Chapter XXXII

Fanny had by no means forgotten Mr Crawford when she awoke the next morning; but she remembered the purport of her note, and was not less sanguine as to its effect than she had been the night before. If Mr Crawford would but go away! That was what she most earnestly desired: go and take his sister with him, as he was to do, and as he returned to Mansfield on purpose to do. And why it was not done already she could not devise, for Miss Crawford certainly wanted no delay. Fanny had hoped, in the course of his yesterday's visit, to hear the day named; but he had only spoken of their journey as what would take place ere long.

Having so satisfactorily settled the conviction her note would convey, she could not but be astonished to see Mr Crawford, as she accidentally did, coming up to the house again, and at an hour as early as the day before. His coming might have nothing to do with her, but she must avoid seeing him if possible; and being then on her way upstairs, she resolved there to remain, during the whole of his visit, unless actually sent for; and as Mrs Norris was still in the house, there seemed little danger of her being wanted.

She sat some time in a good deal of agitation, listening, trembling, and fearing to be sent for every moment; but as no footsteps approached the East room, she grew gradually composed, could sit down, and be able to employ herself, and able to hope that Mr Crawford had come and would go without her being obliged to know anything of the matter.

Nearly half an hour had passed, and she was growing very comfortable, when suddenly the sound of a step in regular approach was heard; a heavy step, an unusual step in that part of the house: it was her uncle's; she knew it as well as his voice; she had trembled at it as often, and began to tremble again, at the idea of his coming up to speak to her, whatever might be the subject. It

was indeed Sir Thomas who opened the door and asked if she were there, and if he might come in. The terror of his former occasional visits to that room seemed all renewed, and she felt as if he were going to examine her again in French and English.

She was all attention, however, in placing a chair for him, and trying to appear honoured; and, in her agitation, had quite overlooked the deficiencies of her apartment, till he, stopping short as he entered, said, with much surprise, 'Why have you no fire to-day?'

There was snow on the ground, and she was sitting in a shawl. She hesitated.

'I am not cold, sir: I never sit here long at this time of year.'

'But you have a fire in general?'

'No, sir.'

'How comes this about? Here must be some mistake. I understood that you had the use of this room by way of making you perfectly comfortable. In your bedchamber I know you *cannot* have a fire. Here is some great misapprehension which must be rectified. It is highly unfit for you to sit, be it only half an hour a day, without a fire. You are not strong. You are chilly. Your aunt cannot be aware of this.'

Fanny would rather have been silent; but being obliged to speak, she could not forbear, in justice to the aunt she loved best, from saying something in which the words 'my aunt Norris' were distinguishable.

'I understand,' cried her uncle, recollecting himself, and not wanting to hear more: 'I understand. Your aunt Norris has always been an advocate, and very judiciously, for young people's being brought up without unnecessary indulgences; but there should be moderation in everything. She is also very hardy herself, which of course will influence her in her opinion of the wants of others. And on another account, too, I can perfectly comprehend. I know what her sentiments have always been. The principle was good in itself, but it may have been, and I believe *has been*, carried too far in your case. I am aware that there has been sometimes, in some points, a misplaced distinction; but I think too well of you, Fanny, to suppose you will ever harbour resentment on that account. You have an understanding which will prevent you from receiving things only in part, and judging partially by the event. You will take in the whole of the past, you will consider times, persons, and probabilities, and you will feel that *they* were not least your friends who were educating

know what I write, but it would be a great favour of you never to mention the subject again. With thanks for the honour of your note,

I remain, dear Miss Crawford, &c. &c.

The conclusion was scarcely intelligible from increasing fright, for she found that Mr Crawford, under pretence of receiving the note, was coming towards her.

'You cannot think I mean to hurry you,' said he, in an undervoice, perceiving the amazing trepidation with which she made up the note, 'you cannot think I have any such object. Do not hurry yourself, I entreat.'

'Oh! I thank you; I have quite done, just done; it will be ready in a moment; I am very much obliged to you; if you will be so good as to give *that* to Miss Crawford.'

The note was held out, and must be taken; and as she instantly and with averted eyes walked towards the fireplace, where sat the others, he had nothing to do but to go in good earnest.

Fanny thought she had never known a day of greater agitation, both of pain and pleasure; but happily the pleasure was not of a sort to die with the day; for every day would restore the knowledge of William's advancement, whereas the pain, she hoped, would return no more. She had no doubt that her note must appear excessively ill-written, that the language would disgrace a child, for her distress had allowed no arrangement; but at least it would assure them both of her being neither imposed on nor gratified by Mr Crawford's attentions.

