

## Chapter 67

I was now fully resolved to go up point-blank to my brother (husband), and to tell him who I was; but not knowing what temper I might find him in, or how much out of temper rather, I might make him by such a rash visit, I resolved to write a letter to him first, to let him know who I was, and that I was come not to give him any trouble upon the old relation, which I hoped was entirely forgot, but that I applied to him as a sister to a brother, desiring his assistance in the case of that provision which our mother, at her decease, had left for my support, and which I did not doubt but he would do me justice in, especially considering that I was come thus far to look after it. I said some very tender, kind things in the letter about his son, which I told him he knew to be my own child, and that as I was guilty of nothing in marrying him, any more than he was in marrying me, neither of us having then known our being at all related to one another, so I hoped he would allow me the most passionate desire of once seeing my one and only child, and of showing something of the infirmities of a mother in preserving a violent affect for him, who had never been able to retain any thought of me one way or other.

I did believe that, having received this letter, he would immediately give it to his son to read, I having understood his eyes being so dim, that he could not see to read it; but it fell out better than so, for as his sight was dim, so he had allowed his son to open all letters that came to his hand for him, and

the old gentleman being from home, or out of the way when my messenger came, my letter came directly to my son's hand, and he opened and read it.

He called the messenger in, after some little stay, and asked him where the person was who gave him the letter. The messenger told him the place, which was about seven miles off, so he bid him stay, and ordering a horse to be got ready, and two servants, away he came to me with the messenger. Let any one judge the consternation I was in when my messenger came back, and told me the old gentleman was not at home, but his son was come along with him, and was just coming up to me. I was perfectly confounded, for I knew not whether it was peace or war, nor could I tell how to behave; however, I had but a very few moments to think, for my son was at the heels of the messenger, and coming up into my lodgings, asked the fellow at the door something. I suppose it was, for I did not hear it so as to understand it, which was the gentlewoman that sent him; for the messenger said, 'There she is, sir'; at which he comes directly up to me, kisses me, took me in his arms, and embraced me with so much passion that he could not speak, but I could feel his breast heave and throb like a child, that cries, but sobs, and cannot cry it out.

I can neither express nor describe the joy that touched my very soul when I found, for it was easy to discover that part, that he came not as a stranger, but as a son to a mother, and indeed as a son who had never before known what a mother of his own was; in short, we cried over one another a

considerable while, when at last he broke out first. 'My dear mother,' says he, 'are you still alive? I never expected to have seen your face.' As for me, I could say nothing a great while.

After we had both recovered ourselves a little, and were able to talk, he told me how things stood. As to what I had written to his father, he told me he had not showed my letter to his father, or told him anything about it; that what his grandmother left me was in his hands, and that he would do me justice to my full satisfaction; that as to his father, he was old and infirm both in body and mind; that he was very fretful and passionate, almost blind, and capable of nothing; and he questioned whether he would know how to act in an affair which was of so nice a nature as this; and that therefore he had come himself, as well to satisfy himself in seeing me, which he could not restrain himself from, as also to put it into my power to make a judgment, after I had seen how things were, whether I would discover myself to his father or no.

This was really so prudently and wisely managed, that I found my son was a man of sense, and needed no direction from me. I told him I did not wonder that his father was as he had described him, for that his head was a little touched before I went away; and principally his disturbance was because I could not be persuaded to conceal our relation and to live with him as my husband, after I knew that he was my brother; that as he knew better than I what his father's present condition was, I should readily join with him

in such measure as he would direct; that I was indifferent as to seeing his father, since I had seen him first, and he could not have told me better news than to tell me that what his grandmother had left me was entrusted in his hands, who, I doubted not, now he knew who I was, would, as he said, do me justice. I inquired then how long my mother had been dead, and where she died, and told so many particulars of the family, that I left him no room to doubt the truth of my being really and truly his mother.

