

# Mr. B Speaks!

Being a Reexamination  
of

*Pamela*

by

**Samuel Richardson**

Including

**Shocking Testimony!**

from

**Pamela's Husband**

Transcribed by

**Katherine Woodbury**

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This narrative is based on characters created by Samuel Richardson for his novel *Pamela*, first published by Rivington & Osborn (London) in 1740.

## Day One

### *Committee for Literary Fairness v. Mr. B*

Mr. B examined the oak-paneled courtroom.

Mellow spring sunlight streamed through the high windows, setting the vibrant grain of the wood walls, floor, and tables aglow. Despite the informal arrangement—two curved tables facing a slightly raised desk—Mr. B didn't feel dislocated, even though he was sitting in a non-fictional courtroom three hundred years later than his own fictional time.

His attorney, Mr. Shorter, sat beside him at the left-hand table. Mr. B had asked for Mr. Shorter, even though he was an attorney, not a barrister, and unaccustomed to arguing before judges. Mr. Shorter was the right choice, however, being absolutely loyal to Mr. B's interests.

"Are they seizing Pamela from the novel as well?" Mr. B asked.

Mr. Shorter shrugged.

Mr. B also shrugged and shifted his lanky body into a more comfortable position. He'd heard—all fictional characters had heard—about these hearings. Characters were yanked out of novels into non-fictional courthouses, where they were questioned regarding various literary crimes. After, they were returned to their novels or banished to new ones: Mr. B wondered if Malory's whiny Launcelot was shivering on

Crusoe's island; if Bunyan's bad giants were being needed by Lilliputians in *Gulliver's Travels*.

"I hope they've left Odysseus alone," he muttered.

"What?" Mr. Shorter said.

Mr. B shook his head. He'd never imagined he would be snatched from his novel. He was a loving husband, reasonable father, responsible landowner, plausible diplomat, and a damned good money manager. He'd committed no crimes. Perhaps he was here as a witness for Tom Jones.

Members from the Committee for Literary Fairness glowered at Mr. B and Mr. Shorter from the other side of the courtroom.

The Committee for Literary Fairness proudly boasted of its worthy goals to cleanse literature of bad role models, social apathy, defective marriages, and wrongful deaths—all social injustice, in fact. Mr. Rochester, the bigamist, would be transported to Nero Wolfe's world and jailed; Fanny from *Mansfield Park* would get a much-needed infusion of self-esteem in a Toni Morrison novel; Scrooge would give up his money-grubbing ways and take a trip in something by Jack Kerouac.

Today, the CLF planned to save the heroine of *Pamela* from an unequal and brutal marriage. The CLF legal team included a CLF director, a psychologist, and a college professor.

The psychologist, Jerome Hatch, said, "He looks like a banker!"

Mr. B, despite his unruly dark hair, could pass for an unusually mellow trader from the New York Stock Exchange.

"When did they extract him from the novel?" Mr. Hatch said.

The CLF director, Dr. Naomi Matchel, said, "I believe they chose the fourth year of the marriage. Pamela recently gave birth to their third child; the family was planning a trip abroad."

“Three children in four years!” exclaimed the college professor, Gary Trame. “Couldn’t they have extracted her sooner?”

“I’m afraid literature judges frown on that, Mr. Trame.”

“Call me Gary. All my students do.”

“Gary. Even though we know what’s going to happen, they say we have to let the characters commit the wrongful acts before being judged.”

Dr. Matchel and Gary shook their heads at the absurdity of applying due process and the rule of law to situations best decided by professionally-trained literary analysts. Dr. Matchel said sententiously, “Oh, well, it’s the only system we have.”

Mr. Hatch said, “People have to air their grievances.”

“Yes,” Dr. Matchel said archly, “you do enjoy putting on a show, Mr. Hatch. It’s like watching Dr. Phil.”

Mr. Hatch shrank into his chair and peered at his notes.

Dr. Matchel said, “Luckily, *Pamela* hasn’t been infected by Walmart-like mass-production.”

“The *Pride & Prejudice* hearings have to be held in the largest courtrooms,” Gary said, shaking his head. Both he and Dr. Matchel sniffed and glanced around the courtroom. Only two other people sat on the audience benches.

Gary jerked his head at them. “Isn’t this hearing closed?”

“They have press passes.”

The two audience members with press passes weren’t members of the press. They were an eighteenth-century aficionado and a representative from Readers for Authorial Intent. The aficionado, Leslie Quinn, was a writer of popular non-fiction (bestseller: *What Frances Burney Wore and Daniel Defoe Traded*). She had a doctorate in British literature but preferred writing to teaching. The RAI representative, Rupert Lonquist, was a volunteer at his local library.

Lonquist was a little surprised at being called in. “I always considered this novel rather innocuous,” he told Leslie

Quinn.

The judicial committee had assigned Leslie Quinn and Lonquist to the hearing at the request of the presiding judge, Judge Arthur Hardcastle. He usually handled twentieth-century murder mysteries. Agatha Christie was one of his favorites. However, the CLF had lately gotten obsessed with eighteenth and nineteenth-century characters, and judges were being reassigned to the hearings.

“Fine, fine,” Judge Hardcastle had said when asked. “But I want some non-academics there—you know, people who actually read.”

He got them.

Judge Hardcastle arrived in the courtroom in a sweep of wrinkled robes, followed by his clerk. He motioned the clerk to a seat at the end of the right-hand table and sat at the raised desk that operated as his bench.

He noticed the characters from *Pamela* had stood immediately as he entered, the others slowly following suit, and reminded himself not to form favorable judgments too early.

“Let’s hear from the Petitioners,” he said when everyone sat down.

Dr. Matchel did the honors:

“*Pamela, Or Virtue Rewarded* by Samuel Richardson is an eighteenth-century novel told in letters from the eponymous heroine’s point of view. She begins the story as a maid in the house of the Respondent. During the course of the story, he sexually harasses, kidnaps, and assaults her. He then forces her to marry him. Based on Mr. B’s actions both before and after the marriage, the CLF petitions to have Pamela moved permanently to *Herland* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman.”

At the Respondent’s table, Mr. B slowly unslouched.

The judge said, “Mr. Shorter?”

Mr. Shorter stood. He wasn’t familiar with trials. As an eighteenth-century English attorney, he mostly managed land deeds. But he was more than game. “The court should

reject this petition. Mr. and Mrs. B have a comfortable, happy marriage.”

The judge said, “Is Mrs. B in the courtroom?”

“No,” said Dr. Matchel. “We received an Order for Protection on Pamela’s behalf from Judge Kline.”

Judge Hardcastle nodded and flipped through folders on his desk. Mr. B leaned forward, shoulders taut. His eyes darted from the judge to Dr. Matchel. He called out, “Protection from what?”

“As stated in our petition, Pamela needs protection from the emotional and physical damage caused by her relationship with Mr. B.”

“Damage?” Mr. B said. “My wife is not damaged. She’s happy. Satisfied. She just gave birth to our third child.”

Dr. Matchel didn’t respond. At the CLF table, Gary rolled his eyes and Mr. Hatch shook his head.

The judge leaned back in his leather chair and studied Mr. B. Literature hearings were generally informal for the very good reason that fictional characters—ranging from King Lear (accusations of parental abuse) to the Cheshire Cat (accusations of enigmatic obnoxiousness)—were generally unfamiliar with contemporary standards of jurisprudence.

The judge said, “*Did* you kidnap her?”

A faint flush crept across Mr. B’s cheekbones, but he looked more amused than embarrassed.

“My courtship of Pamela was rather—active. But I did not force her to marry me. She accepted my proposal.”

“After you brainwashed her,” cried Gary. The judge scowled warningly at the CLF table. Character defendants might not understand court etiquette, but the real people there certainly did.

“I think,” the judge said when the CLF team had sniffed itself into put-upon quiescence, “we had better start from the beginning. How did your courtship start, Mr. B?”

Mr. B's shoulders relaxed. He sat back, propping one foot against the table crossbar. "I would like to clarify: I may have tried to seduce Pamela, but I never lied to her. Never very much, anyway."

***Mr. B's Testimony***  
***Corresponding to Letters I-VIII***

Pamela was my mother's companion. She was a country girl, but her appearance and intelligence charmed my mother. She brought Pamela to live with her on our family's Bedfordshire estate when Pamela was twelve or thirteen years old.

My mother was already ill, though at the time her good days outlasted her bad ones. Whenever I visited the Bedfordshire estate, I would find Pamela sitting beside my mother's chair or bed, reading usually. She would stop and watch us with enchanting avidity.

"Be good," my mother said when she saw me eyeing Pamela, and I suppose I would have been if she hadn't died and left Pamela to my care. My father had died years before when I was at school, leaving me, his heir, to handle our estates. After my mother's death, I moved into the Bedfordshire estate and took responsibility for its servants, including Pamela.

I put her in charge of my linen—my laundry. What else could I do? She wasn't really a maid—she wasn't trained, you understand. But she didn't want to return to her poverty-stricken parents. Believe me.

I gave Pamela access to my late mother's books. Did I mention she was bored? She got along well with the servants, especially Mrs. Jervis, but she was less busy than they as well as a cut above them. At the time, I considered my mother had been careless, training Pamela to be a person of leisurely activities. Nothing bores Pamela more than housework. She'll object

to that statement, but it's the truth. She'd rather read to entertain Mrs. Jervis than sew a button.

Nothing absorbs her more than writing. I already knew Pamela was a skilled writer. My mother caught me once studying Pamela's reading journal in which Pamela recorded her thoughts on sermons and novels. That was when my mother told me to be good. She knew me well enough to guess that mere good looks were not as tempting to me as good looks accompanied by high spirits and intelligence.

And Pamela went on writing. Shortly after my mother's death, I walked in on her finishing a letter to her parents. She twitched—wary as a cat—but I got a look at the letter, which was lively plus full of references to me. I warned her to be careful what she wrote, and she agreed. All good cats leave the cream alone. Until you're out of the room.

I began seeking Pamela out—in my mother's dressing room, Mrs. Jervis's parlor—whenever I was on the estate.

### ***Cross-Examination***

"Are you telling us," interrupted Judge Hardcastle, "that you pursued a thirteen-year-old?"

The CLF team looked smugly outraged. Mr. Shorter said, "She was fifteen when Mr. B first made his advances."

"Fifteen is not that much older than thirteen."

The author of eighteenth-century non-fiction, Leslie Quinn said, "Your honor?"

"Ah, yes, Leslie Quinn." The judge peered into the audience. "What can you tell us?"

"Twelve was the legal age for marriage in the 1700s—for women, at least."

The judge harrumphed. Mr. B opened his mouth, then shut it. There was an awkward pause. Mr. B said carefully,

“Pamela *was* young—unready for the world. I didn’t realize how much until later. She had an air of confidence and self-possession that placed her beyond her years.”

“Many a pedophile has claimed the same thing,” Gary declared.

Mr. B and Mr. Shorter looked confused. Lonquist, the librarian, said sharply, “That’s out of context.”

“Oh, you’re in favor of sexual predators, are you?”

The judge sighed. Agatha Christie hearings never got this nasty. He said, “The standard of lawfulness for literature hearings is the generally established customs of a character’s time period and genre. Otherwise,” he pointed out, “all those un-chaperoned children in adventure stories would never get into the wardrobe.”

Everyone in the courtroom looked puzzled, and the judge shook his head. Nobody read jolly, good adventure yarns anymore. “Legal age or not, was it unusual for women to marry at fifteen?”

Lonquist and Leslie Quinn said, “No.”

“Then Mr. B should continue.”

### ***Mr. B’s Testimony*** ***Corresponding to Letters IX-XIII***

I did protect Pamela. My sister, Lady Davers, wanted Pamela to come work in her household, but her husband’s nephew, who stays with them often, is a boar and a bore, and Pamela wouldn’t have been safe. I suppose you’ll say she wasn’t safe with me—that’s what my sister thought—but there are degrees and qualities of interference.

### ***Cross-Examination***

“If your sister is a lady, does that mean you are a lord?” Judge Hardcastle asked.

Mr. B said, "No, I'm a squire."

"With three estates," Mr. Shorter interpolated.

"Summer-house? Winter house? That sort of thing?"

Mr. Shorter gaped at the judge. "Mr. B's estates bring in an income of over ten thousand a year!"

"Ten thousand?"

"Pounds!"

"It means," said Leslie Quinn, "that Mr. B is worth several million dollars."

"Unearned wealth," Gary spat.

"Mr. B doubled the income from his estates by his own initiative," Mr. Shorter said indignantly. Mr. B put his hand on Mr. Shorter's arm.

"Capitalist," Gary said in the same tone as before.

"I don't see the relevance," the judge said. "I'm sure Mr. B's wealth is very satisfactory for him, but how does it relate to his sister?"

Mr. B forestalled Mr. Shorter: "The relevance, your honor, is that backed by our family's wealth, name, and my status as a gentleman, my sister Barbara could marry just about anyone she wanted. She married a lord. He's not a bad man. A little vague, a little stupid. Barbara tends to overwhelm people. She tried to overwhelm me into sending her Pamela. I refused."

"You wanted to control her," Gary said.

"I think Mr. B should tell us the reasons himself."

### ***Letters IX-XIII (continued)***

I had every intention of doing right by Pamela, especially as I got to know her better. I actually considered making her my mistress. That's quite a leap, you understand—country girl to mistress—but Pamela was worth the investment.

I tracked her down in the glass-fronted summer-house behind the arboretum.

“Don’t run off,” I said; she’d been tiresomely skittish the last few days. Servants should stand and submit when you walk into a room.

“My sister wants you to live with her,” I said. “Wouldn’t you rather stay with me?”

She eyed me through half-closed lids and said carefully, “Your honor will forgive me, but you have no lady for me to wait upon. I had rather go to Lady Davers because—”

“Because you are a little fool,” I said. My sister, Barbara, is a generous employee but high-strung. Pamela would weary of her. “I will make a gentlewoman of you.”

*Paramour*, I meant. And, honestly, what else could Pamela do? She wasn’t fit for hard work; it would bore her to tears. It wouldn’t be kind to throw her back into poverty, even genteel poverty. But to be a kept woman—books to read and occasions to show off her figure—was immensely suitable. I would settle money on her; if she were wise, she would save enough to last until she found a new protector. Though there was no reason to suppose I would tire of her.

I kissed her there in the summer-house. And Pamela responded curiously, the faintest curling of her lips against mine, before she panicked. She would have bolted if I hadn’t shut the door.

“I won’t harm you,” I said.

“I won’t stay,” she said sharply. Pamela can be downright curt when cornered. Don’t let her deferential airs fool you.

“You forget to whom you speak,” I said.

“Yes, sir,” she snapped. “And you forget how a master should behave,” which annoyed me, but she started crying, which was disconcerting. Between sobs, she said, “I am honest though poor, and if you were a prince, I would not choose otherwise.”

I rolled my eyes. At the time, I considered all that “virtuous woman above rubies” stuff so much balderdash. People do what they need to do to survive.

Right then, I needed to protect my reputation. If Pamela had gone back to the house with a tale of humiliation and ripped bodices, I would have been a laughing stock. I told her to walk under the beeches until she stopped blubbing and to keep the matter to herself. I did offer her money—why not?—which she refused.

She went down the steps and disappeared amongst the trees. The summer-house sits on a slight rise, and a few minutes later I saw Pamela emerge from the trees and head into the house. I followed. I spotted Pamela in my mother’s dressing room, scribbling a letter at the vanity.

I stole it later. She’d hidden the letter behind the vanity mirror, so it wasn’t hard to find. The letter could not have been more ashamed or alarmed or abashed or contemptuous of my good self. Pamela can be quite incredibly articulate.