The difficulty was in maintaining the conviction quite so absolutely after Mr Crawford was in the room; for once or twice a look seemed forced on her which she did not know how to class among the common meaning; in any other man, at least, she would have said that it meant something very earnest, very pointed. But she still tried to believe it no more than what he might often have expressed towards her cousins and fifty other women.

She thought he was wishing to speak to her unheard by the rest. She fancied he was trying for it the whole evening at intervals, whenever Sir Thomas was out of the room, or at all engaged with Mrs Norris, and she carefully refused him every opportunity.

At last—it seemed an at last to Fanny's nervousness, though not remarkably late—he began to talk of going away; but the comfort of the sound was impaired by his turning to her the next moment, and saying, 'Have you nothing to send to Mary? No answer to her note? She will be disappointed if she receives nothing from you. Pray write to her, if it be only a line.'

'Oh yes! certainly,' cried Fanny, rising in haste, the haste of embarrassment and of wanting to get away—'I will write directly.'

She went accordingly to the table, where she was in the habit of writing for her aunt, and prepared her materials without knowing what in the world to say. She had read Miss Crawford's note only once, and how to reply to anything so imperfectly understood was most distressing. Quite unpractised in such sort of note-writing, had there been time for scruples and fears as to style she would have felt them in abundance: but something must be instantly written; and with only one decided feeling, that of wishing not to appear to think anything really intended, she wrote thus, in great trembling both of spirits and hand—

> I am very much obliged to you, my dear Miss Crawford, for your kind congratulations, as far as they relate to my dearest William. The rest of your note I know means nothing; but I am so unequal to anything of the sort, that I hope you will excuse my begging you to take no farther notice. I have seen too much of Mr Crawford not to understand his manners; if he understood me as well, he would, I dare say, behave differently. I do not

> and preparing you for that mediocrity of condition which *seemed* to be your lot. Though their caution may prove eventually unnecessary, it was kindly meant; and of this you may be assured, that every advantage of affluence will be doubled by the little privations and restrictions that may have been imposed. I am sure you will not disappoint my opinion of you, by failing at any time to treat your aunt Norris with the respect and attention that are due to her. But enough of this. Sit down, my dear. I must speak to you for a few minutes, but I will not detain you long.'

Fanny obeyed, with eyes cast down and colour rising. After a moment's pause, Sir Thomas, trying to suppress a smile, went on.

'You are not aware, perhaps, that I have had a visitor this morning. I had not been long in my own room, after breakfast, when Mr Crawford was shewn in. His errand you may probably conjecture.'

Fanny's colour grew deeper and deeper; and her uncle, perceiving that she was embarrassed to a degree that made either speaking or looking up quite impossible, turned away his own eyes, and without any farther pause proceeded in his account of Mr Crawford's visit.

Mr Crawford's business had been to declare himself the lover of Fanny, make decided proposals for her, and entreat the sanction of the uncle, who seemed to stand in the place of her parents; and he had done it all so well, so openly, so liberally, so properly, that Sir Thomas, feeling, moreover, his own replies, and his own remarks to have been very much to the purpose, was exceedingly happy to give the particulars of their conversation; and little aware of what was passing in his niece's mind, conceived that by such details he must be gratifying her far more than himself. He talked, therefore, for several minutes without Fanny's daring to interrupt him. She had hardly even attained the wish to do it. Her mind was in too much confusion. She had changed her position; and, with her eyes fixed intently on one of the windows, was listening to her uncle in the utmost perturbation and dismay. For a moment he ceased, but she had barely become conscious of it, when, rising from his chair, he said, 'And now, Fanny, having performed one part of my commission, and shewn you everything placed on a basis the most assured and satisfactory, I may execute the remainder by prevailing on you to accompany me downstairs, where, though I cannot but presume on having been no unacceptable companion myself, I must submit to your finding one still better worth listening to. Mr Crawford,

as you have perhaps foreseen, is yet in the house. He is in my room, and hoping to see you there.'

There was a look, a start, an exclamation on hearing this, which astonished Sir Thomas; but what was his increase of astonishment on hearing her exclaim—'Oh! no, sir, I cannot, indeed I cannot go down to him. Mr Crawford ought to know—he must know that: I told him enough yesterday to convince him; he spoke to me on this subject yesterday, and I told him without disguise that it was very disagreeable to me, and quite out of my power to return his good opinion.'