My son then inquired where I was, and how I had disposed myself. I told him I was on the Maryland side of the bay, at the plantation of a particular friend who came from England in the same ship with me; that as for that side of the bay where he was, I had no habitation. He told me I should go home with him, and live with him, if I pleased, as long as I lived; that as to his father, he knew nobody, and would never so much as guess at me. I considered of that a little, and told him, that though it was really no concern to me to live at a distance from him, yet I could not say it would be the most comfortable thing in the world to me to live in the house with him, and to have that unhappy object always before me, which had been such a blow to my peace before; that though I should be glad to have his company (my son), or to be as near him as possible while I stayed, yet I could not think of being in the house where I should be also under constant restraint for fear of betraying myself in my discourse, nor should I be able to refrain some expressions in my conversing with him as my son, that might discover the whole affair, which would by no means be convenient.

He acknowledged that I was right in all this. 'But then, dear mother,' says he, 'you shall be as near me as you can.' So he took me with him on horseback to a plantation next to his own, and where I was as well entertained as I could have been in his own. Having left me there he went away home, telling me we would talk of the main business the next day; and having first called me his aunt, and given a charge to the people, who it seems were his tenants, to treat me with all possible respect. About two hours after he was gone, he sent me a maid-servant and a Negro boy to wait on me, and provisions ready dressed for my supper; and thus I was as if I had been in a new world, and began secretly now to wish that I had not brought my Lancashire husband from England at all.

However, that wish was not hearty neither, for I lived my Lancashire husband entirely, as indeed I had ever done from the beginning; and he merited from me as much as it was possible for a man to do; but that by the way.

The next morning my son came to visit me again almost as soon as I was up. After a little discourse, he first of all pulled out a deerskin bag, and gave it me, with five-and-fifty Spanish pistoles in it, and told me that was to supply my expenses from England, for though it was not his business to inquire, yet he ought to think I did not bring a great deal of money out with me, it not being usual to bring much money into that country. Then he

pulled out his grandmother's will, and read it over to me, whereby it appeared that she had left a small plantation, as he called it, on York River, that is, where my mother lived, to me, with the stock of servants and cattle upon it, and given it in trust to this son of mine for my use, whenever he should hear of my being alive, and to my heirs, if I had any children, and in default of heirs, to whomsoever I should by will dispose of it; but gave the income of it, till I should be heard of, or found, to my said son; and if I should not be living, then it was to him, and his heirs.

This plantation, though remote from him, he said he did not let out, but managed it by a head-clerk (steward), as he did another that was his father's, that lay hard by it, and went over himself three or four times a year to look after it. I asked him what he thought the plantation might be worth. He said, if I would let it out, he would give me about 60 a year for it; but if I would live on it, then it would be worth much more, and, he believed, would bring me in about #150 a year. But seeing I was likely either to settle on the other side of the bay, or might perhaps have a mind to go back to England again, if I would let him be my steward he would manage it for me, as he had done for himself, and that he believed he should be able to send me as much tobacco to England from it as would yield me about #100 a year, sometimes more.

This was all strange news to me, and things I had not been used to; and really my heart began to look up more seriously than I think it ever did

before, and to look with great thankfulness to the hand of Providence, which had done such wonders for me, who had been myself the greatest wonder of wickedness perhaps that had been suffered to live in the world. And I must again observe, that not on this occasion only, but even on all other occasions of thankfulness, my past wicked and abominable life never looked so monstrous to me, and I never so completely abhorred it, and reproached myself with it, as when I had a sense upon me of Providence doing good to me, while I had been making those vile returns on my part.

But I leave the reader to improve these thoughts, as no doubt they will see cause, and I go on to the fact. My son's tender carriage and kind offers fetched tears from me, almost all the while he talked with me. Indeed, I could scarce discourse with him but in the intervals of my passion; however, at length I began, and expressing myself with wonder at my being so happy to have the trust of what I had left, put into the hands of my own child, I told him, that as to the inheritance of it, I had no child but him in the world, and was now past having any if I should marry, and therefore would desire him to get a writing drawn, which I was ready to execute, by which I would, after me, give it wholly to him and to his heirs. And in the meantime, smiling, I asked him what made him continue a bachelor so long. His answer was kind and ready, that Virginia did not yield any great plenty of wives, and that since I talked of going back to England, I should send him a wife from London.