I couldn’t allow the letter to leave the house: her parents could do nothing, but there was no reason my private affairs should be recounted across the countryside. I told Mrs. Jervis to give Pamela something to mend to keep her hands busy and instructed John Arnold, who delivered Pamela’s letters on his errands, to show me all her letters before delivering them.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Judge Hardcastle said, “Reading a person’s correspondence is a gross invasion of privacy.” The CLF team clucked in vigorous agreement.

“Servants have no right to privacy,” Mr. B said.

The judge frowned. Leslie Quinn said quickly, “The Ameri-

can concept of rights, specifically the right to free speech, didn't exist in this time period. It certainly never would have occurred to the young lady to sue Mr. B or to involve the police."

"I *was* the police," said Mr. B.

"Barbaric," Gary declared. "He belittled her right to privacy and her right to her own sexual identity."

The judge had no idea what the CLF professor was babbling about until Lonquist said, "Are you actually going to argue that Pamela is a lesbian?"

The CLF psychologist, Mr. Hatch, said, "I don't think that's very plausible, Gary."

"Bisexual," Gary said weakly.

The judge glanced at Mr. B, anticipating outrage or, at least, befuddlement. Mr. B had shifted to stare up at the courtroom windows where noontime light sparkled off the panes.

Lonquist said, "I don't imagine lesbianism was a generally established custom—"

"Not as a cultural trend," Mr. B said to the windows. His mouth twitched.

Gary said sullenly, "I would think some contemporary standards would be accepted as givens—in a civilized courtroom, at least."

"Which contemporary standards?" Lonquist said. "Based on twenty-first century Western culture, Mr. B can hardly be faulted for wanting no-strings-attached sex."

That did startle Mr. B. Mr. Shorter clucked.

The judge barked, "We will use the standard of customs as established in the eighteenth century. Was lesbianism a discussed topic in the literature of the day?"

Dr. Matchel said, "It was a forbidden topic that nevertheless underscored most women's writings."

Leslie Quinn said, "No."

Dr. Matchel bridled. "Of course, popular non-fiction ignores such crucial subtexts."

Leslie Quinn said good-humoredly, “Oh, I’m not saying that homosexuality wasn’t an aspect of eighteenth-century England or that people never discussed it. I just don’t think eighteenth-century literature is imbued with hidden messages about the *love that dare not speak its name*. People do write about other things, you know.”

“They were prejudiced,” Gary said.

“So you’ll use eighteenth-century culture to promote your position, then attack it to defend your position?”

The CLF team glared at Lonquist. Mr. B turned back to the windows.

The judge waved a hand. “I’m not concerned with critical theory relativism. I want to know how Mr. B behaved. Please continue, sir.”

### ***Mr. B’s Testimony Corresponding to Letters XIV-XV***

I was away from the Bedfordshire estate for two weeks. I had business to conduct in Kent and London. I was still annoyed with Pamela when I returned from visiting my daughter.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Mr. Hatch, exclaimed, “Your daughter!?” and started flipping through his notes.

Mr. B waited patiently. Mr. Shorter said, “Miss Goodwin, Judge. She has been Mr. B’s ward since her birth. The mother lives in Jamaica.”

“I take it the child was born out of wedlock.”

“Yes,” Mr. B snapped.

Judge Hardcastle turned to him, affronted. “Is there any reason *not* to mention her?”

“There’s no need for her illegitimate status to be generally known. I met my daughter’s mother when I was in college.

We had an affair. She was sorry for it and left, placing our daughter in my care. My daughter has the potential to grow up untainted by her parents' mistakes."

The judge still looked piqued. "Your daughter is not on trial, Mr. B. Your worries are unwarranted."

Mr. B glowered. Behind him, Lonquist murmured, "Illegitimacy is not a disgrace here," and some of the tension left Mr. B's face and body.

Leaning nearly out of his seat, Mr. Hatch said, "How old was she at the time? How often did you visit her?"

"Mr. B's paternal duties are not relevant to this hearing," the judge said.

"They were relevant to Pamela," Mr. B said. "Sally, my daughter, was six when I began courting Pamela. She resided in a boarding-house run by a trustworthy governess."

"Abandonment," muttered Gary, but Mr. Hatch beamed almost kindly on Mr. B.

The judge rapped lightly with his gavel. "Let's focus on the courtship. If you would continue, sir—" and Mr. B did.

### ***Letters XIV-XV (continued)***

I spoke to Mrs. Jervis, my housekeeper about sending Pamela back to her parents.

"She's an artful minx," I complained, and Mrs. Jervis looked understandably doubtful. Pamela is shrewd enough to manipulate events as they arise, but she's never possessed the kind of calculation that pre-arranges events to her benefit.

Mrs. Jervis said, "Your honor frightened her in the summer-house."

Of *course* Pamela had told her.

I stomped off to find Pamela scribbling in my mother's dressing room. She folded the letter and tucked it in her dress. She didn't say anything or curtsy, only watched me, remote and guarded.

“You’ve been spreading rumors about me,” I said—true rumors but rumors nonetheless.

“I talk to hardly anyone.”

“You little equivocator,” I said. “What do you mean by *hardly*?” Mrs. Jervis was a great deal of *very*.

“Why should you care what I tell Mrs. Jervis—if you intend no harm?”

Pamela could be a barrister.

She continued: “I told her about the summer-house because my heart was broken, but I told no one else.”

“You wrote a *letter*, Pamela,” I said.

“Did *you* take it?”

“I should let you expose me?”

“It isn’t exposure if I write the truth.”

At that point, I realized I was exchanging extremely heated words with my mother’s companion in the middle of my mother’s dressing room.

“Insolence,” I said. “Should I let a servant question me?”

Pamela retreated. It’s what she does when she panics. She becomes instantaneously demure.

“I don’t wish to lose my employment.”

“How can you work for me unless you are willing to follow my commands?”

“Should I follow your commands at the expense of my principles?”

I rolled my eyes. “If that’s what you fear, I might as well give you real cause,” I said and took her on my knee. She stilled, eyes slewing towards me.

“Be easy,” I said. “Let the worst happen. You will have the merit, I the blame, and then you can write a *very* interesting letter.”

Her lips curved into a half-smile. She stared hard at the parquet floor.

“Nobody blamed Lucretia,” I pointed out and kissed her neck.

She lifted her chin to frown at me, and I kissed her lips.

“Should I kill myself like Lucretia did?”

Trust Pamela to start a literary argument in the middle of a seduction.

“We could create as pretty a romance,” I said and cupped one breast.

She bolted, and this time, I wasn’t in a state to do more than grab the tail of her dress. She got away.

I sat there awhile, considering the half-smile. Then I considered that Pamela was fairly young and given to hyperbole and could be imagining herself as Lucretia at that moment. English women supposedly know better than to commit suicide in the house of their employers, but Pamela is absurdly literal.

### ***Cross-Examination***

“Who the hell is Lucretia?” Gary said.

Judge Hardcastle didn’t know either but glared at Gary anyway.

Leslie Quinn said, “I thought you academics were chock full of scholarly knowledge.”

“I concentrate on modern problems,” Gary said.

Lonquist said, “Academics aren’t supposed to know *facts*, Leslie. They’re supposed to know how to use the right language to discuss intangibles: liminal, hegemonic, Marxist.”

Mr. B said abruptly, “Lucretia was a woman from Roman legend—she was raped by a king’s son when he threatened to destroy her reputation unless she slept with him. She complied, then denounced the son and killed herself.”

“Good heavens,” the judge said.

At the CLF table, Dr. Matchel pursed her lips while Mr. Hatch scribbled a note. “And did the Romans excuse the

rape?” Gary said and looked triumphant when Mr. B said *No*. “Well, then,” Gary continued, “Pamela *is* Lucretia.”

Mr. B shook his head. “Pamela is not given to pointless martyrdom.”

The judge harrumphed. “I don’t care for martyr complexes myself,” he said. “Please continue, Mr. B.”

### ***Mr. B’s Testimony Corresponding to Letter XVI***

I told Mrs. Jervis to check on Pamela but to ignore any hysterics, and for both of them to see me the next day in my private library on the ground floor. They came there together after dinner, the mid-day meal. Pamela hung back by the door until I frowned at her. Mrs. Jervis stood before the desk, her honest face puzzled. She wasn’t used to so much drama.

“What has Pamela been telling you?” I asked Mrs. Jervis.

“Only that you pulled her on your knee and kissed her,” she said uneasily.

“Only!” Pamela said, stepping further into the room. “Your honor did more than that. You talked of Lucretia’s hard fate.”

In retrospect, referencing Juliet might have been wiser.

Maybe not.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Mr. B said, “Juliet is from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*.”

Judge Hardcastle said, “Thank you, Mr. B.” He wasn’t sure Mr. B wasn’t being snide, but at least the man was well-informed.

## ***Letter XVI (continued)***

The meeting between me, Pamela, and Mrs. Jervis was floundering. The gentlemanly thing to do was to smooth the matter over.

I said, "I should never have allowed myself to joke with a servant. What can I say? I was bewitched. I had no intention of carrying the jest further."

A good piece of diplomacy, I think you'll grant, placing no blame and bringing the matter to a close. Except Pamela hasn't a diplomatic bone in her body.

She said, "It was not an appropriate jest between a master and servant."

I gave Mrs. Jervis a see-what-I-put-up-with look, and she sighed.

"She is truly unnerved."

I groaned. So much for diplomacy. "Pamela should return home," I said.

That didn't please her. Home was distress and poverty—why should she wish to return there? But I couldn't have a servant spreading rumors, no matter how true, about my conduct.

Pamela does have poise. She took a deep breath, then thanked me for my decision as well as for the opportunities and favors she'd received in my mother's household.

"What is the parents' situation?" I asked Mrs. Jervis when Pamela left the room.

"The father is educated. He tried to open a country-school at one time, but it failed. Now, he labors for the Mumfords. Her mother spins though her eyesight is failing."

"Pamela will be a burden to them."

She sighed again. "She could do needlework."

"She's an odd girl," I said, and Mrs. Jervis went away.

I knew that sending Pamela home was a death sentence. She would fade into one of those tired women who sit on their stoops, plaiting wool. She could hardly have arguments about Lucretia with the local sheep herder.

But she couldn't stay. I was aware of her, sensitive to her every movement. I told Mrs. Jervis that Pamela could stay until she finished embroidering my waistcoat. It was a fairly hideous garment of entwined butterflies and roses, but there was nothing else of mine Pamela was working on.

"You care for her, sir," Mrs. Jervis said, and I shrugged in agreement.

"She's fearfully religious," Mrs. Jervis added.

"People usually are until they want something," I said. She clucked her tongue. But she didn't disagree. Mrs. Jervis is a realist.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Judge Hardcastle said abruptly, "How old were you at this time, Mr. B?"

"Twenty-four, twenty-five. Why?"

"You had a rather cynical attitude for such a young man."

"We lived in cynical times."

"I always thought the eighteenth century was a genteel time period with strong public morals and a solid sense of propriety."

"As compared to the Dark Ages?" Mr. B said, looking confused.

Leslie Quinn said, "I think it fair to say, Judge, that eighteenth-century England had stronger—and clearer—*social* expectations for its class members than our own age but no greater expectation of morality."

"Well, then, if Pamela knew her, um, virtue wasn't safe, why didn't she just leave?"

The CLF members clucked in collective reproach. “Blaming the woman—” Gary began.

He was interrupted by Mr. B. “She would need a carriage to take her home.”

“There wouldn’t have been any downtown buses,” Lonquist said.

The judge scowled. “I realize that, but I gather people did *walk* places in the eighteenth century. Unlike today. No—?” in exasperation; Mr. B was shaking his head.

“It wouldn’t have been safe,” Mr. B said. “A female peasant could possibly walk unmolested but not a girl in Pamela’s situation.”

“Was the countryside so dangerous?” The judge was shaken. Eighteenth-century literature was proving more treacherous than twentieth-century “Golden Age” mysteries by those masterly writers of the unexpected, Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, and Ngaoi Marsh.

“It was not *un*-dangerous, and Pamela was no longer a part of that environment. She couldn’t have moved through it without attracting notice.” Mr. B’s brow creased. “I wouldn’t have let her,” he said levelly. “Things were still, more or less, under control.”

The judge said, “When did they become less?” and Mr. B resumed his testimony.

### ***Mr. B’s Testimony*** ***Corresponding to Letters XVII-XXIV***

The servants learned about my rift with Pamela. In truth, it was my fault. I ran into Pamela in the front hall and asked why she hadn’t finished my waistcoat.

“You spend more time with your pen than your needle,” I said. “I don’t want idle slackers in my house.”

The butler, Mr. Jonathan, overheard me. Once he knew I was displeased with Pamela, my steward

Longman learned of it, and after that, the entire countryside. I held a dinner party the next afternoon, and the guests teased me about my pretty maid servant. The lady guests even insisted on trooping up to Mrs. Jervis's parlor off the first-floor landing to inspect Pamela—to comfort themselves she wasn't a temptation to their husbands, I guess. Mrs. Brooks dropped numerous hints about mine and Pamela's *relationship*, but Lady Towers said quietly, "She's got a roguish air. Has she resisted you?"

"She wants to be Lucretia," I said, and Lady Towers laughed.

Pamela had to go. I was starting to look foolish to my servants and my neighbors. I held off giving the final word, only to discover that Pamela was already preparing for country life.

I'd stopped by Mrs. Jervis's parlor to tell her my travel plans to Lincolnshire where our family's original estate is located. She was interviewing a farmer's daughter; I didn't want to disturb them, so I went to the back parlor and rang for Mrs. Jervis.

"Is your visitor Farmer Nichols or Farmer Brady's daughter?" I asked when she arrived.

She laughed. "If your honor won't be angry, I will introduce her, for I think she outdoes our Pamela."

And she brought in Pamela dressed in plain muslin with a black silk kerchief and a straw hat on her head.

A country miss, in fact. Pamela is no fool; she knows clothes make the station.

I got up and came around the oak writing desk. "You are far prettier than your sister Pamela," I said.

"I am Pamela," she told me with a quick upwards glance.

"Impossible," I said. "I can be free with you," and I kissed her lightly on the lips.

She bolted out of the room. Mrs. Jervis clucked.

“What’s she up to?” I said.

“It’s her new wardrobe. She’s been collecting odds and ends over the last week or so.”

Damn Pamela and her practicality.

“Get in here,” I yelled towards the door, and Pamela sidled in, scowling. “This is pure hypocrisy,” I said, waving my hand at the country dress. Pamela didn’t want the life that dress represented.

“I’ve been in disguise ever since your mother brought me here. These clothes are more suitable to my degree.”

I was leaning against the desk, my face almost level with Pamela’s. We studied each other, and I noted her set lips and dark, unhappy eyes.

“Oh, Pamela,” I said and drew her into my arms.

She didn’t struggle—not this time. “You have to leave,” I said to her hair, “only I don’t want that.” She tensed instantly, but I strengthened my hold, and she relaxed again, her cheek against my waistcoat. Poor Pamela sent off in disgrace to a life that would sap her dry.

I let her go and addressed Mrs. Jervis. “I’ll submit myself to this hussy for a fortnight and then send her to my sister. Do you hear what I say, statue?”

And Pamela muttered, “I might be in danger from her ladyship’s nephew.”

Never imagine that Pamela’s memory is bad.

“Damned impertinence,” I said.

“What have I done that you treat me worse than if I robbed you?”

I almost laughed then because whatever was between me and Pamela was very much like being robbed—of sense or self-preservation.

She wasn’t done. “Why should you demean yourself to notice me? Why should I suffer more than others?”