'I do not catch your meaning,' said Sir Thomas, sitting down again. 'Out of your power to return his good opinion? What is all this? I know he spoke to you yesterday, and (as far as I understand) received as much encouragement to proceed as a well-judging young woman could permit herself to give. I was very much pleased with what I collected to have been your behaviour on the occasion; it shewed a discretion highly to be commended. But now, when he has made his overtures so properly, and honourably—what are your scruples *now* ?'

'You are mistaken, sir,' cried Fanny, forced by the anxiety of the moment even to tell her uncle that he was wrong; 'you are quite mistaken. How could Mr Crawford say such a thing? I gave him no encouragement yesterday. On the contrary, I told him, I cannot recollect my exact words, but I am sure I told him that I would not listen to him, that it was very unpleasant to me in every respect, and that I begged him never to talk to me in that manner again. I am sure I said as much as that and more; and I should have said still more, if I had been quite certain of his meaning anything seriously; but I did not like to be, I could not bear to be, imputing more than might be intended. I thought it might all pass for nothing with *him*.'

She could say no more; her breath was almost gone.

'Am I to understand,' said Sir Thomas, after a few moments' silence, 'that you mean to *refuse* Mr Crawford?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Refuse him?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Refuse Mr Crawford! Upon what plea? For what reason?'

'I—I cannot like him, sir, well enough to marry him.'

'I am glad you gave him something considerable,' said Lady Bertram, with most unsuspicious calmness, "for *I* gave him only £10."

'Indeed!' cried Mrs Norris, reddening. 'Upon my word, he must have gone off with his pockets well lined, and at no expense for his journey to London either!'

"Sir Thomas told me £10 would be enough."

Mrs Norris, being not at all inclined to question its sufficiency, began to take the matter in another point.

'It is amazing,' said she, 'how much young people cost their friends, what with bringing them up and putting them out in the world! They little think how much it comes to, or what their parents, or their uncles and aunts, pay for them in the course of the year. Now, here are my sister Price's children; take them all together, I dare say nobody would believe what a sum they cost Sir Thomas every year, to say nothing of what *I* do for them.'

'Very true, sister, as you say. But, poor things! they cannot help it; and you know it makes very little difference to Sir Thomas. Fanny, William must not forget my shawl if he goes to the East Indies; and I shall give him a commission for anything else that is worth having. I wish he may go to the East Indies, that I may have my shawl. I think I will have two shawls, Fanny.'

Fanny, meanwhile, speaking only when she could not help it, was very earnestly trying to understand what Mr and Miss Crawford were at. There was everything in the world *against* their being serious but his words and manner. Everything natural, probable, reasonable, was against it; all their habits and ways of thinking, and all her own demerits. How could *she* have excited serious attachment in a man who had seen so many, and been admired by so many, and flirted with so many, infinitely her superiors; who seemed so little open to serious impressions, even where pains had been taken to please him; who thought so slightly, so carelessly, so unfeelingly on all such points; who was everything to everybody, and seemed to find no one essential to him? And farther, how could it be supposed that his sister, with all her high and worldly notions of matrimony, would be forwarding anything of a serious nature in such a quarter? Nothing could be more unnatural in either. Fanny was ashamed of her own doubts. Everything might be possible rather than serious attachment, or serious approbation of it toward her. She had quite convinced herself of this before Sir Thomas and Mr Crawford joined them.

These were not expressions to do Fanny any good; for though she read in too much haste and confusion to form the clearest judgment of Miss Crawford's meaning, it was evident that she meant to compliment her on her brother's attachment, and even to *appear* to believe it serious. She did not know what to do, or what to think. There was wretchedness in the idea of its being serious; there was perplexity and agitation every way. She was distressed whenever Mr Crawford spoke to her, and he spoke to her much too often; and she was afraid there was a something in his voice and manner in addressing her very different from what they were when he talked to the others. Her comfort in that day's dinner was quite destroyed: she could hardly eat anything; and when Sir Thomas good-humouredly observed that joy had taken away her appetite, she was ready to sink with shame, from the dread of Mr Crawford's interpretation; for though nothing could have tempted her to turn her eyes to the right hand, where he sat, she felt that *his* were immediately directed towards her.

She was more silent than ever. She would hardly join even when William was the subject, for his commission came all from the right hand too, and there was pain in the connexion.

She thought Lady Bertram sat longer than ever, and began to be in despair of ever getting away; but at last they were in the drawing-room, and she was able to think as she would, while her aunts finished the subject of William's appointment in their own style.

