

## Chapter 44

This was indeed probable enough, and the justice satisfied himself with giving her an oath that she had not received or admitted any man into her house to conceal him, or protect or hide him from justice. This oath she might justly take, and did so, and so she was dismissed.

It is easy to judge what a fright I was in upon this occasion, and it was impossible for my governess ever to bring me to dress in that disguise again; for, as I told her, I should certainly betray myself.

My poor partner in this mischief was now in a bad case, for he was carried away before my Lord Mayor, and by his worship committed to Newgate, and the people that took him were so willing, as well as able, to prosecute him, that they offered themselves to enter into recognisances to appear at the sessions and pursue the charge against him.

However, he got his indictment deferred, upon promise to discover his accomplices, and particularly the man that was concerned with him in his robbery; and he failed not to do his endeavour, for he gave in my name, whom he called Gabriel Spencer, which was the name I went by to him; and here appeared the wisdom of my concealing my name and sex from him, which, if he had ever known I had been undone.

He did all he could to discover this Gabriel Spencer; he described me, he discovered the place where he said I lodged, and, in a word, all the particulars that he could of my dwelling; but having concealed the main circumstances of my sex from him, I had a vast advantage, and he never could hear of me. He brought two or three families into trouble by his endeavouring to find me out, but they knew nothing of me, any more than that I had a fellow with me that they had seen, but knew nothing of. And as for my governess, though she was the means of his coming to me, yet it was done at second-hand, and he knew nothing of her.

This turned to his disadvantage; for having promised discoveries, but not being able to make it good, it was looked upon as trifling with the justice of the city, and he was the more fiercely pursued by the shopkeepers who took him.

I was, however, terribly uneasy all this while, and that I might be quite out of the way, I went away from my governess's for a while; but not knowing whither to wander, I took a maid-servant with me, and took the stage-coach to Dunstable, to my old landlord and landlady, where I had lived so handsomely with my Lancashire husband. Here I told her a formal story, that I expected my husband every day from Ireland, and that I had sent a letter to him that I would meet him at Dunstable at her house, and that he would certainly land, if the wind was fair, in a few days, so that I was come

to spend a few days with them till he should come, for he was either come post, or in the West Chester coach, I knew not which; but whichsoever it was, he would be sure to come to that house to meet me.

My landlady was mighty glad to see me, and my landlord made such a stir with me, that if I had been a princess I could not have been better used, and here I might have been welcome a month or two if I had thought fit.

But my business was of another nature. I was very uneasy (though so well disguised that it was scarce possible to detect me) lest this fellow should somehow or other find me out; and though he could not charge me with this robbery, having persuaded him not to venture, and having also done nothing in it myself but run away, yet he might have charged me with other things, and have bought his own life at the expense of mine.

This filled me with horrible apprehensions. I had no recourse, no friend, no confidante but my old governess, and I knew no remedy but to put my life in her hands, and so I did, for I let her know where to send to me, and had several letters from her while I stayed here. Some of them almost scared me out my wits but at last she sent me the joyful news that he was hanged, which was the best news to me that I had heard a great while.

I had stayed here five weeks, and lived very comfortably indeed (the secret anxiety of my mind excepted); but when I received this letter I looked

pleasantly again, and told my landlady that I had received a letter from my spouse in Ireland, that I had the good news of his being very well, but had the bad news that his business would not permit him to come away so soon as he expected, and so I was like to go back again without him.

My landlady complimented me upon the good news however, that I had heard he was well. 'For I have observed, madam,' says she, 'you hadn't been so pleasant as you used to be; you have been over head and ears in care for him, I dare say,' says the good woman; 'tis easy to be seen there's an alteration in you for the better,' says she. 'Well, I am sorry the esquire can't come yet,' says my landlord; 'I should have been heartily glad to have seen him. But I hope, when you have certain news of his coming, you'll take a step hither again, madam,' says he; 'you shall be very welcome whenever you please to come.;

With all these fine compliments we parted, and I came merry enough to London, and found my governess as well pleased as I was. And now she told me she would never recommend any partner to me again, for she always found, she said, that I had the best luck when I ventured by myself. And so indeed I had, for I was seldom in any danger when I was by myself, or if I was, I got out of it with more dexterity than when I was entangled with the dull measures of other people, who had perhaps less forecast, and were more rash and impatient than I; for though I had as much courage to venture as any of them, yet I used more caution before I undertook a thing,

and had more presence of mind when I was to bring myself off.

