

## Chapter 59

This fit of crying held me near two hours, and, as I believe, held me till they were all out of the world, and then a most humble, penitent, serious kind of joy succeeded; a real transport it was, or passion of joy and thankfulness, but still unable to give vent to it by words, and in this I continued most part of the day.

In the evening the good minister visited me again, and then fell to his usual good discourses. He congratulated my having a space yet allowed me for repentance, whereas the state of those six poor creatures was determined, and they were now past the offers of salvation; he earnestly pressed me to retain the same sentiments of the things of life that I had when I had a view of eternity; and at the end of all told me I should not conclude that all was over, that a reprieve was not a pardon, that he could not yet answer for the effects of it; however, I had this mercy, that I had more time given me, and that it was my business to improve that time.

This discourse, though very seasonable, left a kind of sadness on my heart, as if I might expect the affair would have a tragical issue still, which, however, he had no certainty of; and I did not indeed, at that time, question him about it, he having said that he would do his utmost to bring it to a good end, and that he hoped he might, but he would not have me be secure; and the consequence proved that he had reason for what he said.

It was about a fortnight after this that I had some just apprehensions that I should be included in the next dead warrant at the ensuing sessions; and it was not without great difficulty, and at last a humble petition for transportation, that I avoided it, so ill was I beholding to fame, and so prevailing was the fatal report of being an old offender; though in that they did not do me strict justice, for I was not in the sense of the law an old offender, whatever I was in the eye of the judge, for I had never been before them in a judicial way before; so the judges could not charge me with being an old offender, but the Recorder was pleased to represent my case as he thought fit.

I had now a certainty of life indeed, but with the hard conditions of being ordered for transportation, which indeed was hard condition in itself, but not when comparatively considered; and therefore I shall make no comments upon the sentence, nor upon the choice I was put to. We shall all choose anything rather than death, especially when 'tis attended with an uncomfortable prospect beyond it, which was my case.

The good minister, whose interest, though a stranger to me, had obtained me the reprieve, mourned sincerely for this part. He was in hopes, he said, that I should have ended my days under the influence of good instruction, that I should not have been turned loose again among such a wretched crew as they generally are, who are thus sent abroad, where, as he said, I must have more than ordinary secret assistance from the grace of God, if I did not

turn as wicked again as ever.

I have not for a good while mentioned my governess, who had during most, if not all, of this part been dangerously sick, and being in as near a view of death by her disease as I was by my sentence, was a great penitent--I say, I have not mentioned her, nor indeed did I see her in all this time; but being now recovering, and just able to come abroad, she came to see me.

I told her my condition, and what a different flux and reflux of tears and hopes I had been agitated with; I told her what I had escaped, and upon what terms; and she was present when the minister expressed his fears of my relapsing into wickedness upon my falling into the wretched companies that are generally transported. Indeed I had a melancholy reflection upon it in my own mind, for I knew what a dreadful gang was always sent away together, and I said to my governess that the good minister's fears were not without cause. 'Well, well,' says she, 'but I hope you will not be tempted with such a horrid example as that.' And as soon as the minister was gone, she told me she would not have me discouraged, for perhaps ways and means might be found out to dispose of me in a particular way, by myself, of which she would talk further to me afterward.

I looked earnestly at her, and I thought she looked more cheerful than she usually had done, and I entertained immediately a thousand notions of being delivered, but could not for my life image the methods, or think of one

that was in the least feasible; but I was too much concerned in it to let her go from me without explaining herself, which, though she was very loth to do, yet my importunity prevailed, and, while I was still pressing, she answered me in a few words, thus: 'Why, you have money, have you not? Did you ever know one in your life that was transported and had a hundred pounds in his pocket, I'll warrant you, child?' says she.

I understood her presently, but told her I would leave all that to her, but I saw no room to hope for anything but a strict execution of the order, and as it was a severity that was esteemed a mercy, there was no doubt but it would be strictly observed. She said no more but this: 'We will try what can be done,' and so we parted for that night.