Mrs Norris seemed as much delighted with the saving it would be to Sir Thomas as with any part of it. '*Now* William would be able to keep himself, which would make a vast difference to his uncle, for it was unknown how much he had cost his uncle; and, indeed, it would make some difference in *her* presents too. She was very glad that she had given William what she did at parting, very glad, indeed, that it had been in her power, without material inconvenience, just at that time to give him something rather considerable; that is, for *her*, with *her* limited means, for now it would all be useful in helping to fit up his cabin. She knew he must be at some expense, that he would have many things to buy, though to be sure his father and mother would be able to put him in the way of getting everything very cheap; but she was very glad she had contributed her mite towards it.'

'This is very strange!' said Sir Thomas, in a voice of calm displeasure. 'There is something in this which my comprehension does not reach. Here is a young man wishing to pay his addresses to you, with everything to recommend him: not merely situation in life, fortune, and character, but with more than common agreeableness, with address and conversation pleasing to everybody. And he is not an acquaintance of to-day; you have now known him some time. His sister, moreover, is your intimate friend, and he has been doing *that* for your brother, which I should suppose would have been almost sufficient recommendation to you, had there been no other. It is very uncertain when my interest might have got William on. He has done it already.'

'Yes,' said Fanny, in a faint voice, and looking down with fresh shame; and she did feel almost ashamed of herself, after such a picture as her uncle had drawn, for not liking Mr Crawford.

'You must have been aware,' continued Sir Thomas presently, 'you must have been some time aware of a particularity in Mr Crawford's manners to you. This cannot have taken you by surprise. You must have observed his attentions; and though you always received them very properly (I have no accusation to make on that head), I never perceived them to be unpleasant to you. I am half inclined to think, Fanny, that you do not quite know your own feelings.'

'Oh yes, sir! indeed I do. His attentions were always—what I did not like.'

Sir Thomas looked at her with deeper surprise. 'This is beyond me,' said he. 'This requires explanation. Young as you are, and having seen scarcely any one, it is hardly possible that your affections— '

He paused and eyed her fixedly. He saw her lips formed into a *no*, though the sound was inarticulate, but her face was like scarlet. That, however, in so modest a girl, might be very compatible with innocence; and chusing at least to appear satisfied, he quickly added, 'No, no, I know *that* is quite out of the question; quite impossible. Well, there is nothing more to be said.'

And for a few minutes he did say nothing. He was deep in thought. His niece was deep in thought likewise, trying to harden and prepare herself against farther questioning. She would rather die than own the truth; and she hoped, by a little reflection, to fortify herself beyond betraying it.

'Independently of the interest which Mr Crawford's *choice* seemed to justify' said Sir Thomas, beginning again, and very composedly, 'his wishing to marry

at all so early is recommendatory to me. I am an advocate for early marriages, where there are means in proportion, and would have every young man, with a sufficient income, settle as soon after four-and-twenty as he can. This is so much my opinion, that I am sorry to think how little likely my own eldest son, your cousin, Mr Bertram, is to marry early; but at present, as far as I can judge, matrimony makes no part of his plans or thoughts. I wish he were more likely to fix.' Here was a glance at Fanny. 'Edmund, I consider, from his dispositions and habits, as much more likely to marry early than his brother. *He*, indeed, I have lately thought, has seen the woman he could love, which, I am convinced, my eldest son has not. Am I right? Do you agree with me, my dear?'

'Yes, sir.'

It was gently, but it was calmly said, and Sir Thomas was easy on the score of the cousins. But the removal of his alarm did his niece no service: as her unaccountableness was confirmed his displeasure increased; and getting up and walking about the room with a frown, which Fanny could picture to herself, though she dared not lift up her eyes, he shortly afterwards, and in a voice of authority, said, 'Have you any reason, child, to think ill of Mr Crawford's temper?'

'No, sir.'

She longed to add, 'But of his principles I have'; but her heart sunk under the appalling prospect of discussion, explanation, and probably non-conviction. Her ill opinion of him was founded chiefly on observations, which, for her cousins' sake, she could scarcely dare mention to their father. Maria and Julia, and especially Maria, were so closely implicated in Mr Crawford's misconduct, that she could not give his character, such as she believed it, without betraying them. She had hoped that, to a man like her uncle, so discerning, so honourable, so good, the simple acknowledgment of settled *dislike* on her side would have been sufficient. To her infinite grief she found it was not.