“You have distinguished yourself above the common servant,” I said. She couldn’t have it both ways—she couldn’t write and read and befriend Mrs. Jervis and then want me to treat her like a scullery maid. “Didn’t my good mother desire I take care of you?”

She muttered. I took her chin and forced it up, and she said, nearly spitting, “My good lady did not desire your care to extend to the summer-house and dressing room.”

I nearly smacked her. She darted backwards out of the room.

“Oh, sir,” Mrs. Jervis said, “don’t be angry. She praises you when you’re not around.”

“Does she?” I said, studying my desk. I didn’t want Mrs. Jervis to see how much her words pleased me.

“If you could only hear her—”

“Very well,” I said. “Hide me where I can listen to Pamela speak freely.”

### ***Cross-Examination***

“In other words, he planned to spy on her.” Dr. Matchel said.

“Is this true?” Judge Hardcastle said, gazing at an embarrassed Mr. B.

“It was a harmless deception.”

“Huh. As implausible as that sounds, we’ve covered as much material as we can today.”

The judge nodded to his clerk, who finished typing on his laptop. “Transcripts of each day’s testimony will be couriered to the various parties every evening. Yes, Leslie Quinn, you too.”

Mr. Shorter, nudged by Mr. B, stood. “Your honor, may Mr. B see his wife now?”

“Absolutely not,” Dr. Matchel said. “I think we have at least demonstrated that Mr. B is not in full control of his be-

havior. In accordance with the Order for Protection, Pamela has been moved to *Herland*. Once—ah, if—our petition is granted, she will be settled there permanently.”

Mr. B said, “If you return her to our novel, I give you my word of honor, I will stay away until this hearing concludes.”

Gary looked like he wanted to snort but refrained. Wisely, in the judge’s opinion. Mr. B’s tone was grim and absolutely sincere.

Mr. B continued, “Her children will want to see her.”

The judge said, “Don’t they have nursemaids?”

“Yes, but Pamela spends a great deal of time with them. She is not a typical parent of our class.”

Mr. Hatch excitedly made a note and leaned across the aisle between the tables. He might have asked Mr. B a question, but the judge forestalled him.

“The Order remains in place until this hearing is concluded.” Perhaps Mr. B would keep his word, but the judge didn’t want to give either party reason to complain. This hearing would be carried out with complete procedural accuracy. “The hearing will resume tomorrow at nine a.m.”

## Day Two

### *Committee for Literary Fairness v. Mr. B*

Mr. B made a point of ignoring the other people in the courtroom, especially the interfering busybodies at the opposite table.

He was still trying to understand why he was there. He had never excused or dismissed his mistakes with Pamela. He said to Mr. Shorter, “I encouraged her to publish her account of my misdeeds. Pamela forgave me everything.” She’d married him. “Aren’t any of these people Christians?”

Mr. Shorter shrugged. “I don’t think it matters.”

It mattered to Pamela. Mr. B didn’t see who else it should matter to.

But then, he wasn’t always sure the people in this hearing were talking about his and Pamela’s novel. His testimony followed Pamela’s account: he’d read and reread her letters so often, he knew the order she gave to events. She was a better observer than he, and he’d always accepted her version as exact. Her writing style was a tad effusive, but she and Mr. B concurred on who said what when, where, and even why.

But the people in this courtroom—more precisely, the people at the opposite table—seemed to think Pamela’s writ-

ing said something other than it did, that Pamela was not honest when she spoke of softening towards him, of loving him.

Perhaps, these non-fictionals *wouldn't* leave Odysseus alone.

"Do you think they hate novels?" he said to Mr. Shorter.

"I'm not a huge fan of them myself."

"Because they endanger society's morals?" Mr. B said, surprised. Mr. Shorter had never struck Mr. B as an alarmist.

"What? No. I just prefer reading news."

"They seem frightened," Mr. B said, glancing towards the CLF table. "Like they don't want novels to exist."

Like they didn't want Pamela to have ever been.

Under the table, Mr. B clenched his hands.

At the opposite table, Dr. Matchel murmured to Mr. Hatch, "I thought we agreed to leave Pamela in *Herland*."

"We did. She's there now."

"But you extracted her yesterday."

"Our therapy sessions have to take place in the courthouse."

"She doesn't need therapy," Gary said. "She needs to get away from her bullying husband."

"She doesn't behave like an abused wife," Mr. Hatch said.

Dr. Matchel said, "Women in these situations don't always know they need help, Mr. Hatch."

"That's why I need to interview her." Mr. Hatch was annoyed. His was the awesome responsibility of acquainting Pamela with non-repressive forms of self-expression. "Last night, I used the hearing transcripts to point out patriarchal assumptions in Mr. B's testimony."

"How did Pamela respond?"

Mr. Hatch twitched defensively. "She demanded to see her husband."

"You see!"

“I’ll get through to her eventually.”

Leslie Quinn and Lonquist strolled into the courtroom together. They had met at the coffee stand in the rotunda where they’d shared a pastry and discussed Wilkie Collins’s *Woman in White*.

“Our judge would be more comfortable with a murder mystery,” Lonquist said.

“Oh, he’s only finding his legs. The eighteenth century is a lot to take on.”

“You’re just pleased he’s giving you access to the transcripts.”

“I’ve fleshed out two chapters in my next book.”

“So *Pamela* is simply a resource on eighteenth-century conditions?”

She twinkled. “I confess, I confess. But then I don’t pretend to be doing anything else.”

“An honest scholar.”

“Oh, sure, there’s a few of us.”

“A voice crying in the wilderness.”

“Now, now,” Leslie Quinn scolded. “Don’t go using Biblical references. People will start thinking you’re a fictional character who actually reads the standard works of Western civilization.”

“I do, I do,” Lonquist admitted.

Judge Hardcastle’s robes bunched around his thighs as he sat down. The audience members were in place—Leslie Quinn with her laptop; Lonquist, the librarian, with his jaundiced gaze. At the character table, Mr. B sat, hands folded, beside Mr. Shorter, who had added an official looking pile of papers and a cup of coffee to his area.

Fictional lawyers always adjusted quickly to real life.

The CLF team members were also seated. They looked ready to make objections about yesterday’s testimony, particularly Gary the professor.

The judge preferred to get on with the story. He'd been tempted to read *Pamela* the night before, but during hearings, he tried to treat each text as a fresh experience—like meeting new friends or eating a new dish (the judge's wife liked to experiment with unusual recipes). However atypical the context, the characters never failed to leave their own distinct impressions on the court.

He said, "We will proceed with Mr. B's testimony. However, I must tell you, Mr. B, I am of the opinion that you should have helped Pamela get home to her parents."

"I was enamored. I knew I should let her go. I wanted her to stay. Pamela liked talking to me." A soft, reflective look crossed Mr. B's face. "She's careful around most people. A caustic wit isn't always appreciated. I went back for more. And she liked being able to say what she thought to me. She will claim she tried to avoid me, but I managed to see a lot of her during those weeks."

"You stalked her," Gary said.

Mr. B directed his gaze at the courthouse windows.

Mr. Shorter said, "It is in Mr. B's nature to form passionate attachments."

"I think we'd better tackle this stalking charge," the judge said. "You wanted to overhear Pamela talking about you—is that right?"

Mr. B nodded and began.

### ***Mr. B's Testimony*** ***Corresponding to Letters XXV-XXVII***

I hid in Mrs. Jervis's room. I went there while the servants were at supper and sat in her closet. I had to wait a while, so I read *Robinson Crusoe*—the tale of a self-reliant hero. Quite appropriate to my situation.

Pamela and Mrs. Jervis came in. Pamela was sleeping with Mrs. Jervis by then. They were arguing. Apparently, Pamela hadn't wanted me to see her in her

peasant clothes. She thought Mrs. Jervis had set her up. The motherly woman was trying to soothe Pamela's feelings. Pamela wouldn't listen. So much wrath and self-pity over so much ordinary human fallibility—Pamela was quite young at the time.

"There's something in the closet," she said, and Mrs. Jervis said, "Perhaps the cat" and tried to get Pamela to talk about me, but Pamela kept claiming to hear noises and the next thing I knew, we were face to face. For a moment, she looked bemused, and then she took in my silk dressing gown and bare feet and rushed for the bed.

I honestly hadn't planned a seduction. I'd wanted to hear Pamela's opinion of me, to discover what lurked behind her clutched-after front of propriety. But we'd suddenly become participants in a French farce with Pamela huddled under the covers and Mrs. Jervis trying to shoo me out.

I got fed up. "I can always dismiss *you*," I told her, an unworthy threat. She's a good housekeeper, Mrs. Jervis. She wasn't impressed by my bluster anyway and told me to go to the other side of the room.

"Pamela's fainted," she said then.

"Hell's bells," I said.

"You'd better go."

I left, feeling a fool.

The next morning, I went out hunting with two of my neighbors. I desperately wanted to shoot something. When I returned home, I found my entire household engaged in the conflict between Pamela and myself. This was intolerable. One cannot have servants making bets over a maid's virtue.

I called Pamela to my dressing room. "Last night," I said, "you frightened me as much as I frightened you."

"You ought to be more afraid of God Almighty."

I grinned. “Nicely urged, my pretty preacher! When my Lincolnshire chaplain dies, I’ll put *thee* in a gown and cassock and *thou’lt* make a good figure in his place.”

She glowered. I was trying on my court dress, and she studied my silver-laced waistcoat, head tilted. She came forward, smoothed out a wrinkle, then backed away, head still tilted.

“I’m considering a wife suitable to my station,” I told her, which was a lie. My sister wanted me to marry Lady Betty, but I’d refused to contemplate the match. Lady Betty is one of those aggressive teasers; I like my lovers to take me somewhat seriously.

Still, the lie was a handy way to distance myself.

“I’m glad for you,” Pamela said, but her voice shook.

“You should look more cheerful,” I told her, “or people will think you regret leaving me.”

“I will smile and laugh more.”

“A noteworthy moment,” I said. “This is the first time you’ve taken my advice.”

She pulled a face. “It is the first good advice you’ve given.”

*Touché.* “I wish you were as quick with your kisses as you are with your answers.”

She blushed and bolted. Naturally.

### ***Cross-Examination***

“Sexual harassment creates an unequal and unsafe environment,” Dr. Matchel said.

Leslie Quinn said, “The eighteenth century didn’t have harassment laws.”

“People discussed the issue,” Dr. Matchel countered. “People were aware that masters pressured their servants,” and Leslie Quinn nodded. (“True. True.”)

“She was obviously repulsed,” Gary said.

Lonquist hooted. “Are you still going with the Pamela-as-lesbian theory?” he said, and Gary looked cross.

Mr. B said without rancor, “We only exchanged kisses. Pamela rather enjoyed them when she wasn’t remembering to be coy.”

“Says you,” Gary muttered.

To Judge Hardcastle’s surprise, out of all Gary’s remarks, this one earned a glare from Mr. B.

Mr. B snapped, “Pamela’s quite good at kissing,”

Leslie Quinn laughed. “Such *noblesse oblige*.”

“Which apparently extends to defending Pamela’s amatory proficiencies,” Judge Hardcastle said, feeling a little amused and a great deal nonplussed.

Mr. B shrugged and grimaced at the windows.

Dr. Matchel said, “Pamela’s ability in this area isn’t the point,” and the judge told Mr. B to continue.

### ***Mr. B’s Testimony*** ***Corresponding to Letters XXVIII-XXXI***

The ructions in my household continued. Longman, my steward, got wind of my threat to let Mrs. Jervis go and cornered me with homages to her housekeeping. This led to another meeting between me, Mrs. Jervis, and Pamela, this time with Longman hovering in the background. I’d never intended to let Mrs. Jervis go, but I made a point of telling her she could stay.

“Pamela needs to return home,” I said.

Pamela put on her demure routine, and Longman, who is a bit of an old fool about girls, praised her delicate behavior. That annoyed me. I goaded Pamela until she snapped at me, sending Longman into a dither. Pamela instantly put on a performance worthy of the most honest of Roman matrons, declaiming she had

been “faulty and ungrateful to the very best of masters.”

I seemed to be the only one who heard the sarcasm.

“It’s a hard thing you’re doing,” Mrs. Jervis told me when I stopped by her parlor afterwards. “The girl tried scouring a pewter plate this morning and made a mess of it. She’s not made for hard-labor.”

“She was never taught it,” I said. “Pamela is quick. She’ll learn.”

But Mrs. Jervis still hoped to soften my heart towards Pamela. She invited me to sit in her closet again with some snacks while she and Pamela went over the packing. Pamela planned to leave behind not only my gifts to her but my mother’s gifts. She didn’t want to be beholden to me in any way.

She was especially worried about the four guineas I’d given her when my mother died. She had already sent them to her parents, and they had spent them. Pamela pointed out to Mrs. Jervis that she’d had no wages while living on the Bedfordshire estate and although she couldn’t repay my mother’s kindness, the education she’d received from my mother would do her little good in her parents’ cottage.

I put my head in my hands and listened to Pamela arguing, mostly with herself, that her work was worth four guineas, she didn’t need to repay the money, only she didn’t want anyone to think she’d taken what wasn’t hers, and so on and so on—so much mingled worry and fear and belligerence over so minor an issue.

I came up with a new plan.

The next day, I asked Pamela to come to my library.

“Stay a fortnight longer,” I told her, “while John carries word to your father that I wish to see him.”

My idea was to employ her father or at least settle money on him, to show Pamela the benefits of my patronage. Once those benefits became real to her, she would see the wisdom of becoming my paramour.

Pamela shook her head. "Let me go tomorrow."

"I intend no harm," I told her. This was mostly true. Kindness was a better weapon with Pamela than harassment and a promise to mitigate her worst fears would go a long way towards overcoming her scruples. I even promised to marry her off to a clergyman if she stayed.

I suppose it is no shock to you that she turned me down.

So I decided to kidnap her.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Dr. Matchel rose. "Mr. B's testimony confirms our worst fears. He admits he spied on Pamela, planned to kidnap her—"

Mr. Shorter came to his feet. "He is not excusing his conduct. He is placing events in context."

"His so-called context engendered an environment of fear. Within such an environment, any decision on Pamela's part to marry is suspect. The marriage should be annulled, and Pamela permanently placed in a more female-affirmative novel."

Lonquist said, "She didn't agree to marry him until almost seven weeks later."

"After he imprisoned and thoroughly demoralized her!"

Judge Hardcastle banged his gavel. He said to Mr. B, "Did you really skulk about in a closet, eavesdropping on Pamela and Mrs. Jervis?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Knocking your head against the hangers?"

Mr. B looked blank. Leslie Quinn said, "A closet was a

small room, Judge, like, uh, a breakfast nook. With a door. It often contained books, a desk.”

“I see. Of course, Mr. B, you were much younger.”

Mr. B smiled ruefully. “And far more foolish.”

“Yes. Please continue.” The judge waved down the objecting Dr. Matchel. “The subject of this hearing is the marriage, which has not yet occurred. Please wait until it does before you start demanding a decision.”

***Mr. B's Testimony***  
***Corresponding to Pamela's Abduction***

Weeks 1-3

I put my plan in motion that Thursday. Please remember, Pamela was my servant, not my peer. I had the right to arrange her place and type of employment.

I had my coachman convey Pamela to my Lincolnshire estate. My servants in Lincolnshire were less inclined to independent action; they would not be susceptible to Pamela's sense of injury.

I'd kept back Pamela's last three letters detailing my latest overtures; I'd warned her not to cross the line into gossip. In lieu of her letters, I wrote her father, advising him that Pamela was betrothed to my chaplain and that she was safe. There was no reason her parents should be worried when she didn't show up.

I didn't expect her father to actually appear at my door.