I have often wondered even at my own hardiness another way, that when all my companions were surprised and fell so suddenly into the hand of justice, and that I so narrowly escaped, yet I could not all this while enter into one serious resolution to leave off this trade, and especially considering that I was now very far from being poor; that the temptation of necessity, which is generally the introduction of all such wickedness, was now removed; for I had near #500 by me in ready money, on which I might have lived very well, if I had thought fit to have retired; but I say, I had not so much as the least inclination to leave off; no, not so much as I had before when I had but #200 beforehand, and when I had no such frightful examples before my eyes as these were. From hence 'tis evident to me, that when once we are hardened in crime, no fear can affect us, no example give us any warning.

I had indeed one comrade whose fate went very near me for a good while, though I wore it off too in time. That case was indeed very unhappy. I had made a prize of a piece of very good damask in a mercer's shop, and went clear off myself, but had conveyed the piece to this companion of mine when we went out of the shop, and she went one way and I went another. We had not been long out of the shop but the mercer missed his piece of stuff, and sent his messengers, one one way and one another, and they presently seized her that had the piece, with the damask upon her. As for me, I had very luckily stepped into a house where there was a lace chamber, up one

pair of stairs, and had the satisfaction, or the terror indeed, of looking out of the window upon the noise they made, and seeing the poor creature dragged away in triumph to the justice, who immediately committed her to Newgate.

I was careful to attempt nothing in the lace chamber, but tumbled their goods pretty much to spend time; then bought a few yards of edging and paid for it, and came away very sad-hearted indeed for the poor woman, who was in tribulation for what I only had stolen.

Here again my old caution stood me in good stead; namely, that though I often robbed with these people, yet I never let them know who I was, or where I lodged, nor could they ever find out my lodging, though they often endeavoured to watch me to it. They all knew me by the name of Moll Flanders, though even some of them rather believed I was she than knew me to be so. My name was public among them indeed, but how to find me out they knew not, nor so much as how to guess at my quarters, whether they were at the east end of the town or the west; and this wariness was my safety upon all these occasions.

I kept close a great while upon the occasion of this woman's disaster. I knew that if I should do anything that should miscarry, and should be carried to prison, she would be there and ready to witness against me, and perhaps save her life at my expense. I considered that I began to be very well known by name at the Old Bailey, though they did not know my face, and that if I

should fall into their hands, I should be treated as an old offender; and for this reason I was resolved to see what this poor creature's fate should be before I stirred abroad, though several times in her distress I conveyed money to her for her relief.

At length she came to her trial. She pleaded she did not steal the thing, but that one Mrs. Flanders, as she heard her called (for she did not know her), gave the bundle to her after they came out of the shop, and bade her carry it home to her lodging. They asked her where this Mrs. Flanders was, but she could not produce her, neither could she give the least account of me; and the mercer's men swearing positively that she was in the shop when the goods were stolen, that they immediately missed them, and pursued her, and found them upon her, thereupon the jury brought her in guilty; but the Court, considering that she was really not the person that stole the goods, an inferior assistant, and that it was very possible she could not find out this Mrs. Flanders, meaning me, though it would save her life, which indeed was true--I say, considering all this, they allowed her to be transported, which was the utmost favour she could obtain, only that the Court told her that if she could in the meantime produce the said Mrs. Flanders, they would intercede for her pardon; that is to say, if she could find me out, and hand me, she should not be transported. This I took care to make impossible to her, and so she was shipped off in pursuance of her sentence a little while after.