Sir Thomas came towards the table where she sat in trembling wretchedness, and with a good deal of cold sternness, said, 'It is of no use, I perceive, to talk to you. We had better put an end to this most mortifying conference. Mr Crawford must not be kept longer waiting. I will, therefore, only add, as thinking it my duty to mark my opinion of your conduct, that you have disappointed every expectation I had formed, and proved yourself of a character the very reverse of what I had supposed. For I *had*, Fanny, as I think my behaviour

the benefit of his information or his conjectures as to what would now be William's destination. Sir Thomas was as joyful as she could desire, and very kind and communicative; and she had so comfortable a talk with him about William as to make her feel as if nothing had occurred to vex her, till she found, towards the close, that Mr Crawford was engaged to return and dine there that very day. This was a most unwelcome hearing, for though he might think nothing of what had passed, it would be quite distressing to her to see him again so soon.

She tried to get the better of it; tried very hard, as the dinner hour approached, to feel and appear as usual; but it was quite impossible for her not to look most shy and uncomfortable when their visitor entered the room. She could not have supposed it in the power of any concurrence of circumstances to give her so many painful sensations on the first day of hearing of William's promotion.

Mr Crawford was not only in the room—he was soon close to her. He had a note to deliver from his sister. Fanny could not look at him, but there was no consciousness of past folly in his voice. She opened her note immediately, glad to have anything to do, and happy, as she read it, to feel that the fidgetings of her aunt Norris, who was also to dine there, screened her a little from view.

> My dear Fanny,
>
> —for so I may now always call you, to the infinite relief of a tongue that has been stumbling at *Miss Price* for at least the last six weeks—I cannot let my brother go without sending you a few lines of general congratulation, and giving my most joyful consent and approval. Go on, my dear Fanny, and without fear; there can be no difficulties worth naming. I chuse to suppose that the assurance of my consent will be something; so you may smile upon him with your sweetest smiles this afternoon, and send him back to me even happier than he goes.
>
> Yours affectionately,
>
> M. C.

soliciting a return, and, finally, in words so plain as to bear but one meaning even to her, offering himself, hand, fortune, everything, to her acceptance. It was so; he had said it. Her astonishment and confusion increased; and though still not knowing how to suppose him serious, she could hardly stand. He pressed for an answer.

'No, no, no!' she cried, hiding her face. 'This is all nonsense. Do not distress me. I can hear no more of this. Your kindness to William makes me more obliged to you than words can express; but I do not want, I cannot bear, I must not listen to such—No, no, don't think of me. But you are *not* thinking of me. I know it is all nothing.'

She had burst away from him, and at that moment Sir Thomas was heard speaking to a servant in his way towards the room they were in. It was no time for farther assurances or entreaty, though to part with her at a moment when her modesty alone seemed, to his sanguine and preassured mind, to stand in the way of the happiness he sought, was a cruel necessity. She rushed out at an opposite door from the one her uncle was approaching, and was walking up and down the East room in the utmost confusion of contrary feeling, before Sir Thomas's politeness or apologies were over, or he had reached the beginning of the joyful intelligence which his visitor came to communicate.

She was feeling, thinking, trembling about everything; agitated, happy, miserable, infinitely obliged, absolutely angry. It was all beyond belief! He was inexcusable, incomprehensible! But such were his habits that he could do nothing without a mixture of evil. He had previously made her the happiest of human beings, and now he had insulted—she knew not what to say, how to class, or how to regard it. She would not have him be serious, and yet what could excuse the use of such words and offers, if they meant but to trifle?

But William was a lieutenant. *That* was a fact beyond a doubt, and without an alloy. She would think of it for ever and forget all the rest. Mr Crawford would certainly never address her so again: he must have seen how unwelcome it was to her; and in that case, how gratefully she could esteem him for his friendship to William!

She would not stir farther from the East room than the head of the great staircase, till she had satisfied herself of Mr Crawford's having left the house; but when convinced of his being gone, she was eager to go down and be with her uncle, and have all the happiness of his joy as well as her own, and all