More precisely, he appeared in Mrs. Jervis's parlor. At the time, he was about fifty and terribly poor: the grooms mistook him for a beggar. I leaned against the parlor wall and studied him. He was a big man. If he'd walked all night, he would have plenty of stamina. His

hands were calloused, his neck darkly bronzed. A hard worker.

I said, "Your daughter is being well cared for."

"How can I be sure?" he said, scowling sideways at me. It was a look I recognized. I also recognized the steely voice. Pamela comes fairly by her barrister's mind.

"Recollect who I am," I said. "Why ask me questions if you won't believe my answers?"

"I wish only to know her whereabouts, sir."

"She'll write you," I said, "unless she's negligent. I can't answer for that."

I had no doubt Pamela would write. Whether I would let anyone see her letters was a separate issue.

He seemed assuaged, and I instructed Mrs. Jervis to feed him and give him money before he left. I sent a letter to Pamela, asking her to copy an innocuous message I'd enclosed, so I could send it on to her parents. I truly didn't want the rustics to suffer.

Pamela sent the copied message back with a belligerent missive to me. Kidnapping hadn't quelled her spirit. She even annotated the message, adding phrases like "vilely tricked" but the content was more or less the same, so I handed it over to Mrs. Jervis to send to Mr. and Mrs. Andrews.

Young John Arnold, who brought the mail from Lincolnshire, approached me diffidently. "Pamela's not safe, sir, if you pardon me mentioning it. That Mrs. Jewkes doesn't treat her well."

Mrs. Jewkes is the Lincolnshire housekeeper, a somewhat crass but loyal woman.

"Pamela's used to being treated better than her station," I pointed out, and he nodded glumly and went away.

I considered his complaint, however. Mrs. Jewkes is a hard woman, harder than Mrs. Jervis, being more

cynical and more exacting. Pamela would be chafing under her eagle eye.

I wrote Pamela, assuring her that Mrs. Jewkes was meant to treat her well. I also promised not to visit until Pamela invited me to Lincolnshire as if she were truly mistress of my house there.

I did not know then what schemes were being hatched between Pamela and my chaplain.

That's right—*my* chaplain, a man dependent on *me* for a living, entered into a conspiracy with Pamela. She began it. Mr. Williams isn't clever or cool-headed enough to "save" a kidnapped girl, but once Pamela incited him, he did plenty of damage.

I first learned of the conspiracy when Sir Simon, whose estate is near mine in Lincolnshire, visited me in Bedfordshire. "Do you know," he said, "that your chaplain fella is spreading all kinds of rumors about you in our county?"

Williams didn't have the imagination to spread rumors about me. I nearly said so until a qualm struck.

"About what?" I said warily.

"About you keeping some chippy locked up in your house. I told him he was out of bounds, engaging in a scheme against his friend and patron."

"Yes."

"I don't care if you have ten chippies locked up in your house—it's got nothing to do with me. I told him so. But you might want to bring him to heel."

"Yes," I said, and I knew how to do it.

### ***Cross-Examination***

"Why on earth," Judge Hardcastle said, "would this priest, Williams, answer to *you* for his behavior?"

"He wasn't a priest—" Mr. B began.

Leslie Quinn interrupted. "Mr. Williams would have taken

orders—been ordained—but he would not yet have obtained a parish.”

The judge gnawed on that. “Then why does Mr. B speak of him as if he were an employee?”

“Mr. Williams couldn’t simply apply for a living—ah, a full-time job—as a parish priest. Mr. B had to appoint him.”

Gary muttered, “CEO arrogance,” and Leslie Quinn atypically snapped, “It’s not that type of relationship at all.”

Mr. B said, “I’d intended to give Williams a living when it became available, when the current incumbent died. The living is a good one, about three hundred per year, enough to establish Williams as a gentleman of some leisure.”

“That sounds rather like a CEO-employee relationship,” the judge said, and Leslie Quinn looked resigned.

Mr. Hatch muttered, “Not exactly separation of church and state.”

“You understand what that means?” Gary said to Mr. B, as if addressing a dim college freshman.

“I have encountered the idea.”

“The American Revolution will begin while Mr. B is still alive,” Leslie Quinn said. “He might even be a supporter.”

Mr. B shrugged. “The colonies are too closely regulated. But I’m not really interested in foreign affairs. I think Englishmen and women spend too much time abroad.”

“Provincialism,” Gary said weakly. Mr. B’s sanguine attitude regarding possible revolution clearly surprised him.

The judge, on the other hand, was beginning to wonder if Mr. B was the best educated person in the room. Unfortunately, exploring American history from an eighteenth-century English point of view, however fascinating, wasn’t going to get them through the story any faster.

“What *did* you do with Mr. Williams?”

***Mr. B's Testimony***  
***Corresponding to Pamela's Abduction***

Week 4

Williams is not an intelligent financial manager. He's a good man who does his duties (usually) faithfully (usually). But he'd borrowed money from me nearly a year before and never repaid it. It was a good enough reason to throw him in gaol, an excellent way to bring him to heel.

I should have done it and let the issue drop, but I wanted to know how far Pamela had confided in him. I could not believe Pamela would be attracted to his bland personality or labored conversation or lack of wit. What I did next was beneath me, but I did it: I sent a letter to Williams offering him a living plus Pamela's hand in marriage.

Mrs. Jewkes confirmed my suspicions. She wrote that upon receiving my offer, Williams confessed to her that he and Pamela already planned to marry. They'd been secreting notes to each other for several weeks.

I've never been so angry. All those protestations about needing her parents' approval "and yet," I wrote Pamela, "you could enter into an intrigue with a man you barely know," especially when the ridiculous man's livelihood depended on me. I sent instructions to Mr. Shorter to have Williams arrested for his debt.

I intended to visit Lincolnshire, but if I'd gone after writing those letters, I can't trust what might have happened. A bad temper runs in our family. My sister's is worse, believe it or not. I went instead to the Hargraves in Hertfordshire, and there, I nearly died.

## ***Cross-Examination***

Judge Hardcastle was now upset with Mr. Shorter. “You had Mr. Williams arrested?” he said.

Mr. Shorter shrugged. “The debt was owed.”

“And you just do what you’re told,” Gary said derisively.

“Yes,” Mr. Shorter said without any defensiveness.

“Servitude creates mindlessness.”

Mr. Shorter blinked at that. “Hey!”

Mr. B said, “Mr. Shorter is a diligent attorney.”

“Meaning, he does what you want.”

“Meaning, he carries out his duties.” Mr. B paused, then said, “A servant or retainer should remonstrate his employer if he thinks that employer has behaved wrongly. Williams, you understand, never came to me, never verified Pamela’s story, never used his position to resolve the issue directly.”

“Would you have listened?”

“I don’t know, but he sabotaged the chance.”

Mr. Hatch said curiously, “Are you even friends with your, uh, employees?”

Mr. Shorter and Mr. B looked blankly at each other. Mr. Shorter shrugged as if to say: *Ignore them.*

The judge thought the conversation was getting off course. “Jailed for debt?” he said.

Leslie Quinn started to say something about “debtor’s prison” and “no such thing as overdraft protection,” but the judge threw up his hands and nodded to Mr. B.

## ***Mr. B’s Testimony Corresponding to Pamela’s Abduction***

### Week 5

I visited my daughter before I went on to the Har-graves. Little Sally was in good health and as lively as

ever. She's an intelligent child who takes after her papa. Of course, she doesn't know me by that title.

I planned to spend several weeks with the Hargraves. I was giving myself time to calm down before I confronted Pamela in Lincolnshire. I went hunting on Wednesday with Charles Hargrave.

We were fording the stream on the estate when the damned horse shied. I felt myself falling and swore; my right foot was still caught in the stirrup. I shook it loose and went into the water. The horse fell towards me. I rolled sideways. The horse didn't strike me, but its collapse sent up a wave. I was tossed over, my face scrapping the gravel bed. I gasped like a fool and water flowed into my lungs. I pushed desperately upwards with my hands, met another wave of water, and everything went dark.

I woke from a nightmare. I didn't remember it then, but I know what it was now because I dreamed it later over and over: the sensation of choking, large falling shapes that loomed towards me no matter which direction I twisted.

People were speaking in the room where I woke. I recognized my sister, Lady Davers's voice: "Is he going to die?" I didn't recognize the soothing voice that replied, but I praised it silently: "No, Lady Davers, the water is out of his lungs." And then I heard Charles's voice: "Only bumps and bruises, Lady Davers. He'll be fine."

"But fever—"

"Let him rest. He will be well."

The voices faded. I slept and dreamed and woke, pushing frantically at the sheets. I was alone. I got up slowly and peeled off my nightshirt. My left side was a mass of dark bruises. I winced as I stood but lurched to the wardrobe. I was half-dressed when Sir Hargrave's valet entered.

“Sir,” he said and looked uncomfortable. “Lady Davers will not be pleased you are up.”

“My sister does not rule me,” I said. “Come here.”

We managed to dress me, but I had to sit down when we finished. Breathing was more difficult than I’d anticipated. My ribs didn’t seem broken, but the throbbing on my left side was beginning to creep across my chest.

I groaned. “What time is it?”

“Friday evening, sir.”

I’d been in bed two days.

“Has the family supped?”

“Yes, sir.”

That was a boon. I’d never be able to sit through a meal.

“I’ll visit with the ladies and gentlemen,” I said.

There was much exclaiming when I appeared in the brightly lit parlor. My sister began to lecture me for rising but stopped when I turned away. Charles said, “I knew he would be fine! Hunting tomorrow?”

I smiled stiffly and sat beside Sir Hargrave. He pressed a drink into my hand and started a conversation with Charles about hounds. *Intelligent man*. I sipped my drink and retreated upstairs before my sister could maneuver me into a one-on-one diatribe.

She would insist on such an encounter eventually. Barbara, my sister, is more persistent than Pamela and far more obnoxious about it. Besides, Charles kept proclaiming that another hunting trip would set me up “good ’n proper.”

I was being suffocated by well-meaning people. I decided on Monday to leave for Lincolnshire where I would put an end to the problem of Pamela.

I started on Wednesday. Lincolnshire is less than a day’s ride from Hertfordshire, but I could only manage a few hours in the carriage. On Thursday, I lasted four

hours before collapsing in a Cambridge Inn. I made it to the Lincolnshire estate the next evening.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Mr. Shorter spoke up: "I would like it on record that my client's accident at the Hargraves resulted in weakness to his lungs. He was unwell for several weeks which made him light-headed and irrational."

Even Mr. B looked doubtful at this defense but turned blank when Judge Hardcastle glanced at him.

The judge said dryly, "What a terribly modern attorney you are, Mr. Shorter, to blame your client's shortcomings on his circumstances. I acknowledge Mr. B's medical condition. Let's move on. Mr. B—?"

### ***Mr. B's Testimony Corresponding to Pamela's Abduction***

#### Week 6

I sat in the shadowed parlor of the Lincolnshire estate while Mrs. Jewkes talked my ear off. She was full of Pamela's intransigence: how Pamela tried to escape, how Pamela had secrets, how Pamela called her names. I rested my head on my fists. I wanted sleep, except sleep brought dreams. I wanted rest from pain, but I didn't want to get drunk. Loss of control has never appealed to me.

"Bring Pamela down," I said.

I heard Mrs. Jewkes and Pamela on the stairs. "Come along," Mrs. Jewkes was saying with brash good-humor. "Beg his honor's forgiveness for all your faults."

I rubbed my temples and considered that perhaps John Arnold was right: Mrs. Jewkes was not the best person to attend Pamela.

Pamela entered the long, gloomy room, looking beligerent, and I almost smiled at her until I remembered her conspiracy with Williams.

“Mrs. Jewkes,” I said, “you tell me Pamela remains sullen and eats nothing. I suppose she lives upon love. Her plots with sweet Mr. Williams keep her well.”

“That’s right,” Mrs. Jewkes said. “She’s slippery as an eel.”

Finally, Pamela spoke: “Hear me concerning this wicked woman’s usage—”

“I am satisfied she has done her duty,” I said. “You, however, are a wicked girl to tempt the parson to undo himself.”

“I have a strange tribunal to plead before,” Pamela said acidly. “The poor sheep in the fable was tried before the vulture on the accusation of the wolf.”

I was a little surprised I wasn’t cast as the wolf, but I tried to follow Pamela’s line of reasoning: “So, Mrs. Jewkes,” I said, “I am a vulture, and here is a poor innocent lamb.”

“Oh,” Mrs. Jewkes snorted. “That is nothing to what she has called me: Jezebel, London prostitute—”

I grinned as Pamela burst out, “I wasn’t comparing—”

“Don’t quibble, girl,” I said, and Mrs. Jewkes agreed.

Pamela said, “I appeal to the righteous judge who knows the secrets of all hearts.”

Calling down the fire of heaven on us, in fact, and Pamela looked fit to strike something. If we ever did have children, I pitied them their tempers.

Even tearful, she looked beautiful if too thin. The inquisitive glance was still there, the mocking quirk to

the lips, and I wondered what had led Williams to think he could handle Pamela in the first place. But then, she can be quite persuasive when she wants to be.

“It’s no wonder the poor parson was infatuated,” I said. “I blame him less than I do her.”

And Pamela’s expression changed, became bewildered, helpless. For the first time, I wondered if she had encouraged Williams. Had she endowed my chaplain with the scruples of Galahad?

She turned and pressed her face against the parlor’s paneled wall. I got up and slipped an arm around her shoulders. “How can I forgive you?” I said. She had caused disturbances in my households, corrupted my servants, conspired with Williams. I kissed her hair.

She broke away then. “I will die before I will be used thus,” she said, and the indignation was back.

“Consider where you are, Pamela,” I said. “Don’t be a fool.”

She wouldn’t meet my eyes, so I sent her upstairs with Mrs. Jewkes.

I collapsed then. Monsieur Colbrand, my Swiss servant, heaved me into bed. “You have fever, sir,” he said, and I said, “I’ll be better in the morning.”

I didn’t sleep, and the next morning, I was still warm, but I dressed without help. Sir Simon came to welcome me to the county. “Can I see the chippy?” he asked, and I said, “No” shortly.

He obviously expected to stay for dinner, so while he strode in the garden, I pulled out my proposal and had Mrs. Jewkes take it up to Pamela.

I’d begun the proposal before I packed Pamela off to Lincolnshire. Once Pamela became my paramour, I would give her the immediate gift of five-hundred guineas, the income from my property in Kent with

her father as manager, a promise to care for any of her relations (I hoped there weren't many; she'd never suggested she came from a large family), four sets of clothes plus several pieces of high quality jewelry, and the right to command my servants. Lastly, I promised to marry her in a year.

I doubted Pamela would care about the last provision once she had exposure to the rest. It was a generous settlement.

### ***Cross-Examination***

"Very generous," Judge Hardcastle said. "Was this equivalent to a pre-nuptial agreement?"

"More like wages for a hooker," Gary said.

Mr. B turned white. "I never perceived Pamela as a street-walker," he said, teeth gritted.

Dr. Matchel said, "Really, Gary!"

"That was uncalled for," Mr. Hatch added.

Leslie Quinn said, "The position Mr. B was offering Pamela was something closer to, ah, a geisha."

The judge, who only oversaw trials of Western literature, looked doubtful.

"Tarted-up analogy," Gary muttered, twitching when Mr. B glowered at him.

Leslie Quinn said, "Watch out, Professor. Mr. B might challenge you to a duel."

Everyone looked startled except Mr. B, who looked vaguely embarrassed.

The judge said quickly, "That would be most inappropriate."

Technically, a duel—as an established eighteenth-century custom—would be allowable, but it would also be messy and time-consuming.

Mr. B's smile was understanding. "I don't fight duels anymore," he told the judge pacifically.

“Anymore? You *did* fight duels?” Gary sounded rather awe-struck.

