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Good sirs! how unlucky this is! What shall I do!—Here is Lady Davers come, her own self! and my kind protector a great, great many miles off!—Mrs. Jewkes, out of breath, comes and tells me this, and says, she is inquiring for my master and me. She asked her, it seemed, naughty lady as she is, if I was whored yet! There’s a word for a lady’s mouth! Mrs. Jewkes says, she knew not what to answer. And my lady said, She is not married, I hope? And said she, I said, No: because you have not owned it yet publicly. My lady said, That was well enough. Said I, I will run away, Mrs. Jewkes; and let the chariot go to the bottom of the elm-walk, and I will steal out of the door unperceived: But she is inquiring for you, madam, replied she, and I said you was within, but going out; and she said, she would see you presently, as soon as she could have patience. What did she call me? said I. The creature, madam; I will see the creature, said she, as soon as I can have patience. Ay, but, said I, the creature won’t let her, if she can help it.

Pray, Mrs. Jewkes, favour my escape, for this once; for I am sadly frighted.—Said she, I’ll bid the chariot go down, as you order, and wait till you come; and I’ll step down and shut the hall door, that you may pass unobserved; for she sits cooling herself in the parlour, over against the staircase. That’s a good Mrs. Jewkes! said I: But who has she with her? Her woman, answered she, and her nephew; but he came on horseback, and is going into the stables; and they have three footmen.—And I wish, said I, they were all three hundred miles off!—What shall I do?—So I wrote thus far, and wait impatiently to hear the coast is clear.

Mrs. Jewkes tells me I must come down, or she will come up. What does she call me now? said I. Wench, madam, Bid the wench come down to me. And her nephew and her woman are with her.

Said I, I can’t go, and that’s enough!—You might contrive it that I might get out, if you would.—Indeed, madam, said she, I cannot; for I went to shut the door, and she bid me let it stand open; and there she sits over against the staircase. Then, said I, I’ll get out of the window, I think!—(And fanned myself;) for I am sadly frightened. Laud, madam, said she, I wonder you so much disturb yourself!—You’re on the right side the hedge, I’m sure; and I would not be so discomposed for any body. Ay, said I, but who can help constitution? I dare say you would no more be so discomposed, that I can help it.—Said she, Indeed, madam, if it was to me, I would put on an air as mistress of the house, as you are, and go and salute her ladyship, and bid her welcome. Ay, ay, replied I, fine talking!—But how unlucky this is, your good master is not at home!

What answer shall I give her, said she, to her desiring to see you?—Tell her, said I, I am sick a-bed; I’m dying, and must not be disturbed; I’m gone out—or any thing.

But her woman came up to me just as I had uttered this, and said, How do you do, Mrs. Pamela? My lady desires to speak to you. So I must go.—Sure she won’t beat me!—Oh that my dear protector was at home!

Well, now I will tell you all that happened in this frightful interview.—And very bad it was.

I went down, dressed as I was, and my gloves on, and my fan in my hand, to be just ready to step into the chariot, when I could get away; and I thought all my trembling fits had been over now; but I was mistaken; for I trembled sadly. Yet resolved to put on as good an air as I could.

So I went to the parlour, and said, making a very low courtesy, Your servant, my good lady! And your servant again, said she, my lady, for I think you are dressed out like one.

A charming girl, though! said her rakish nephew, and swore a great oath: Dear aunt, forgive me, but I must kiss her; and was coming to me. And I said, Forbear, uncivil gentleman! I won’t be used freely. Jackey, said my lady, sit down, and don’t touch the creature—She’s proud enough already. There’s a great difference in her air, I’ll assure you, since I saw her last.

Well, child, said she, sneeringly, how dost find thyself? Thou’rt mightily come on, of late!—I hear strange reports about thee!—Thou’rt almost got into fool’s paradise, I doubt!—And wilt find thyself terribly mistaken in a little while, if thou thinkest my brother will disgrace his family, to humour thy baby-face!

I see, said I, sadly vexed, (her woman and nephew smiling by,) your ladyship has no very important commands for me; and I beg leave to withdraw. Beck, said she to her woman, shut the door, my young lady and I must not have done so soon.

Where’s your well-mannered deceiver gone, child?—says she.—Said I, When your ladyship is pleased to speak intelligibly, I shall know how to answer.