must have shewn, formed a very favourable opinion of you from the period of my return to England. I had thought you peculiarly free from wilfulness of temper, self-conceit, and every tendency to that independence of spirit which prevails so much in modern days, even in young women, and which in young women is offensive and disgusting beyond all common offence. But you have now shewn me that you can be wilful and perverse; that you can and will decide for yourself, without any consideration or deference for those who have surely some right to guide you, without even asking their advice. You have shewn yourself very, very different from anything that I had imagined. The advantage or disadvantage of your family, of your parents, your brothers and sisters, never seems to have had a moment's share in your thoughts on this occasion. How *they* might be benefited, how *they* must rejoice in such an establishment for you, is nothing to *you*. You think only of yourself, and because you do not feel for Mr Crawford exactly what a young heated fancy imagines to be necessary for happiness, you resolve to refuse him at once, without wishing even for a little time to consider of it, a little more time for cool consideration, and for really examining your own inclinations; and are, in a wild fit of folly, throwing away from you such an opportunity of being settled in life, eligibly, honourably, nobly settled, as will, probably, never occur to you again. Here is a young man of sense, of character, of temper, of manners, and of fortune, exceedingly attached to you, and seeking your hand in the most handsome and disinterested way; and let me tell you, Fanny, that you may live eighteen years longer in the world without being addressed by a man of half Mr Crawford's estate, or a tenth part of his merits. Gladly would I have bestowed either of my own daughters on him. Maria is nobly married; but had Mr Crawford sought Julia's hand, I should have given it to him with superior and more heartfelt satisfaction than I gave Maria's to Mr Rushworth.' After half a moment's pause: 'And I should have been very much surprised had either of my daughters, on receiving a proposal of marriage at any time which might carry with it only *half* the eligibility of *this*, immediately and peremptorily, and without paying my opinion or my regard the compliment of any consultation, put a decided negative on it. I should have been much surprised and much hurt by such a proceeding. I should have thought it a gross violation of duty and respect. *You* are not to be judged by the same rule.

You do not owe me the duty of a child. But, Fanny, if your heart can acquit you of *ingratitude*— '

He ceased. Fanny was by this time crying so bitterly that, angry as he was, he would not press that article farther. Her heart was almost broke by such a picture of what she appeared to him; by such accusations, so heavy, so multiplied, so rising in dreadful gradation! Self-willed, obstinate, selfish, and ungrateful. He thought her all this. She had deceived his expectations; she had lost his good opinion. What was to become of her?

'I am very sorry,' said she inarticulately, through her tears, 'I am very sorry indeed.'

'Sorry! yes, I hope you are sorry; and you will probably have reason to be long sorry for this day's transactions.'

'If it were possible for me to do otherwise' said she, with another strong effort; 'but I am so perfectly convinced that I could never make him happy, and that I should be miserable myself.'

Another burst of tears; but in spite of that burst, and in spite of that great black word *miserable*, which served to introduce it, Sir Thomas began to think a little relenting, a little change of inclination, might have something to do with it; and to augur favourably from the personal entreaty of the young man himself. He knew her to be very timid, and exceedingly nervous; and thought it not improbable that her mind might be in such a state as a little time, a little pressing, a little patience, and a little impatience, a judicious mixture of all on the lover's side, might work their usual effect on. If the gentleman would but persevere, if he had but love enough to persevere, Sir Thomas began to have hopes; and these reflections having passed across his mind and cheered it, 'Well,' said he, in a tone of becoming gravity, but of less anger, 'well, child, dry up your tears. There is no use in these tears; they can do no good. You must now come downstairs with me. Mr Crawford has been kept waiting too long already. You must give him your own answer: we cannot expect him to be satisfied with less; and you only can explain to him the grounds of that misconception of your sentiments, which, unfortunately for himself, he certainly has imbibed. I am totally unequal to it.'

But Fanny shewed such reluctance, such misery, at the idea of going down to him, that Sir Thomas, after a little consideration, judged it better to indulge her. His hopes from both gentleman and lady suffered a small depression in

