, after some more pause, flew out in the most furious passion that ever I saw a man in my life, cursing her, and calling her all the whores and hard names he could think of; and that she had ruined him, declaring that she had told him I had #15,000, and that she was to have #500 of him for procuring this match for him. He then added, directing his speech to me, that she was none of his sister, but had been his whore for two years before, that she had had #100 of him in part of this bargain, and that he was utterly undone if things were as I said; and in his raving he swore he would let her heart's blood out immediately, which frightened her and me too. She cried, said she had been told so in the house where I lodged. But this aggravated him more than before, that she should put so far upon him, and run things such a length upon no other authority than a hearsay; and then, turning to me again, said very honestly, he was afraid we were both undone. 'For, to be plain, my dear, I have no estate,' says he; 'what little I had, this devil has made me run out in waiting on you and putting me into this equipage.' She took the opportunity of his being earnest in talking with me, and got out of the room, and I never saw her more.

I was confounded now as much as he, and knew not what to say. I thought

many ways that I had the worst of it, but his saying he was undone, and that he had no estate neither, put me into a mere distraction. 'Why,' says I to him, 'this has been a hellish juggle, for we are married here upon the foot of a double fraud; you are undone by the disappointment, it seems; and if I had had a fortune I had been cheated too, for you say you have nothing.'

'You would indeed have been cheated, my dear,' says he, 'but you would not have been undone, for #15,000 would have maintained us both very handsomely in this country; and I assure you,' added he, 'I had resolved to have dedicated every groat of it to you; I would not have wronged you of a shilling, and the rest I would have made up in my affection to you, and tenderness of you, as long as I lived.'

This was very honest indeed, and I really believe he spoke as he intended, and that he was a man that was as well qualified to make me happy, as to his temper and behaviour, as any man ever was; but his having no estate, and being run into debt on this ridiculous account in the country, made all the prospect dismal and dreadful, and I knew not what to say, or what to think of myself.

I told him it was very unhappy that so much love, and so much good nature as I discovered in him, should be thus precipitated into misery; that I saw nothing before us but ruin; for as to me, it was my unhappiness that what little I had was not able to relieve us week, and with that I pulled out a bank

bill of #20 and eleven guineas, which I told him I had saved out of my little income, and that by the account that creature had given me of the way of living in that country, I expected it would maintain me three or four years; that if it was taken from me, I was left destitute, and he knew what the condition of a woman among strangers must be, if she had no money in her pocket; however, I told him, if he would take it, there it was.

He told me with a great concern, and I thought I saw tears stand in his eyes, that he would not touch it; that he abhorred the thoughts of stripping me and make me miserable; that, on the contrary, he had fifty guineas left, which was all he had in the world, and he pulled it out and threw it down on the table, bidding me take it, though he were to starve for want of it.

I returned, with the same concern for him, that I could not bear to hear him talk so; that, on the contrary, if he could propose any probable method of living, I would do anything that became me on my part, and that I would live as close and as narrow as he could desire.

He begged of me to talk no more at that rate, for it would make him distracted; he said he was bred a gentleman, though he was reduced to a low fortune, and that there was but one way left which he could think of, and that would not do, unless I could answer him one question, which, however, he said he would not press me to. I told him I would answer it honestly; whether it would be to his satisfaction or not, that I could not tell.

'Why, then, my dear, tell me plainly,' says he, 'will the little you have keep us together in any figure, or in any station or place, or will it not?'

It was my happiness hitherto that I had not discovered myself or my circumstances at all--no, not so much as my name; and seeing these was nothing to be expected from him, however good-humoured and however honest he seemed to be, but to live on what I knew would soon be wasted, I resolved to conceal everything but the bank bill and the eleven guineas which I had owned; and I would have been very glad to have lost that and have been set down where he took me up. I had indeed another bank bill about me of #30, which was the whole of what I brought with me, as well to subsist on in the country, as not knowing what might offer; because this creature, the go-between that had thus betrayed us both, had made me believe strange things of my marrying to my advantage in the country, and I was not willing to be without money, whatever might happen. This bill I concealed, and that made me the freer of the rest, in consideration of his circumstances, for I really pitied him heartily.

But to return to his question, I told him I never willingly deceived him, and I never would. I was very sorry to tell him that the little I had would not subsist us; that it was not sufficient to subsist me alone in the south country, and that this was the reason that made me put myself into the hands of that woman who called him brother, she having assured me that I

might board very handsomely at a town called Manchester, where I had not yet been, for about #6 a year; and my whole income not being about #15 a year, I thought I might live easy upon it, and wait for better things.

He shook his head and remained silent, and a very melancholy evening we had; however, we supped together, and lay together that night, and when we had almost supped he looked a little better and more cheerful, and called for a bottle of wine. 'Come, my dear,' says he, ' though the case is bad, it is to no purpose to be dejected. come, be as easy as you can; I will endeavour to find out some way or other to live; if you can but subsist yourself, that is better than nothing. I must try the world again; a man ought to think like a man; to be discouraged is to yield to the misfortune.' With this he filled a glass and drank to me, holding my hand and pressing it hard in his hand all the while the wine went down, and protesting afterwards his main concern was for me.

It was really a true, gallant spirit he was of, and it was the more grievous to me. 'Tis something of relief even to be undone by a man of honour, rather than by a scoundrel; but here the greatest disappointment was on his side, for he had really spent a great deal of money, deluded by this madam the procuress; and it was very remarkable on what poor terms he proceeded. First the baseness of the creature herself is to be observed, who, for the getting #100 herself, could be content to let him spend three or four more, though perhaps it was all he had in the world, and more than all; when she

had not the least ground, more than a little tea-table chat, to say that I had any estate, or was a fortune, or the like. It is true the design of deluding a woman of fortune, if I had been so, was base enough; the putting the face of great things upon poor circumstances was a fraud, and bad enough; but the case a little differed too, and that in his favour, for he was not a rake that made a trade to delude women, and, as some have done, get six or seven fortunes after one another, and then rifle and run away from them; but he was really a gentleman, unfortunate and low, but had lived well; and though, if I had had a fortune, I should have been enraged at the slut for betraying me, yet really for the man, a fortune would not have been ill bestowed on him, for he was a lovely person indeed, of generous principles, good sense, and of abundance of good-humour.

We had a great deal of close conversation that night, for we neither of us slept much; he was as penitent for having put all those cheats upon me as if it had been felony, and that he was going to execution; he offered me again every shilling of the money he had about him, and said he would go into the army and seek the world for more.

I asked him why he would be so unkind to carry me into Ireland, when I might suppose he could not have subsisted me there. He took me in his arms. 'My dear,' said he, 'depend upon it, I never designed to go to Ireland at all, much less to have carried you thither, but came hither to be out of the observation of the people, who had heard what I pretended to, and withal,

that nobody might ask me for money before I was furnished to supply them.'

'But where, then,' said I, 'were we to have gone next?'

'Why, my dear,' said he, 'I'll confess the whole scheme to you as I had laid it; I purposed here to ask you something about your estate, as you see I did, and when you, as I expected you would, had entered into some account with me of the particulars, I would have made an excuse to you to have put off our voyage to Ireland for some time, and to have gone first towards London.'

'Then, my dear,' said he, 'I resolved to have confessed all the circumstances of my own affairs to you, and let you know I had indeed made use of these artifices to obtain your consent to marry me, but had now nothing to do but ask to your pardon, and to tell you how abundantly, as I have said above, I would endeavour to make you forget what was past, by the felicity of the days to come.'