“Once abroad. I won. I was much younger, of course. I wouldn’t fight a duel now. Taking people to court,” Mr. B said, “is much more civilized.” He winked at Leslie Quinn.

The judge glanced around the court. Mr. B had finally rendered even the CLF speechless. It was time to move on.

“How did Pamela react to your proposal?”

### Week 6 (continued)

She refused it. I suppose you aren’t surprised. I no longer knew what to expect. I will say her answer to my proposal was the most straightforward she had been with me in weeks:

“I will not trifle with you nor act like a person doubtful of her own mind,” she wrote. She assured me she had not encouraged Williams. She disdained my offers of money, proclaiming her “honest parents” would never agree to any proposal that involved the “prostitution of their poor daughter.” I wondered if her parents would be similarly high-handed if approached directly.

Remembering her father, I thought perhaps they would be.

She ended by pointing out that if she did become my paramour for a year, at the end of it, she would hardly merit marriage with a gentleman. This was true. A young woman who hopes to achieve a respectable life cannot afford any liaisons, no matter how brief.

There is, as I stated previously, a great deal of the barrister about Pamela.

One passage gave me pause. “There is no man breathing I wish to marry,” Pamela wrote, “except one

and that is the gentleman who, above all others, seeks my everlasting dishonor.”

She wanted me. Her refusal was pointless. God would hardly hold her accountable for merely trying to better herself. A liaison with me would seriously damage her future, but she had no great future anyway. Her parents would hardly complain because their daughter put their comfort above her misguided morality. I stomped around my study, head throbbing.

“It’s your own fault for being so tender,” Mrs. Jewkes said, and I was beginning to think she was right. Pamela needed a *fait accompli*. The issue needed to be resolved.

“I’ll bed her tomorrow,” I said and instructed Mrs. Jewkes to keep Pamela from escaping.

“She got as far as the garden pond last time.”

“Well, see it doesn’t happen again,” I snapped, and she bustled out. I heard her and Pamela yelling at each other in Pamela’s bedroom. Pamela wanted the keys to the room; Mrs. Jewkes wouldn’t give them up.

I went to bed and didn’t sleep.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Cries from the CLF team interrupted Mr. B’s testimony.

“He admits he decided to rape her,” Gary said.

Mr. B said, “Rape is your parlance, not mine.”

“So no one in the eighteenth century was raped?”

“Of course they were. That wasn’t the issue. Pamela was more concerned with her virginity than her rights.”

Leslie Quinn said mildly, “I doubt she saw a difference. Holding out for a decent marriage was more or less her purpose in life. Rape would have ruined her forever.”

“I did repent the decision,” Mr. B said. “I’m no Lovelace. He was a cad. From *Clarissa*,” he snapped at Judge Hardcastle, who was looking puzzled.

The judge frowned. "There's no need for irritation," he said.

Lonquist drew the judge's attention away from Mr. B. "*Clarissa* is a novel, also by Richardson, about a young woman pursued by a deceitful gentleman named Lovelace. She is eventually seduced—"

"Raped!" Gary said.

"Ravished by Lovelace. She dies, and Lovelace is killed in a duel."

"Another Lucretia!"

"But not another Pamela." Mr. B faced the judge, shoulders braced. "I'm being asked to justify an action I long ago regretted. Pamela was my servant, she was female, she had no prospects, and little protection. I was the god of my estates. Didn't Eros kidnap and seduce Psyche?"

Lonquist said gently, "Psyche accepted her seduction."

"I was convinced Pamela would as well. Let us grant I was wrong. But I honestly believed I was right."

The judge looked at the taut, unhappy faces. Only Leslie Quinn and the nondescript clerk seemed unruffled. He sighed. "I find I am suddenly fed up with history. We'll end early today. Yes, yes, the transcripts will be couriered to you all this evening. Mr. B's testimony will resume tomorrow morning, nine a.m. Good day."

## Day Three

### *Committee for Literary Fairness v. Mr. B*

Mr. B found he was tapping his feet and leaned forward, pressing his arms against his knees.

Of course, the CLF had brought up the attempted rape. It was not the biggest problem he and Pamela had ever faced, but he understood how it appeared to the outside world.

He knew, without Mr. Shorter's advice, that he needed to tread carefully. Pleading age and inexperience would not impress the judge—or bring Pamela back to him. Pleading incompetence would offend even his supporters.

Mr. Shorter came in, carrying a bagel and cup of coffee. He received a small stipend in courthouse dollars for his work as a “legal aid,” which he spent on modern “delicacies.” Mr. B would bet Mr. Shorter was already wondering who else he could represent from the novel in this so-called “real life.”

“There's a letter about us in a non-fictional newspaper,” Mr. Shorter said.

Mr. B already knew that. Before Mr. Shorter arrived, he'd heard the librarian, Lonquist, and the historian, Leslie Quinn, gleefully discussing it. Apparently, it castigated the CLF as “citizens of low repute who deign to disrupt the holy sacrament of marriage.”

Mr. B said, “I don’t like scandal sheets.”

“If the newspapers are on our side—”

“Neither does Pamela.”

Mr. Shorter shrugged.

A dark-haired young woman wearing a press pass entered the courtroom and sat behind Leslie Quinn. Mr. B glanced at her disinterestedly.

“Hi,” he heard her say to the historian, “I’m Deborah. I just learned about the *Pamela* hearings. Oh, there’s Mr. B. Is *she* here?”

“The CLF stuck her in *Herland*.”

“Wow—why?”

“Isn’t it the ultimate feminist training ground?” Lonquist said. “Perhaps, Pamela will want to stay there.”

Mr. B crossed his arms and glared at the table top.

“Oh, no,” Deborah said blithely. “She and Mr. B are soul mates.”

“The young lady reviews romance novels,” Mr. Shorter told Mr. B. “Stories about love—not stories about knights.”

“I don’t live in a love novel,” Mr. B said, but he hoped Deborah was right about him and Pamela.

The CLF team was in a snit about the editorial in the *City Gazette*.

“The media has been co-opted by reactionaries,” Gary cried.

Judge Hardcastle ignored him. He also turned down Dr. Matchel’s request for a media blackout. He had no problems with the First Amendment. Media commentary was irritating but rarely intrusive. If it did become intrusive it was only because other people wouldn’t shut up about it.

He wanted to deal with the rape or seduction or whatever it was. He turned to Mr. B and Mr. Shorter. “I can’t ignore this part of the novel—unless rape was an established custom in eighteenth-century literature?”

Both men hesitated.

“Not as an acceptable action,” Mr. B said, and Mr. Shorter concurred.

“Then we need to address the event. Mr. B—?”

***Mr. B’s Testimony***  
***Corresponding to Pamela’s Abduction***

Week 6 (continued)

I went to church the next morning with a prayer message sent to me by Pamela through Mrs. Jewkes: “The prayers of this congregation are earnestly desired for a gentleman of great worth and honor who labors to ruin a poor, distressed, worthless maiden,” it read.

Typical Pamela and clever, but I was tired of the game. “Tell her the reckoning is not far off,” I said and left the house. As I got into the carriage, I saw Pamela’s solemn face at an upstairs window. Our eyes met. She tilted her head and raised her chin the way she does before passing judgment. I jerked my chin back at her and got into the carriage.

Church was exasperating. Parson Peters came up after the sermon to plead with me for Williams’s release: Williams didn’t realize he owed me money, he thought the sum I gave him was in anticipation of his living, et cetera, et cetera.

“It was a bit much putting the fella in gaol,” Sir Simon chimed in.

“I’ll resolve the matter,” I said and left them.

Dealing with Williams was good cover for what I had planned. I sent the carriage home with a letter to Mrs. Jewkes telling her to tell Pamela I’d gone to Stamford town where Williams was locked up. I then walked home, cutting across the pasture, so I could enter through the rear.

I ran into Colbrand in the stable yard and used him to send a second message to Mrs. Jewkes, after which I rested on the terraced garden watching the sky mellow and getting my breath back.

The stage was set. By that same time the next day, Pamela's fate would be decided. Finally.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Dr. Matchel was becoming more and more agitated. She slammed her hands on the table. "I cannot believe you are allowing this testimony," she told Judge Hardcastle. "This man admits he planned a rape. There is no way, by any standards, that this is acceptable fiction."

"I don't agree," blurted the dark-haired young woman in the audience benches.

Everybody turned and looked at her. She blushed but grinned and waved a hand.

The judge said, "Ah, Ms. Walsh? My clerk gave you a pass this morning?"

"Miss. Deborah. Yes."

"I'm afraid you have no expert standing in this hearing."

"I review romance novels," Deborah said hopefully.

Gary and Dr. Matchel looked pained, but the judge set down a folder and said, "Really? Would you call this novel a romance?"

"Sort of," Deborah said. "It's really more a polemic about education and servants and stuff. But it has a lot of the same material you'd find in a romance novel."

"Such as?"

Dr. Matchel objected: "A discussion of romance novels is hardly appropriate."

"We are looking for established literary customs," the judge said briskly. "What are the romantic components in *Pamela*, Miss Walsh?"

"There's a heroine, first of all, and she's good—you know,

virtuous. And there's a hero, and he's a rake. And he pursues her and sometimes gets her into bed, but he always backs off when she says *no*, and then they reconcile, and then they marry."

Dr. Matchel cried, "These romance novels have done more to undermine women's rights than any other type of literature."

"Oh, that's old-school," Deborah said. "Like people who think women should only have supported Hillary in 2008."

The judge said, "Do other eighteenth-century novels share these components?"

"No!" Dr. Matchel said, but Leslie Quinn said, "Yes. Novels for the middle-class. Broadsheets. The romantic romance isn't new. Everyone likes a juicy story."

The judge glanced at Mr. B who looked rather shell-shocked. The judge couldn't blame him. Mr. B was being depicted as either a lecher or a champion. Personally, the judge thought both roles would prove uncomfortable.

"Did you back off?" he said.

"In a sense," Mr. B said, still looking guarded. He continued his testimony.

### Week 6 (continued)

Towards evening, I went to my room to change and from there to Pamela's square bedroom with its canopied bed and large French chest. She and Mrs. Jewkes were in the back parlor downstairs. I sat in the elbow-chair in the darkest corner and covered my face with an apron and my legs with a petticoat as if I were the maid. I dozed off and on until I heard Mrs. Jewkes and Pamela come upstairs.

Mrs. Jewkes was teasing Pamela about her writing. Pamela was complaining about me. She ignored the "maid," whom she obviously thought was drunk, but she checked the closet—I smiled to myself—and finally

went to bed, still talking rapidly. Pamela is no fool. She knew something wasn't right.

They doused the candles and after a few minutes, I got up and undressed. I sat down on the edge of the bed closest to Pamela. I slid under the covers.

"Are you alright?" she said, thinking I was the maid.

I suppose no red-blooded gentleman will believe me, but for a long moment, I just wanted to sleep—there, next to Pamela with my arm across her middle. Sleep away dreams, sleep away thoughts of drowning. I suppose I was already drowning, and Pamela was the only way out, the only way up. I slid closer until her arm was under my shoulders and clasped her around the waist.

I kissed her full on the mouth before she could scream, and then I came up for air, and she did scream. Mrs. Jewkes was somewhere on the periphery, shouting, "Don't dilly-dally, sir."

### ***Cross-Examination***

"Mrs. Jewkes encouraged you to violate the girl?" Judge Hardcastle said, dumbfounded. He was beginning to think he'd stumbled into a cross between Charles Dickens and *Married with Children*.

"Mrs. Jewkes has an uncomplicated approach to problems," Mr. B said.

"She hates her own gender," proclaimed Dr. Matchel.

"She's a damned good housekeeper," Mr. B said.

Dr. Matchel blanched. Gary sputtered. The judge couldn't blame them. For a man claiming to be in love, Mr. B's matter-of-fact attitude was a trifle chilling.

Leslie Quinn said, "Sex was a less private matter in eighteenth-century households than in our modern world."

Mr. B said, "I did not have sex with Pamela in front of

Mrs. Jewkes.”

“You almost did,” Gary said. “That woman’s a voyeur.”

The judge had to agree. “Surely, a servant would have more propriety—”

“Most servants are sluts,” Mr. Shorter muttered; Mr. B kicked him.

“What?” the judge said sharply.

Leslie Quinn said, “Servant women were considered more, ah, earthy than women of the upper classes.”

The judge had been right: this was definitely *Married with Children* meets *Twisted Tales of Bleak Expectations*.

Mr. B said wearily, “I did not have sex in front of Mrs. Jewkes.”

“What did happen?” the judge said.

#### Week 6 (continued)

Pamela was still screaming, and I was trying to explain that this was it, she might as well accept my proposals, and then she went limp, completely limp, like something dead.

“She’s had a fit,” I said, getting up.

“Ah, she’s faking, sir,” Mrs. Jewkes said.

“No, she isn’t,” I said and lit a candle. Pamela lay on the bed, white and motionless. Mrs. Jewkes leaned over her.

“She’s breathing,” she said while I pulled on my gown and slippers. I brought another candle to the bed and sat on the free side.

“Can you wake her?” I said.

Mrs. Jewkes waved smelling-salts under Pamela’s nose, and Pamela jerked awake. She looked at me, and I knew that look, I read it from my own experience.

She was terrified of drowning.

She sat up, edging backwards until she struck the headboard.

“Pamela,” I said gently. “Pamela.”

She watched me warily like something wild and injured. I leaned forward, speaking softly, and she put her hand on my mouth. We gazed at each other over her fingers.

She said, “Did I suffer any distress?”

“No,” I said. “I promise you I did nothing.”

“Well, you could now, seeing as she’s well,” Mrs. Jewkes said stolidly.

Pamela’s eyes rolled back in her head. She was pressed sideways against the bed’s headboard and would have fallen to the floor if I hadn’t caught her.

“Get out of here,” I said to Mrs. Jewkes. “Send the maid in.”

### ***Cross-Examination***

“He sent Mrs. Jewkes away,” Gary said. “He arranged to be alone in order to—”

“I did not violate her,” Mr. B shouted, and Judge Hardcastle banged his gavel.

“None of that,” he said sternly, and Mr. B slumped in his chair, a hand to his face. The judge eyed the man’s tight lips and closed eyes.

Dr. Matchel said, “Pamela *was* unconscious. Whatever isn’t stated in the text directly—”

The judge interrupted: “Does the text suggest in any way that Pamela was violated at this time?”

“No,” Lonquist said, and Leslie Quinn said, “I think Pamela would have known. She only asked Mr. B out of innocence. If she’d really been, uh, deflowered, she would have written about it.”

The judge glanced at Mr. Hatch who nodded reluctant agreement.

“Then she wasn’t raped.” There would be no deconstructionism in Judge Hardcastle’s court. Texts thrived on their own and all that, but meaning was meaning, and some things just happened and some things just did not.

“She must have been very frightened,” he said gently, and Mr. B, eyes still closed, said, “Yes.”

Mr. Hatch said, “It’s obvious Pamela suffered a dissociative fugue.”

Lonquist said, “She swooned. Everybody in eighteenth-century literature swooned. Even men swooned.”

Leslie Quinn said, “Swooning was a recognized reaction to emotional upheaval during this time period. Emotions are universal, but expressions of emotions are not. Swooning was an acceptable form of expression.”

“So—Pamela would swoon whenever she was upset,” the judge said.

“Whenever she needed to protect her future,” Leslie Quinn said.

“Whenever I was being an idiot,” Mr. B said. He was sitting up now, hands splayed on the table. “I stopped being one.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” the judge said. “If you can refrain from shouting, I suggest you continue your testimony.”