her brother in Hill Street, and prevailing on the Admiral to exert whatever interest he might have for getting him on. This had been his business. He had communicated it to no creature: he had not breathed a syllable of it even to Mary; while uncertain of the issue, he could not have borne any participation of his feelings, but this had been his business; and he spoke with such a glow of what his solicitude had been, and used such strong expressions, was so abounding in the *deepest interest*, in *twofold motives*, in *views and wishes more than could be told*, that Fanny could not have remained insensible of his drift, had she been able to attend; but her heart was so full and her senses still so astonished, that she could listen but imperfectly even to what he told her of William, and saying only when he paused, 'How kind! how very kind! Oh, Mr Crawford, we are infinitely obliged to you! Dearest, dearest William!' She jumped up and moved in haste towards the door, crying out, 'I will go to my uncle. My uncle ought to know it as soon as possible.' But this could not be suffered. The opportunity was too fair, and his feelings too impatient. He was after her immediately. 'She must not go, she must allow him five minutes longer,' and he took her hand and led her back to her seat, and was in the middle of his farther explanation, before she had suspected for what she was detained. When she did understand it, however, and found herself expected to believe that she had created sensations which his heart had never known before, and that everything he had done for William was to be placed to the account of his excessive and unequalled attachment to her, she was exceedingly distressed, and for some moments unable to speak. She considered it all as nonsense, as mere trifling and gallantry, which meant only to deceive for the hour; she could not but feel that it was treating her improperly and unworthily, and in such a way as she had not deserved; but it was like himself, and entirely of a piece with what she had seen before; and she would not allow herself to shew half the displeasure she felt, because he had been conferring an obligation, which no want of delicacy on his part could make a trifle to her. While her heart was still bounding with joy and gratitude on William's behalf, she could not be severely resentful of anything that injured only herself; and after having twice drawn back her hand, and twice attempted in vain to turn away from him, she got up, and said only, with much agitation, 'Don't, Mr Crawford, pray don't! I beg you would not. This is a sort of talking which is very unpleasant to me. I must go away. I cannot bear it.' But he was still talking on, describing his affection,

his regard for Admiral Crawford, and that the circumstance of Mr William Price's commission as Second Lieutenant of H.M. Sloop Thrush being made out was spreading general joy through a wide circle of great people.

While her hand was trembling under these letters, her eye running from one to the other, and her heart swelling with emotion, Crawford thus continued, with unfeigned eagerness, to express his interest in the event—

'I will not talk of my own happiness,' said he, 'great as it is, for I think only of yours. Compared with you, who has a right to be happy? I have almost grudged myself my own prior knowledge of what you ought to have known before all the world. I have not lost a moment, however. The post was late this morning, but there has not been since a moment's delay. How impatient, how anxious, how wild I have been on the subject, I will not attempt to describe; how severely mortified, how cruelly disappointed, in not having it finished while I was in London! I was kept there from day to day in the hope of it, for nothing less dear to me than such an object would have detained me half the time from Mansfield. But though my uncle entered into my wishes with all the warmth I could desire, and exerted himself immediately, there were difficulties from the absence of one friend, and the engagements of another, which at last I could no longer bear to stay the end of, and knowing in what good hands I left the cause, I came away on Monday, trusting that many posts would not pass before I should be followed by such very letters as these. My uncle, who is the very best man in the world, has exerted himself, as I knew he would, after seeing your brother. He was delighted with him. I would not allow myself yesterday to say how delighted, or to repeat half that the Admiral said in his praise. I deferred it all till his praise should be proved the praise of a friend, as this day *does* prove it. *Now* I may say that even I could not require William Price to excite a greater interest, or be followed by warmer wishes and higher commendation, than were most voluntarily bestowed by my uncle after the evening they had passed together.'

'Has this been all *your* doing, then?' cried Fanny. 'Good heaven! how very, very kind! Have you really—was it by *your* desire? I beg your pardon, but I am bewildered. Did Admiral Crawford apply? How was it? I am stupefied.'

Henry was most happy to make it more intelligible, by beginning at an earlier stage, and explaining very particularly what he had done. His last journey to London had been undertaken with no other view than that of introducing

consequence; but when he looked at his niece, and saw the state of feature and complexion which her crying had brought her into, he thought there might be as much lost as gained by an immediate interview. With a few words, therefore, of no particular meaning, he walked off by himself, leaving his poor niece to sit and cry over what had passed, with very wretched feelings.

Her mind was all disorder. The past, present, future, everything was terrible. But her uncle's anger gave her the severest pain of all. Selfish and ungrateful! to have appeared so to him! She was miserable for ever. She had no one to take her part, to counsel, or speak for her. Her only friend was absent. He might have softened his father; but all, perhaps all, would think her selfish and ungrateful. She might have to endure the reproach again and again; she might hear it, or see it, or know it to exist for ever in every connexion about her. She could not but feel some resentment against Mr Crawford; yet, if he really loved her, and were unhappy too! It was all wretchedness together.

In about a quarter of an hour her uncle returned; she was almost ready to faint at the sight of him. He spoke calmly, however, without austerity, without reproach, and she revived a little. There was comfort, too, in his words, as well as his manner, for he began with, 'Mr Crawford is gone: he has just left me. I need not repeat what has passed. I do not want to add to anything you may now be feeling, by an account of what he has felt. Suffice it, that he has behaved in the most gentlemanlike and generous manner, and has confirmed me in a most favourable opinion of his understanding, heart, and temper. Upon my representation of what you were suffering, he immediately, and with the greatest delicacy, ceased to urge to see you for the present.'