Well, but my dear child, said she, in drollery, don’t be too pert neither, I beseech thee. Thou wilt not find thy master’s sister half so ready to take thy freedoms, as thy mannerly master is!—So, a little of that modesty and humility that my mother’s waiting-maid used to shew, will become thee better than the airs thou givest thyself, since my mother’s son has taught thee to forget thyself.

I would beg, said I, one favour of your ladyship, That if you would have me keep my distance, you will not forget your own degree.—Why, suppose, Miss Pert, I should forget my degree, wouldst thou not keep thy distance then?

If you, madam, said I, lessen the distance yourself, you will descend to my level, and make an equality, which I don’t presume to think of; for I can’t descend lower than I am—at least in your ladyship’s esteem!

Did I not tell you, Jackey, said she, that I should have a wit to talk to?—He, who swears like a fine gentleman at every word, rapped out an oath, and said, drolling, I think, Mrs. Pamela, if I may be so bold as to say so, you should know you are speaking to Lady Davers!—Sir, said I, I hope there was no need of your information, and so I can’t thank you for it; and am sorry you seem to think it wants an oath to convince me of the truth of it.

He looked more foolish than I, at this, if possible, not expecting such a reprimand.—And said, at last, Why, Mrs. Pamela, you put me half out of countenance with your witty reproof!—Sir, said I, you seem quite a fine gentleman; and it will not be easily done, I dare say.

How now, pert one, said my lady, do you know whom you talk to?—I think I do not, madam, replied I: and for fear I should forget myself more, I’ll withdraw. Your ladyship’s servant, said I; and was going: but she rose, and gave me a push, and pulled a chair, and, setting the back against the door, sat down in it.

Well, said I, I can bear anything at your ladyship’s hands; but I was ready to cry though. And I went, and sat down, and fanned myself, at the other end of the room.

Her woman, who stood all the time, said softly, Mrs. Pamela, you should not sit in my lady’s presence. And my lady, though she did not hear her, said, You shall sit down, child, in the room where I am, when I give you leave.

So I stood up, and said, When your ladyship will hardly permit me to stand, one might be indulged to sit down. But I ask you, said she, Whither your master is gone? To one Mr. Carlton, madam, about eighteen miles off, who is very sick. And when does he come home?—This evening, madam. And where are you going? To a gentleman’s house in the town, madam.—And how was you to go? In the chariot, madam.—Why, you must be a lady in time, to be sure!—I believe you’d become a chariot mighty well, child!—Was you ever out in it with your master?

Pray, your ladyship, said I, a little too pertly, perhaps, be pleased to ask half a dozen such questions together; because one answer may do for all!—Why, bold-face, said she, you’ll forget your distance, and bring me to your level before my time.

I could no longer refrain tears, but said, Pray your ladyship, let me ask what I have done, to be thus severely treated? I never did your ladyship any harm. And if you think I am deceived, as you was pleased to hint, I should be more entitled to your pity, than your anger.

She rose, and took me by the hand, and led me to her chair; and then sat down; and still holding my hand, said, Why Pamela, I did indeed pity you while I thought you innocent; and when my brother seized you, and brought you down hither, without your consent, I was concerned for you; and I was still more concerned for you, and loved you, when I heard of your virtue and resistance, and your laudable efforts to get away from him. But when, as I fear, you have suffered yourself to be prevailed upon, and have lost your innocence, and added another to the number of the fools he has ruined, (This shocked me a little,) I cannot help shewing my displeasure to you.

Madam, replied I, I must beg no hasty judgment; I have not lost my innocence.—Take care, take care, Pamela! said she: don’t lose your veracity, as well as your honour!—Why are you here, when you are at full liberty to go whither you please?—I will make one proposal to you, and if you are innocent, I am sure you’ll accept it. Will you go and live with me?—I will instantly set out with you in my chariot, and not stay half an hour longer in this house, if you’ll go with me.—Now, if you are innocent, and willing to keep so, deny me, if you can.

I am innocent, madam, replied I, and willing to keep so; and yet I cannot consent to this. Then, said she, very mannerly, Thou liest, child, that’s all: and I give thee up!

And so she arose, and walked about the room in great wrath. Her nephew and her woman said, Your ladyship’s very good; ’tis a plain case; a very plain case!