### Week 6 (continued)

I laid Pamela flat on the bed; she was light, too light. She hadn’t been eating as Mrs. Jewkes claimed. I touched her cheek, and it was cold. There was a scar along her hairline I didn’t remember from Bedfordshire.

The maid showed up, blinking confusedly.

“What’s your name?” I said.

“Nan, sir.”

“Sit down there, Nan.”

Nan agreed, wide-eyed. I waited, holding Pamela's hand, watching her face as Nan waved the smelling salts.

Pamela entered consciousness slowly. Her eyes fixed on me.

"Nan will sleep here tonight," I said. "I sent Mrs. Jewkes to her room."

"Won't the same thing happen again? Only this time with Nan to encourage you?"

"No," I said. "I will not come in again tonight. Say you forgive me, Pamela," and I kissed her hand.

"God forgive you, sir," she said.

I had to be content with that.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Judge Hardcastle sighed, clasped his hands, and studied Mr. B. "Did you try again?"

"No," Mr. B said. "Absolutely not."

Gary said, "Your presence in the house was violation enough."

Dr. Matchel said, "The mere possibility of rape would traumatize Pamela for years to come."

Deborah didn't hesitate to speak up this time. "But this wasn't a real rape attempt," she said, and everyone looked at her, including Mr. B.

"I suppose," Dr. Matchel said icily, "you are one of those Katie Roiphe-type girls who think women ask for rape."

"Sure, I read *The Morning After*. That's not the point." When no one stopped her, Deborah continued, "Romance rape is never really rape. Some scholars think the hero actually represents the dark side of the female psyche—the whole thing is sort of Jungian—"

The judge disliked overextended metaphors and must have looked it because Deborah said, "Yes, I know. I think it's farfetched too. But the point is, the heroine is never com-

pletely at odds with the hero.”

“I can’t believe we are belittling the worst thing that could happen to a woman,” Gary sputtered with outrage.

“It isn’t the worse thing that could happen to Pamela the *character*. Anything Mr. B does to her will never be the worst thing because he is the hero, and he ultimately means well.”

Gary threw up his arms. “Talk about moral relativism. Why are we even here?!”

Everyone turned to stare at Gary.

“Gary!” Dr. Matchel said.

He folded his arms and tried to look belligerent. “I *have* to question things.”

“I think it’s a *great* question,” Lonquist said, looking amused.

But the judge wasn’t about to have the entire hearing put in jeopardy with more deconstructionist nonsense.

He said, “We are here to discover if Pamela has or will suffer beyond the scope of her time-period or genre. Even poor Tess of the D’Urbervilles was released from that terrible existence—” to a moderately less depressing novel (she wouldn’t, it was argued, be able to comprehend an entirely happy one).

“Pamela has and will suffer,” Dr. Matchel said sharply, still glaring at Gary.

“But not from Mr. B,” Deborah said. “The worst thing that could happen to Pamela would be if Lady Davers’s nephew tried to rape her. Or if she had to marry Williams.”

There was a brief pause, and then Mr. B laughed without restraint, lines creasing about his eyes.

Mr. Hatch said quickly, “None of this alters that Pamela was upset.”

“Yes,” the judge agreed, “but it does mean we can move on.”

### Week 6 (continued)

Pamela stayed in bed the next day. She tensed under the bedclothes when I entered the room. I stopped just inside the door.

“I don’t want Mrs. Jewkes,” she said, and I promised Mrs. Jewkes would stay away. I instructed Nan to wait on Pamela.

I didn’t see Pamela again until she came down to the long parlor the next day. She was withdrawn and tense, not the Pamela I knew. In Bedfordshire, she’d been formal—too formal—but always ready to respond, interact, argue. That day, she was gone from me, absent.

My fault. I own it, most remorsefully.

“I will not attempt to force you again,” I told her.

“Send me away.”

I couldn’t do it. I was sorry, I truly was. I never thought Pamela could be so frightened. But to send her away would leave me to the water and the dark, and I couldn’t do it.

I would coax her back to happiness and ease.

“Your confinement will get easier,” I said.

“For how long? To what end?”

“Give me a fortnight,” I said, “and try to forgive Mrs. Jewkes,” who’d been justifying herself vociferously for the last two days. “She was only being obedient to me.”

Pamela’s jaw set, and I saw the woman I knew again.

“She is unwomanly and wicked and vile,” she said fiercely, and I half-smiled. This seemed to calm her a little. She knitted her brow. “I will submit to anything except where my virtue is at stake.”

I didn’t believe her for a moment. Everything placed Pamela’s virtue at stake, which gave her, apparently, the right to protest everything I did.

Partial consent was better than nothing. “Good girl,” I said and kissed her. She consented, studying me through half-lids. I wasn’t sure I’d gained anything, but I called Mrs. Jewkes and bid her and Pamela to be friends.

We ate dinner together or, rather, Mrs. Jewkes ate. I sat in a chair, legs stretched out, and watched Pamela play with her food.

“My mother used to praise your carving, Pamela,” I said finally. I pushed a chicken towards her. “Cut that up.”

She did with intense concentration. When she was done, I took a wing and placed it on her plate. “Eat. For me.”

She ate neatly. “I’ll be in the garden,” I said when she was done. “I’d like you to attend me there.”

Mrs. Jewkes followed me into the hall. “You’re too kind,” she said.

“I began wrong,” I told her. “Pamela may be thawed by kindness, melted by love rather than frozen by fear.”

I went out to the fish pond. I half expected Pamela to send Mrs. Jewkes with a devastating rebuff, but Pamela came. I took her hand and pulled her close.

### ***Cross-Examination***

The CLF team was giving off increasingly noisy cries and snorts. Finally, Judge Hardcastle threw up his hands and glared at them. “What is the problem now?”

“Pamela would never have recovered that fast from an attempted rape!” Dr. Matchel said.

Mr. Hatch said, “Women who are attacked, your honor, usually suffer some form of PTSD. Every time she went near Mr. B, she would suffer a reoccurrence, such as fainting.”

“Does fictional rape have the same effects as real—?”

Dr. Matchel cried, “You can’t separate them so neatly. Fictional rape can distort a woman’s perceptions of power, of her own rights; it can confuse her about sexuality and real male-female relationships.”

Lonquist said, “Most literature can distort people’s perceptions. Anna Karenina committed adultery, then suicide. Should married women refuse to read it?”

“That’s a completely different context.”

“Since Anna was punished?”

“People,” Gary said, eyeballing Lonquist, “*people* shouldn’t pontificate about literature until they know the difference between literal meaning and metaphorical meaning.”

Leslie Quinn said, “*People* used to think women shouldn’t read fiction at all because their brains would rot.”

Dr. Matchel sighed and looked worried.

Gary waved a hand. “Of course, that was wrong. But you have to admit, most members of our culture are only exposed to the kinds of shallow images and trite metaphors available on television. They aren’t ready for literary works.”

“I don’t think the professor watches much television,” Deborah said, not very quietly.

Lonquist said, “So books shouldn’t be read by the unprepared masses?”

“Not unless some *professor* instructs them first,” Deborah said, again not very quietly. Gary looked pleased, but the judge doubted Deborah was being complimentary.

Mr. B said in a tired voice, “I think the masses already know about adultery and suicide.”

The judge agreed. “What did you tell Pamela at the pond, Mr. B?”

### Week 6 (continued)

I told Pamela the truth: “You are possessed of a frank and generous mind plus a lovely appearance. I do not want to marry—”

I'd seen my mother withdraw from my father's severity; I'd seen my sister's husband evade her shrewishness with drink and less innocuous pastimes. Pamela and I could damage each other beyond all that.

"Yet I must have you," I told her. "I cannot bear the thought of another man supplanting me in your affections. I have been candid. Tell me honestly what you think I should do."

She blushed several times as I spoke and retreated from my arms when I finished. "Let me go. Once I am gone, you will meet worthier women. You will overcome your regard for me."

I shook my head at her. I'd suffered far too many conversations with so-called worthier women to believe that.

"If I were a countess or a duchess, I would tell you—" she broke off. I tried hard not to smile. Pamela made a confused gesture and sat on the damp grass. I knelt beside her.

She said, "I overheard what you said to Mrs. Jewkes. I think I am in more danger now than ever in my life."

I pondered this. I couldn't imagine what I'd said to Mrs. Jewkes that could alarm Pamela so much unless, of course, she meant my decision to thaw her with kindness. I supposed, on reflection, that Pamela was right to be nervous.

"I tried being patient," I said, "and you gave your heart to Williams."

She looked annoyed. "That poor man—"

"Oh, shut up."

She glared at the cattails on the edge of the pond. I groaned and clasped my hands behind my head.

"You really never intended to marry him?" I said finally.

“I didn’t know how else to get away. I asked him to apply to the gentry for my sake. They all refused. Then he decided we should marry. I declined. Luckily, he still agreed to assist me. For God’s sake.”

I thought about this and tried not to laugh. Pamela couldn’t have found a less competent Knight Errant if she’d tried. A more subtle and intelligent man could have saved Pamela. Williams was neither.

“So you do prefer me?”

She glanced up at me under half-lids. To my wonderment, she pushed up, pressing her face to my shoulder. I put my arms around her and smiled into her neck. I was happy then.

She echoed me, saying, “I’d be so happy if—”

“I won’t marry, Pamela,” I said.

It was the wrong thing to say. She recoiled. “I am not so presumptuous,” she said stiffly. “I would wish you happily married to a lady of suitable degree.”

I didn’t believe her.

I considered luring Pamela into a sham marriage. I knew a man who knew a man who would do the ceremony. Pamela and I would live together, happy and content, for many months before Pamela discovered the truth.

I know the idea was unworthy of me. Anyone who knows me knows how loathsome I consider that type of subterfuge. But there were so few solutions left to Pamela and me.

Except marriage. Except that.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Judge Hardcastle said to Deborah, “I suppose romance accounts for this *Romeo and Juliet* nonsense: star-crossed lovers, family feuds.”

“Oh, sure, that happens a lot in romance novels. There

has to be an external obstacle to the match plus an internal obstacle. Lots of times, the external obstacle is about social class—social ramifications if the hero marries the wrong person.”

“Pamela sounds like an educated, intelligent, well-mannered young lady. What possible social ramifications could there be?”

Mr. B beamed at the judge. “My thoughts exactly,” he said.

Deborah said to Leslie Quinn, “Isn’t he adorable?”

Leslie Quinn apparently agreed: “It was highly atypical for a gentleman of Mr. B’s class to marry a servant-girl.”

“That didn’t give Mr. B the right to use her,” Gary said.

To his astonishment, Mr. B said, “I agree.”

“And was there an *internal* obstacle?” the judge asked Deborah.

She motioned to Mr. B. Mr. B said hesitantly, “I was blessed with a loving mother, distant father, and a hectoring sister. The combination does not enchant one with the pleasures of family and marital life.”

Mr. Hatch scribbled a note.

“Ah, yes, well,” Judge Hardcastle said. He hoped *Pamela* wasn’t going to turn into one of those dreadful modern suburban novels where each family member had multiple dysfunctions.

“My sister certainly tried to end our attachment,” Mr. B said, and the judge stifled a groan as he leaned back in his chair. Mr. B continued his testimony.

***Mr. B’s Testimony***  
***Corresponding to Pamela’s Abduction***

Week 7

My sister sent me one of her lecturing letters. She’d learned about the kidnapping from my Bedfordshire

servants, who'd hauled her into my affairs. In the letter, she harangued me for seducing Pamela on the one hand and wanting to marry her on the other. I had no intention of marrying although I knew I should for the family line. In any case, if—when—I did marry, I'd marry whomever I damned well pleased.

I had to let the scheming servants go; you cannot have servants forming plots against you, especially servants idiotic enough to involve my sister. The scheming servants included the bulk of Bedfordshire's upper table or better paid servants: Longman, Mr. Jonathan, and Mrs. Jervis. Plus John Arnold, who'd delivered their messages to my sister.

It bothered me that I would lose such fine servants. In fact, the whole matter was getting out of hand. I needed to send Pamela home. I knew it, but I couldn't bring myself to say the words.

I was expected at a wedding ball for the daughter of a Lincolnshire family. I instructed Mrs. Jewkes to watch Pamela closely. Since my sister had gotten involved, I was sure various schemes to free Pamela had been put in motion. I didn't want others interfering in what was a private matter between two people.

The ball was tedious. I don't usually mind social occasions, but my ribs still ached, and my fever came and went. The only highlight was talking to Lady Darnford, wife of Sir Simon, a placid, level-headed woman.

"Are you in love with your guest?" she asked me kindly, not salaciously.

"I guess I must be," I told her.

I went to Stamford the next day and freed Mr. Williams from gaol. He didn't mention Pamela. The Knight Errant had been brought to heel.

I mentioned her. I said, "You will leave Miss Andrews alone, is that understood?" and he gulped and nodded.

Pamela said me she wasn't interested in him, but I had doubts. Pamela will claim she was always honest . . . except for the occasional fib, the occasional untruth, the occasional downright lie. After all, she will say, I imprisoned her.

I knew, even at the time, that Pamela would do what she needed to do in order to protect herself. I knew she might have lied to me about Williams, hoping he would return and carry her off. Face to face with Williams, who is handsome enough if dull, I couldn't help but wonder.

### ***Cross-Examination***

"Extreme jealousy is characteristic of abusive relationships," Mr. Hatch said.

"It's also part of the human condition," Lonquist said.

Mr. B said softly, "So full of artless jealousy is guilt/It spills itself in fearing to be spilt."

Judge Hardcastle looked pleased. "You know your *Hamlet*."

"Mr. B is widely read," Mr. Shorter began, but Mr. B shushed him. "The only writing I truly care for is my wife's."

Deborah said, "That is so cute."

The judge said, "Yes, you used to steal her letters."

"I stole the early letters. Pamela gave me all her later writings."

"When coerced!" Gary had been silent for awhile. He must have decided it was time to be appalled.

"No," Mr. B said to Gary. "I asked. Pamela has never been afraid of showing me her mind."

Week 7 (continued)

When I arrived home on Saturday, Mrs. Jewkes greeted me with a packet of Pamela's letters. It seemed Pamela had been writing doggedly since she'd arrived at the Lincolnshire estate, and hiding her letters in linen-wrapped packets.

While I was away at the wedding, she retrieved one of her packets from under the rose bush in the garden. She was unwinding the linen to check the papers were undamaged when Mrs. Jewkes came in. Mrs. Jewkes, naturally, confiscated the entire packet.

Pamela didn't want me to read the letters; she was worried I would be offended by their bluntness. I couldn't imagine Pamela could be blunter to the page than she was to my face, but I told her to have more confidence in me. I wanted the honest Pamela, not the Pamela who spoke round and round and round a topic, hiding her thoughts and motives.

"I have read many of your barbed reflections," I said. "And yet I've never upbraided you on that score." Not very often, at least.

"As long as you remember I wrote the truth from my heart," she said, "and that I had the right to defy this forced and illegal restraint."

"You have a powerful advocate in me," I said and went to my library to read.

The packet contained not only Pamela's letters to her parents but letters from Williams and drafts of Pamela's letters to him. I glowered over them. Pamela had certainly pled her case to Williams most affectingly, and he had definitely presented himself as more a romantic than disinterested savior.

"Do you find I encouraged his proposal?" Pamela said when I called her down and taxed her about her "love letters."

I didn't, but, "What about the letters before these?" I said. The ones I had started nearly two weeks after I sent Pamela to Lincolnshire. I knew from Mrs. Jewkes that Pamela and Williams began corresponding immediately after her arrival.

"My father has them."

I remembered then that Mrs. Jewkes believed Pamela had given Williams a packet to send to her parents. Mrs. Jewkes had tried to retrieve it by arranging an attack on the poor man. I would not have condoned such a crude scheme, especially since it failed in its purpose.