Here Fanny, who had looked up, looked down again. 'Of course,' continued her uncle, 'it cannot be supposed but that he should request to speak with you alone, be it only for five minutes; a request too natural, a claim too just to be denied. But there is no time fixed; perhaps to-morrow, or whenever your spirits are composed enough. For the present you have only to tranquillise yourself. Check these tears; they do but exhaust you. If, as I am willing to suppose, you wish to shew me any observance, you will not give way to these emotions, but endeavour to reason yourself into a stronger frame of mind. I advise you to go out: the air will do you good; go out for an hour on the gravel; you will have the shrubbery to yourself, and will be the better for air and exercise. And, Fanny' (turning back again for a moment), 'I shall make

no mention below of what has passed; I shall not even tell your aunt Bertram. There is no occasion for spreading the disappointment; say nothing about it yourself.'

This was an order to be most joyfully obeyed; this was an act of kindness which Fanny felt at her heart. To be spared from her aunt Norris's interminable reproaches! he left her in a glow of gratitude. Anything might be bearable rather than such reproaches. Even to see Mr Crawford would be less overpowering.

She walked out directly, as her uncle recommended, and followed his advice throughout, as far as she could; did check her tears; did earnestly try to compose her spirits and strengthen her mind. She wished to prove to him that she did desire his comfort, and sought to regain his favour; and he had given her another strong motive for exertion, in keeping the whole affair from the knowledge of her aunts. Not to excite suspicion by her look or manner was now an object worth attaining; and she felt equal to almost anything that might save her from her aunt Norris.

She was struck, quite struck, when, on returning from her walk and going into the East room again, the first thing which caught her eye was a fire lighted and burning. A fire! it seemed too much; just at that time to be giving her such an indulgence was exciting even painful gratitude. She wondered that Sir Thomas could have leisure to think of such a trifle again; but she soon found, from the voluntary information of the housemaid, who came in to attend it, that so it was to be every day. Sir Thomas had given orders for it.

'I must be a brute, indeed, if I can be really ungrateful!' said she, in soliloquy. 'Heaven defend me from being ungrateful!'

She saw nothing more of her uncle, nor of her aunt Norris, till they met at dinner. Her uncle's behaviour to her was then as nearly as possible what it had been before; she was sure he did not mean there should be any change, and that it was only her own conscience that could fancy any; but her aunt was soon quarrelling with her; and when she found how much and how unpleasantly her having only walked out without her aunt's knowledge could be dwelt on, she felt all the reason she had to bless the kindness which saved her from the same spirit of reproach, exerted on a more momentous subject.

'If I had known you were going out, I should have got you just to go as far as my house with some orders for Nanny,' said she, 'which I have since, to my

Chapter XXXI

HENRY Crawford was at Mansfield Park again the next morning, and at an earlier hour than common visiting warrants. The two ladies were together in the breakfast-room, and, fortunately for him, Lady Bertram was on the very point of quitting it as he entered. She was almost at the door, and not chusing by any means to take so much trouble in vain, she still went on, after a civil reception, a short sentence about being waited for, and a 'Let Sir Thomas know' to the servant.

Henry, overjoyed to have her go, bowed and watched her off, and without losing another moment, turned instantly to Fanny, and, taking out some letters, said, with a most animated look, 'I must acknowledge myself infinitely obliged to any creature who gives me such an opportunity of seeing you alone: I have been wishing it more than you can have any idea. Knowing as I do what your feelings as a sister are, I could hardly have borne that any one in the house should share with you in the first knowledge of the news I now bring. He is made. Your brother is a lieutenant. I have the infinite satisfaction of congratulating you on your brother's promotion. Here are the letters which announce it, this moment come to hand. You will, perhaps, like to see them.'

Fanny could not speak, but he did not want her to speak. To see the expression of her eyes, the change of her complexion, the progress of her feelings, their doubt, confusion, and felicity, was enough. She took the letters as he gave them. The first was from the Admiral to inform his nephew, in a few words, of his having succeeded in the object he had undertaken, the promotion of young Price, and enclosing two more, one from the Secretary of the First Lord to a friend, whom the Admiral had set to work in the business, the other from that friend to himself, by which it appeared that his lordship had the very great happiness of attending to the recommendation of Sir Charles; that Sir Charles was much delighted in having such an opportunity of proving