I would have removed the chair, to have gone out; but her nephew came and sat in it. This provoked me; for I thought I should be unworthy of the honour I was raised to, though I was afraid to own it, if I did not shew some spirit; and I said, What, sir, is your pretence in this house, to keep me a prisoner here? Because, said he—I like it.—Do you so, sir? replied I: if that is the answer of a gentleman to such an one as I, it would not, I dare say, be the answer of a gentleman to a gentleman.—My lady! my lady! said he, a challenge, a challenge, by gad! No, sir, said I, I am of a sex that gives no challenges; and you think so too, or you would not give this occasion for the word.

Said my lady, Don’t be surprised, nephew; the wench could not talk thus, if she had not been her master’s bed-fellow.—Pamela, Pamela, said she, and tapped me upon the shoulder two or three times, in anger, thou hast lost thy innocence, girl; and thou hast got some of thy bold master’s assurance, and art fit to go any where.—Then, and please your ladyship, said I, I am unworthy of your presence, and desire I may quit it.

No, replied she, I will know first what reason you can give for not accepting my proposal, if you are innocent? I can give, said I, a very good one: but I beg to be excused. I will hear it, said she. Why, then, answered I, I should perhaps have less reason to like this gentleman, than where I am.

Well then, said she, I’ll put you to another trial. I’ll set out this moment with you to your father and mother, and give you up safe to them. What do you say to that?—Ay, Mrs. Pamela, said her nephew, now what does your innocence say to that?—‘Fore gad, madam, you have puzzled her now.

Be pleased, madam, said I, to call off this fine gentleman. Your kindness in these proposals makes me think you would not have me baited. I’ll be d——d, said he, if she does not make me a bull-dog! Why she’ll toss us all by and by! Sir, said I, you indeed behave as if you were in a bear-garden.

Jackey, be quiet, said my lady. You only give her a pretence to evade my questions. Come, answer me, Pamela. I will, madam, said I, and it is thus: I have no occasion to be beholden to your ladyship for this honour; for I am to set out to-morrow morning on the way to my parents.—Now again thou liest, wench!—I am not of quality, said I, to answer such language.—Once again, said she, provoke me not, by these reflections, and this pertness; if thou dost, I shall do something by thee unworthy of myself. That, thought I, you have done already; but I ventured not to say so. But who is to carry you, said she, to your father and mother? Who my master pleases, madam, said I. Ay, said she, I doubt not thou wilt do every thing he pleases, if thou hast not already. Why now tell me, Pamela, from thy heart, hast thou not been in bed with thy master? Ha, wench!—I was quite shocked at this, and said, I wonder how your ladyship can use me thus!—I am sure you can expect no answer; and my sex, and my tender years, might exempt me from such treatment, from a person of your ladyship’s birth and quality, and who, be the distance ever so great, is of the same sex with me.

Thou art a confident wench, said she, I see!—Pray, madam, said I, let me beg you to permit me to go. I am waited for in the town, to dinner. No, replied she, I can’t spare you; and whomsoever you are to go to, will excuse you, when they are told ’tis I that command you not to go;—and you may excuse it too, young Lady Would-be, if you consider, that it is the unexpected coming of your late lady’s daughter, and your master’s sister, that commands your stay.

But a pre-engagement, your ladyship will consider, is something.—Ay, so it is; but I know not what reason waiting-maids have to assume these airs of pre-engagements! Oh, Pamela, Pamela, I am sorry for thy thus aping thy betters, and giving thyself such airs: I see thou’rt quite spoiled! Of a modest, innocent girl, that thou wast, and humble too, thou art now fit for nothing in the world, but what I fear thou art.

Why, please your ladyship, said her kinsman, what signifies all you say? The matter’s over with her, no doubt; and she likes it; and she is in a fairy-dream, and ’tis pity to awaken her before her dream’s out.—Bad as you take me to be, madam, said I, I am not used to such language or reflections as this gentleman bestows upon me; and I won’t bear it.

Well, Jackey, said she, be silent; and, shaking her head, Poor girl!—said she—what a sweet innocence is here destroyed!—A thousand pities!—I could cry over her, if that would do her good! But she is quite lost, quite undone; and then has assumed a carriage upon it, that all those creatures are distinguished by!

I cried sadly for vexation; and said, Say what you please, madam; if I can help it, I will not answer another word.