I lay in the prison near fifteen weeks after this order for transportation was signed. What the reason of it was, I know not, but at the end of this time I was put on board of a ship in the Thames, and with me a gang of thirteen as hardened vile creatures as ever Newgate produced in my time; and it would really well take up a history longer than mine to describe the degrees of impudence and audacious villainy that those thirteen were arrived to, and the manner of their behaviour in the voyage; of which I have a very diverting account by me, which the captain of the ship who carried them over gave me the minutes of, and which he caused his mate to write down at large.

It may perhaps be thought trifling to enter here into a relation of all the little

incidents which attended me in this interval of my circumstances; I mean, between the final order of my transportation and the time of my going on board the ship; and I am too near the end of my story to allow room for it; but something relating to me and my Lancashire husband I must not omit.

He had, as I have observed already, been carried from the master's side of the ordinary prison into the press-yard, with three of his comrades, for they found another to add to them after some time; here, for what reason I knew not, they were kept in custody without being brought to trial almost three months. It seems they found means to bribe or buy off some of those who were expected to come in against them, and they wanted evidence for some time to convict them. After some puzzle on this account, at first they made a shift to get proof enough against two of them to carry them off; but the other two, of which my Lancashire husband was one, lay still in suspense. They had, I think, one positive evidence against each of them, but the law strictly obliging them to have two witnesses, they could make nothing of it. Yet it seems they were resolved not to part with the men neither, not doubting but a further evidence would at last come in; and in order to this, I think publication was made, that such prisoners being taken, any one that had been robbed by them might come to the prison and see them.

I took this opportunity to satisfy my curiosity, pretending that I had been robbed in the Dunstable coach, and that I would go to see the two highwaymen. But when I came into the press-yard, I so disguised myself,

and muffled my face up so, that he could see little of me, and consequently knew nothing of who I was; and when I came back, I said publicly that I knew them very well.

Immediately it was rumoured all over the prison that Moll Flanders would turn evidence against one of the highwaymen, and that I was to come off by it from the sentence of transportation.

They heard of it, and immediately my husband desired to see this Mrs. Flanders that knew him so well, and was to be an evidence against him; and accordingly I had leave given to go to him. I dressed myself up as well as the best clothes that I suffered myself ever to appear in there would allow me, and went to the press-yard, but had for some time a hood over my face. He said little to me at first, but asked me if I knew him. I told him, Yes, very well; but as I concealed my face, so I counterfeited my voice, that he had not the least guess at who I was. He asked me where I had seen him. I told him between Dunstable and Brickhill; but turning to the keeper that stood by, I asked if I might not be admitted to talk with him alone. He said Yes, yes, as much as I pleased, and so very civilly withdrew.

As soon as he was gone, I had shut the door, I threw off my hood, and bursting out into tears, 'My dear,' says I, 'do you not know me?' He turned pale, and stood speechless, like one thunderstruck, and, not able to conquer the surprise, said no more but this, 'Let me sit down'; and sitting down by a

table, he laid his elbow upon the table, and leaning his head on his hand, fixed his eyes on the ground as one stupid. I cried so vehemently, on the other hand, that it was a good while ere I could speak any more; but after I had given some vent to my passion by tears, I repeated the same words, 'My dear, do you not know me?' At which he answered, Yes, and said no more a good while.

After some time continuing in the surprise, as above, he cast up his eyes towards me and said, 'How could you be so cruel?' I did not readily understand what he meant; and I answered, 'How can you call me cruel? What have I been cruel to you in?' 'To come to me,' says he, 'in such a place as this, is it not to insult me? I have not robbed you, at least not on the highway.'

I perceived by this that he knew nothing of the miserable circumstances I was in, and thought that, having got some intelligence of his being there, I had come to upbraid him with his leaving me. But I had too much to say to him to be affronted, and told him in few words, that I was far from coming to insult him, but at best I came to condole mutually; that he would be easily satisfied that I had no such view, when I should tell him that my condition was worse than his, and that many ways. He looked a little concerned at the general expression of my condition being worse than his, but, with a kind smile, looked a little wildly, and said, 'How can that be? When you see me

fettered, and in Newgate, and two of my companions executed already, can you can your condition is worse than mine?'