"I want to read everything you've written," I said. "You create a pretty tale of romance around your troubles."

She raised her chin. "You jeer at my misfortunes."

"Considering the liberties you take with my character," I said, brandishing the letters, "I'd say we are equally outspoken."

"I would not have taken liberties if you had not given me cause. The cause, sir, comes before the effect." Pamela's voice gets quite steely when she's riled. I held back a smile.

"You chop logic very prettily. What the deuce do men go to school *for*?"

"You wouldn't mock me if I were dull."

"I wouldn't love you half so well," I pointed out.

She flushed. "I'd be better off married to a plough-boy," she told the worn rug, which she knew and I knew wasn't true.

"One of us fox-hunters would still have found you," I said. I hoped I would have found her. I couldn't imagine never having met Pamela. "What about the most recent letters, the ones *after* these? Are they on your person?" And when she remained silent, "You know criminals who don't confess are tortured."

“Torture is not used in England,” she retorted.

“Oh, my torture will fit the crime,” I said. “I’m going to strip you, Pamela.” I crossed to her and began to slowly untie the lace handkerchief that masked her bosom. She gazed at me, open-mouth, and for a heart-stopping moment, I thought she wouldn’t stop me. But she slapped my hand and darted backwards.

“You’ll give me the letters?” I said.

“Yes,” she said and fled.

### ***Cross-Examination***

“You see,” Gary said. “She gave him the letters after being threatened.”

“Not until the next morning. Pamela could have destroyed them. She could have kept some back. She didn’t. In fact, she brought me the letters before I asked for them.”

“That’s like saying the prisoner gave up information before the guards beat it out of him. In today’s world, the rights of supposed terrorists—”

Several people, including the judge, interrupted him. No one wanted to hear Gary’s views on terrorists.

Judge Hardcastle, naturally, got the floor. “Why the next morning? Why not earlier?”

“Pamela asked for a chance to read them over.” Mr. B shrugged, grinning faintly. “I think she wanted to be ready for any questions or objections from me.”

“So the new letters were not entirely favorable.”

“No,” Mr. B said, his gaze turning inward. He looked up and met the judge’s eyes. “Pamela likes to dismantle events—her lawyer’s mind, you know. But these letters—” Mr. B crossed his arms across his chest and gave the judge an unhappy smile “—she was writing to exorcise her fears, not explain them.”

The judge said gently, “You’ll need to tell us what she wrote.”

## Week 7 (continued)

Pamela's most recent letters were written after Williams proved unreliable, and Pamela learned I was coming to Lincolnshire. She panicked. While I was at the Hargraves getting nearly drowned by a horse, she tried to escape from the Lincolnshire estate. She wiggled out her bedroom window and threw her upper-petticoat, handkerchief, and cap into the garden pond to put off pursuers.

I knew about this part of the plan from Mrs. Jewkes. I didn't know the rest: Pamela tried to escape over the garden wall, but the bricks gave way and struck her on the head.

Her scar. I turned and looked at Pamela. Pamela had brought her letters to me at the pond, and I'd asked her to stay. Now she sat, hands around her knees, gazing across the calm water.

She quivered when I lifted her chin but didn't pull back. The scar stretched under her hairline. I turned her head gently and lifted her linen cap to examine a second scar at the base of her skull. Her hair had been cut to help it heal.

I got up and went over to the brick wall that enclosed the pasture. Pamela's narrative implied she'd been struck once or twice, but I counted at least five bricks lying on the grass.

I went back to the pond and put an arm around Pamela's shoulders. "It's a good thing you didn't get out," I said. "You would have been alone in great danger. And I would have caught you anyway," I added, trying to jolly her.

She gave me a half-smile; I turned back to the letters.

After being struck by bricks, Pamela considered taking her life. It was no melodramatic proclamation. She acknowledged her tendency to romanticize and was ashamed of her momentary despair. She had honestly considered ending her life in the pond.

Drowned. Buried under water. Out of fear. Fear of me.

I got up, so Pamela couldn't see my face. It was like dreaming awake, only worse, because any follies I cause myself, I can pay for. But if Pamela had taken her life, it would have been on my shoulders, and I wouldn't have wanted to live.

I turned back. Pamela watched me curiously from the pond's edge. "Don't sit there," I said, and she scrambled to her feet. I put her letters in my pocket and slid my arms around her.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I'm sorry for pushing you into so much danger and distress."

Her head came to rest against my shoulder.

"I will defy the world's censures and make you amends," I said.

Marriage, I meant. If Williams had been present, I would have commanded him to wed us.

I felt Pamela withdraw even before she stepped out of my arms. "Let me go home," she said.

I'd just offered marriage, and she didn't care. She stood there, not meeting my eyes, and I knew she was thinking about Williams. She preferred a canting clergyman to a man who knew her, who liked her, who wanted to be more to her than a knight.

"Very well," I said and walked away.

I was almost to the house when: "One word," she called, but I waved her off. It was time for Pamela to go home.

### ***Cross-Examination***

“We rest our case,” Mr. Shorter said to Judge Hardcastle’s surprise. “Mr. B allowed Pamela to leave. Anything that follows is not coercion.”

“So she returned to Bedfordshire?” Mr. Hatch said.

“No,” Dr. Matchel barked. “Mr. B forced Pamela to return to his estate within twenty-four hours.”

“I *asked* her to return,” Mr. B said.

The judge said, “And we all know it is typical for the hero to chase after the heroine,” and preened a bit when Deborah laughed.

“Well,” Mr. B said, “I sent my servants after her.”

“Mr. B,” Mr. Shorter said, “was ill at the time.”

Everyone shushed him.

The judge said, “I think we need to hear more.”

Deborah said in a loud stage whisper, “Oh, this is my favorite part.”

### Week 7 (continued)

I instructed Colbrand and Robin, my coachman, to take Pamela home. Pamela had gone up to her room to fetch her few belongings. I heard her descend the stairs with Mrs. Jewkes. As they passed the parlor, Mrs. Jewkes called out peevishly, “Sir, you have nothing to tell this baggage before she goes?”

Why would Pamela want to stay when I let the woman speak to her so rudely?

“Who said you could speak to her like that? She’s offended only me. She deserves to go honest, and she shall go.”

And then Pamela was at the parlor’s open door, looking at me gratefully. “Thank you,” she said. “God bless you for your goodness to me!”

I almost asked her to stay, but I knew I shouldn’t, so I went into my library. Before I closed the door, I

heard Pamela say pointedly, “And I will pray for you too, Mrs. Jewkes, wicked wretch that you are,” and I grinned to myself.

I leaned against the door, then sank to the floor. My headache was getting worse. Finally I lay down and closed my eyes against the pain.

I woke near twilight. The room was not quite dark. My headache had lessened, but the fever was back with a vengeance. I made my way to the desk and lit a candle. I considered calling the servants, but the idea tired me too much.

The armchair was uncomfortable: I was sitting half-on, half-off my coat. I jerked it loose and realized that Pamela’s letters were still in my pocket. I pulled them out and flattened them on the desk. There was no point reading more; they would only remind me that Pamela was gone, no longer upstairs writing feverishly in her closet, getting ready to lecture me.

I couldn’t help myself. I read.

She described my arrival in Lincolnshire, my proposal that she become my paramour, even my aborted ravishment. I winced.

She went on to detail how sorry she’d been when she heard about my accident, how hard it was for her to resist me—only she didn’t trust me.

What did I expect? I’d given her no reason to trust me, not from the moment my mother died. I should have courted her in earnest from the beginning. I should have known marriage to Pamela would satisfy all my needs and desires.

The candle guttered and went on. I sat in the dark, missing Pamela, thinking back over her letters.

An odd coincidence struck me. I’d almost drowned the same day Pamela tried to escape. As if we were bound to the same fate; if she had died, I would surely

have perished in Hertfordshire, whatever the doctor told my sister.

Soul of my soul.

I'd been a fool to let her go.

I lit another candle and wrote a letter begging Pamela to return, "for I find I cannot live a day without you." I asked her to "forgive the man who loves you more than himself" and promised to make her happy.

I went to the stables, hugging the wall because the fever was making me dizzy. I woke Thomas, only remembering after he was up that it was past midnight. But since he was up—

"I want you to ride after the carriage," I told him. "I have a letter for Miss Andrews."

As he got ready, I considered that Pamela would never believe I meant her well. I went into the back parlor and wrote a letter to Colbrand confirming that he and Robin were to bring Pamela back only at her request. He could show Pamela my letter to him.

I gave both letters to Thomas, and he rode off.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Mr. B paused and took a drink of water. The court was steeped in blue-gray afternoon light. It was past four.

"So," Judge Hardcastle said, "what happened next?"

The CLF team burst into loud expostulations. How could they expect to get a fair hearing if people got caught up in the actions of the novel?

"Heaven forbid people actually *enjoy* the reading experience!" Lonquist said acidly.

The judge flapped his hands. "It is getting late. We will continue tomorrow morning. Nine a.m. Yes, yes, the transcripts will be sent."

Mr. B stood before the judge could sweep out. "Your honor, about my wife—"

“Pamela is happy in *Herland*,” Mr. Hatch said to the judge and to Mr. B. “She gets along well with the women there. She’s learning the language and finding her talents.”

“Has she asked for me?”

“Not as much as she used to,” Mr. Hatch said. The judge supposed the young psychologist meant to be comforting.

Mr. B sagged. “If I cannot see my wife, may we at least write each other? I have always found comfort in her letters.”

The judge hesitated. It wasn’t an unreasonable request, and the man looked so beleaguered. The CLF team seemed to hold its breath. Finally, reluctantly, “I’m afraid not,” the judge said. “This hearing will reach a conclusion soon. In the meantime, it is best to keep things as they are.”

He tried not to dwell on Mr. B’s strained, gray face as he left the courtroom. Characters could become extremely likable. But ultimately, a judge had to decide on the law.

## Day Four

### *Committee for Literary Fairness v. Mr. B*

Mr. B sat in the courtroom, his head in his hands.

He wasn't used to depending on other people's judgments. He wasn't used to being judged. He didn't think the hearing was going well, and he couldn't figure out a solution.

"We should offer the judge money," he said to Mr. Shorter.

"It won't work. It's considered bribery."

"It's considered bribery where we come from."

"Yes, but it's not overlooked here. We could get a summary judgment against us. Don't worry. The judge isn't unsympathetic."

"I think the judge regards us all as one step away from circus performers."

Mr. Shorter laughed. "I'd say we have more entertainment value than the folks across the aisle."

"I'd rather just get on with my life." Mr. B groaned and leaned back in his chair. "I've never been without her for so long," he said, then grimaced and frowned at the windows.

"I'm sure Mrs. B is putting up a fuss in that other novel."

Mr. B certainly hoped so. But even if she was, he doubted anyone would listen. It wasn't as if these people understood

characters.

That ridiculous college professor, for example, was currently trying to reprimand the young, romantic girl. Personally, Mr. B would try flirting with her, but the man just blathered on about himself.

“So,” Mr. B heard the ridiculous man say, “I guess you’re one of those young ladies who adores authors like Jane Austen.”

“Sure,” Deborah said.

“I will grant, she is an important female writer.”

“Walter Scott believed no author matched Jane Austen at describing ordinary life and personalities.”

“Yes. Well. But won’t you admit that, despite her ability and her importance to women’s literature, Austen was mired in middle class values?”

Mr. Shorter leaned over to Mr. B and said, “What kind of gallantry is that man employing?”

“He isn’t,” Mr. B said, rubbing his temples. “He’s Polonius.”

“I *like* middle class values,” Deborah said.

“Of course you would say that,” the professor said in an irritated voice. Apparently, the professor didn’t like being contradicted.

And *Mr. B* was against female free-thinkers?

The professor said snippily, “I bet you wish you were Elizabeth, hmm, being chased by that handsome Darcy?”

“Not really,” Deborah said. “A lot of women do read books that way. And men too. Sort of *what would I do?* But I like to explore the author’s characterizations. Like Mr. B is way more of a homebody than most people picture him. Of course, he served in Parliament, but I think that was just out of a sense of obligation.”

Mr. Shorter snorted, but Mr. B couldn’t disagree. Except that a home without Pamela wasn’t much of a home.

“I’m sure Mr. B is quite conservative in his politics,” the professor said in the tone of voice he’d used to impugn Mr.

B's wealth.

"You could ask him," Deborah said.

There was a short silence. Mr. B smiled to himself. The professor was a coward. He probably gravitated to female scholars because they were less trained in rhetoric and therefore easier to bully.

Deborah said, "Or Leslie Quinn. She might know."

Some female scholars, that is. Mr. B laughed out loud. He glanced over his shoulder.

The professor was crimson. He didn't look at Mr. B but hunched his shoulders and glared at Deborah, who was trying not to giggle. "I suppose progressive thinking is too much to ask from computer-obsessed students."

Mr. Shorter muttered, "These CLF folks aren't the most tolerant people."

Mr. B agreed. At the CLF table, the other interferer, Dr. Matchel, was telling the psychologist (whose bumbling but inept goodwill reminded Mr. B of Williams), "You need to let Pamela get acclimated to *Herland*."

"I have to evaluate her."

"Every day?"

"She's stopped asking to see Mr. B."

Dr. Matchel said, "But she still spouts off religious twaddle."

"We can't just override her state of mind," the psychologist said. "We have to introduce her to modern ways of thinking, not brainwash her."

Mr. B groaned and pressed his forehead to the table.

"We could kidnap her back," he muttered to Mr. Shorter.

"They can find characters anywhere," Mr. Shorter said. "*Pamela* is an open book to them."

Judge Hardcastle swept in, prepared to take charge. He waited for his clerk to get settled, for the audience members and CLF team to stop muttering. At least the fictionals were ready to begin.

“Yesterday’s testimony ended with Mr. B sending a servant to ask Pamela to return. I assume the servant reached her?”

“Yes,” Mr. B said.

The judge said, “This hearing requires that we discover what happens next.” He sent a quelling glance towards the CLF table. He wouldn’t be badgered into not caring about a novel’s adventure, not by these academic hotheads. “Did she return?”

“She did.”

***Mr. B’s Testimony***  
***Corresponding to Pamela’s Abduction***

Week 7 (continued)

After sending Thomas after the carriage with my letters, I fell asleep in the back parlor. I vaguely remember being half-escorted, half-carried to my bed chamber above. Towards daylight, someone forced me to drink broth. Later, I heard Mumford’s voice—he’s the local doctor—and then my arm ached; I’d been blooded, which must have helped because I fell asleep again. I dreamed of lurching shapes and thrashed awake to be given another cup of broth. Finally, towards evening, I slept deeply.

I woke to late morning light. Mrs. Jewkes was standing by my bed, arms akimbo.

“Well, she’s here,” she said. I gazed at her blurrily. “Pamela,” she said. “And in quite a taking because I didn’t wake you earlier. I told her—”

“She came back?”

“Yes, and I wouldn’t let her wake—”

“Already?”

“They drove all night at her precious command. And she’s been up two hours, fretting.”

“Ask her to visit me,” I said. “Or I could visit her.”

“You must stay abed, sir. I’ll tell her if you stay abed.”

“Don’t urge her,” I said, remembering certain passages from Pamela’s letters. Mrs. Jewkes took my commands possibly more seriously than any servant ever has.

She rolled her eyes as she turned away. I didn’t bother to rebuke her. I sat up and combed my fingers through my dark scarecrow hair. I heard feet in the passage.

“Is she come?” I said, and “Yes,” Pamela said.

She looked tired but happy. She came over to the bed and took the hand I held out. I kissed her wrist.

She said, “I’m sorry you’ve been ill.”

“I can’t be ill while you are with me,” I said. Yes, I know, but remember, I was feverish.

She sat beside the bed. I leaned back and watched her talk about the inn she’d stayed at on Sunday, Thomas’s arrival with my letters, her decision to return, the ride back, and her insistence that she, Robin, and Colbrand keep going after sunset. I watched her smile to herself as she talked, watched her eyes gleam as she reflected. I held her hand until I fell asleep.

I got up around noon. I wanted to make sure the servants understood Pamela should be treated like a guest, not a prisoner. She could go where she liked, even town; my carriage was at her disposal. I also told Pamela that Williams was free from gaol. I thought she should know.

“We’ll take a ride tomorrow,” I told her and went back to bed. I didn’t dream at all that night.

### ***Cross-Examination***

“Her return must have been a pleasant surprise,” Judge Hardcastle said, and the laugh lines creased around Mr. B’s eyes.

Dr. Matchel said, “She was confused,” and Gary added, magnanimously, “I suppose it is hardly Mr. B’s fault that women of that era just did what men told them.”

Mr. B set his jaw and stared fixedly towards the courtroom windows while Leslie Quinn appeared extremely annoyed at Gary’s dismissal of eighteenth-century women as brainless automatons. Before she could speak, Mr. Shorter stood, grasping sheets of heavily creased, brownish paper.

“We have the letters Mr. B sent to Pamela and Monsieur Colbrand. They indicate Mr. B’s state of mind at this point in the novel.” Mr. Shorter read in a staccato manner: “*Spare me, my dearest girl, the confusion of following you to your father’s which I must do if you persist in going on, for I find I cannot live a day without you.* Mr. B’s affections and intentions are clear, Judge. Pamela was free to continue her journey—”

“Knowing she would be hunted,” Mr. Hatch pointed out, and Gary said, “He manipulated her by playing up his illness.”

The judge beckoned and the clerk collected the letters from Mr. Shorter. The judge read them over, then glanced at Mr. B’s taut, lanky form.

“Your letter to Pamela is quite eloquent. Was she appreciative?”

A faint look of amusement eased the tension in Mr. B’s face. “I believe so.”

“No use of force is mentioned.”

Mr. Hatch stood. “Force is implied. Pamela was clearly horrified at the thought of further pursuit. She felt she had no choice. Like many sufferers of paradoxical identification shift, she did what she needed to survive.”

“Her own record indicates a state of eagerness.”

“After seven weeks imprisonment, she hardly knew her

own mind. She was desperate to avoid more threats.”

“I never threatened her,” Mr. B said, adding quickly, “Not after she came back. We were like any engaged couple.”

Gary snorted. Mr. Hatch shook his head. Dr. Matchel said, “An *enslaved* couple.”

“I think,” the judge said, “you should describe your engagement, Mr. B.”

### ***Mr. B's Testimony*** ***Corresponding to The Engagement***

We went for a drive the next morning in the carriage. Once seated, I put an arm around Pamela. She leaned against me and even lifted her chin to receive a kiss on the mouth, which disarmed me.

We discussed Pamela's future as my wife. If my sister's letter was any indication of how Pamela would be received by our set, she would never be visited or invited to parties. I could always go hunting with my friends, but Pamela, as neither servant nor lady, would have no one.

“What will you do?” I said.

“Take care of your accounts, visit the poor, assist your housekeeper.” She paused, considering. “Miss you when you are gone,” she said, giving me one of her sideways glances. I smiled and slid my hand under her cap to rub her hair.

“Write.”

I laughed, bent, and kissed her shoulder.

“Pray for you and myself. I am resourceful.”

I never doubted that. I said, “All worries are in the past. We are secure now in each other's good opinion.”

And Pamela detached herself—not physically but in that slight, guarded way she has. She said, “In the garden, I wanted to tell you about this—”

She pulled a letter from her pocket. It was from *Somebody* warning Pamela about the sham marriage I'd considered. I groaned. "How did you get this?"

From a gypsy, who told fortunes at the back gate and left the letter in a clump of dirt.

"A thousand dragons are not enough to watch a woman," I said. "I rejected the idea, Pamela. I knew it was wrong. You should have asked me about this directly," tapping the letter.

"You wouldn't listen."

"You could have written."

Her lips twitched. "I came back very quickly," she pointed out, and I hugged her, and she was there again, present in my arms. "I could never hate you," she said to my shoulder.

Pamela said it. Who am I, who is anyone, to disagree?

Thomas returned the next afternoon. He'd gone on to the Andrews when Pamela came back to me. He'd taken them a letter from Pamela, explaining her decision and requesting her first packet of letters.

Her parents refused to send them. Apparently, they believed their daughter had written under compulsion. From Thomas's expression, I gathered the interview had been rather trying.

Pamela looked perturbed, so I quelled my annoyance. We would both write letters and send them to Mr. Atkins who lived near Pamela's parents. He would make a worthy envoy.

I drove out alone later that day. There is a meadow—a park-like place—near my Lincolnshire estate, and I went to walk along the footpath and consider the enormous step I was taking.

I'd brought Pamela's most recent letters with me. I was pulling them out when I saw Williams. He was strolling about with a book, though he might have

been reading upside down for all the attention he paid it. He was obviously hoping to meet me.

He did depend on me for a living. I sighed and made myself address him. "What are you reading?"

"Sir," he stammered, "it is Louis Aragon's *Telemachus*." A French novel filled with moral commentary. "I am perfecting myself in the French tongue."

I didn't roll my eyes. We made small-talk. When I got tired of comments about the weather, I said, "You should congratulate me on my engagement to Miss Andrews."

"Yes, yes, absolutely," he gabbled.

So much for Pamela's knight.

I dropped him at his lodgings and went home to tell Pamela about our meeting.

"Poor man," she said.

I gave her a narrow stare. "I'd rather he was perfecting his French tongue with *Telemachus* than perfecting you with it." Despite her bent head, I caught the glimmer of Pamela's smile and went out, grinning to myself.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Dr. Matchel said, "What an offensive remark!"

"Is it?" Judge Hardcastle said, confused.

"Mr. B was referring to French kissing," Deborah said. "I think it's funny. Mr. B is a really funny guy."

Mr. B turned to grin at her from his seat.

The judge was doubtful. "Was ribald humor unusual in the eighteenth century?" he said and scowled when Mr. B choked on a laugh.

Dr. Matchel had to admit that ribald humor was a staple of eighteenth-century English life, but, "Pamela was likely insulted."

"Why?"

“Her religious feelings.” Dr. Matchel looked proud at being able to use Pamela’s religious feelings to make an argument.

“Religion doesn’t make people humorless,” Mr. Shorter said. Mr. B just sighed.

“Dirty jokes—” Dr. Matchel said. “Pamela was obviously upset by bodily humor.”

“Bodily humor is not the same as insulting humor,” Mr. B said before the judge could say it. “Not in our world. Pamela gets her hackles up about smutty stories and boorish behavior. She never minds me calling things by their proper names.”

“How refreshing,” the judge said, and since half the court agreed, Mr. B was told to continue.

### ***The Engagement (continued)***

Williams agreed to officiate at our wedding. Nobody bore anyone any hard feelings in that relationship.

### ***Cross-Examination***

“In fact,” Mr. Shorter interrupted, “Mr. B forgave Williams’s bond of money.”

Judge Hardcastle made a note.

Gary snorted. “He should have apologized to the man.”

Mr. B’s response was mild. “Williams was good-hearted but imprudent.”

Mr. Shorter said, “Pamela’s account records Mr. B’s many gracious acts to Williams and later to her parents.”

“Oh, sure,” Gary said. “That makes *everything* okay.”

“Well, yes,” Mr. Shorter said.

“He was putting on an act.”

“It was an act with results,” Lonquist pointed out. “Williams did eventually get the living he wanted with a generous income.”

“A show. Mr. B hadn’t really, uh, repented.”

Mr. B said, “But I could only demonstrate my repentance by a *show*. How else would anyone, especially Pamela, know that I’d changed?”

Lonquist said, “You weren’t supposed to *do* things, Mr. B. You were supposed to declaim, *My patriarchal ideology was clearly the error upon which hegemonic and unequal subservience was created in my household.*”

Mr. Shorter said, “Huh?” and the judge wished he could. He got rather tired of academics using English to do everything *but* communicate.

Mr. B, however, shrugged. “I’m not sorry for being male or for being the head of my household. Saying ridiculous things won’t change that.”

“I thought you valued language.” Gary was red-faced.

“I value communication,” Mr. B said, unconsciously echoing the judge’s reaction.

“Even if it conflicts with your behavior? You must admit, you are hardly a good man.”

“By the standards of his world, he is,” Leslie Quinn said, looking up from her laptop. “He takes care of his land and servants. He serves his government as required. He doesn’t smuggle, set things on fire, steal, or kill—not on English soil anyway. He pays for everything he uses. And he doesn’t interfere with his neighbors.”

“That’s hardly a morality—” Gary began.

“If more people practiced it, this world would be a better place,” the judge said tartly.

Deborah said, “Yeah, like it would be nice if people would stop interfering with this story.”

The judge agreed, so Mr. B was allowed to continue.

### ***The Engagement (continued)***

The next few days of our engagement went smoothly. The Darnfords did not snub Pamela nor did the Peters. I am the wealthiest of the families in that

area of Lincolnshire. Power has its privileges. It was obvious that with me as her husband, Pamela would have no problems “fitting in.”

Pamela’s father showed up the same day the Darnfords dropped by to meet Pamela officially. Mrs. Jewkes told me an old man wanted to see me in the parlor. And there was Mr. Andrews, looking surprisingly presentable with a shaved chin and clean shirt despite his copious tears.

“I must have my child,” he cried with Pamela-like fervor.

I went forward, took his hand, and got him to sit. “She has written you that she is happy. I am her prisoner now and about to put on the most agreeable fetters a man ever wore.”

“Is she virtuous?” he said and tears aside, if I’d answered no, I doubt I would be here telling this tale.

“Yes,” I said, giving him a direct look.

As you might imagine, reunion between father and daughter was quite touching. I confess, I arranged for it to take place before my neighbors. They liked Pamela already, but I wanted to ensure her entry amongst them as well as her reputation. Right or wrong, fair or unfair, in our world, a woman’s wholesome reputation can smooth her path to a respectable and stable future, while a damaged reputation can block that path for a lifetime. I would become the villain of our story to ensure Pamela’s role as heroine.

In retrospect, it is possible I sold my part too well.

When Pamela saw her father, she rushed to him, overturning a table. “Daddy,” she cried, then sagged. The ladies got her water while her father picked her up. I decided I’d given the Andrews family as much dramatic license as it could bear and escorted Pamela and her father to the back parlor.

In the long parlor, the ladies dabbed their eyes and even Sir Simon blew his nose. I smiled to myself. There's nothing like a reunion to overwhelm people's sensibilities.

The Andrews family was much calmer when I went to check on them. They sat in the window seat overlooking the terraced garden, heads close together, and I felt a sudden pang for the parent I had lost not so long ago.

"Make this your home," I told the old man. "The longer you stay, the more welcome you'll be."

"You see what goodness there is in my once naughty master," Pamela said as I was leaving, and I winked at her.

Pamela and her father joined us later while the guests were at cards. Her father had brought her first packet of letters, and she handed them over to me with a pretty bow. I read them after the party broke up, and Pamela and her father had gone to their beds.

It was not pleasant reading. These were the letters Pamela wrote immediately after arriving in Lincolnshire. She had turned down Williams's marriage proposal but was uncertain whether she'd made the right decision, especially since her parents were not averse to the match.

"You could be Williams's wife by now," I told her the next morning. Pamela and her father were strolling in the Dutch garden.

"I had no notion of being anybody's."

"It would have been inevitable, and your father was for it."

"I little thought of the honor *you* would bring her," Mr. Andrews said. "When I discovered she didn't want to marry the man, I didn't urge her."

"Yes, yes," I said shortly. "Everyone was sincere, honest, and open."

They gazed at me, and I realized—with some annoyance—that they *were* being sincere, honest, and open. I sighed.

“She is a blameless daughter and a witty writer,” I said and took Pamela’s hand. “Williams has agreed to officiate at the wedding. I will order my little chapel cleared.”

### ***Cross-Examination***

“To satisfy Pamela’s ineffectual religious feelings, I suppose,” Gary said, his voice dripping with sarcasm.

Dr. Matchel looked uncomfortable at Gary’s tone, but she gamely added, “She could hardly care so much for religion if she agreed to marry a man who rarely went to church.”

Mr. B’s voice was harsh. “My wife’s religious beliefs are sincerely held. She has never clung uselessly to anything except, possibly, my good self.” He began to rise, but Mr. Shorter pressed his shoulder. “Does this court encourage the denigration of a woman’s soul and values?”

The courtroom was breathless. Mr. Hatch glared at his compatriots. Deborah shook her head. Lonquist smiled faintly. Leslie Quinn made a note.

Judge Hardcastle said, “Excellent point, Mr. B. We will continue without attacking anyone’s religious beliefs, people.”

“We weren’t—” Dr. Matchel said, but the judge waved an impatient hand, and she sucked in her lips, looking put-out.

The judge said affably to Mr. B, “Did Pamela’s father stay for the wedding?”

Mr. B wiggled his shoulders loose and took a breath. “I didn’t get the license until after he left. We married the next week.”

Dr. Matchel said stiffly, “If I might interject—it is a fact that Pamela didn’t want to get married so quickly.”

The judge glanced at Mr. B who nodded reluctantly and

ran a hand across his face. "I may have urged Pamela to marry me before she was ready. But my sister was already causing problems in Bedfordshire. I was afraid she might cause problems in Lincolnshire."

"She couldn't stop the marriage, could she?"

"She could have made things difficult. The Davers' name has some sway; my neighbors may have withdrawn their support. Barbara bullied her husband into writing me a scolding letter which I got three days before the wedding."

### ***The Engagement (continued)***

In the letter, Lord Davers reproved me for thinking to marry below my station. I was a foolish man who did not know his own mind. I should leave Lincolnshire immediately and join my sister in London where I would regain my senses. I should remember my past follies—

The words were my sister's, not his. Barbara has tried to manage me since the day I was born. I am younger by seven years, and although I am the heir, she has always believed she knows best how I should behave, who I should associate with, how I should handle the family's estates. She will use any past mistake or indiscretion of mine to gain her ends.

I was furious, and I didn't want Pamela to see me in that state. She knew by then that I had a temper, but she'd never had to endure a full-blown rage. I got a horse and rode out. I rode the horse hard, harder than I should have, to the meadows. I stopped at a stream, so the horse could drink, dismounted and leaned against its side.

My sister and I inherited our father's temper, if not his lack of humor, though I am more generous—in my better moments, at least. But then I had our mother's influence. She and Barbara never got on. My sister

saw our mother as compliant and dreamy while I marveled at her steadiness and good will.

I found those qualities in Pamela. Pamela is occasionally obstructive, even saucy or acerbic, but no screamer and certainly no bully. She retreats into herself—sometimes too much—but when she speaks up, you had better listen. She was and is a far better person than I.

I got home late, near supper time. Pamela had been worried by my absence, and I told her about the letter. I didn't know who was sending information to my sister, so I suggested we let everyone, even the servants, believe our marriage would be in two Thursdays while marrying that coming Thursday. Only Williams, who would perform the ceremony, and Peters, who would assist, would know the truth.

Pamela agreed. I never pressured her.

It is true that Wednesday night, she was pale and jittery. We ate together in the parlor. Rather, I ate while Pamela fidgeted. Finally, I rang for the plates to be taken away and pulled Pamela onto my lap.

"I thought all doubts had been dealt with," I said against her hair.

She pressed her face to my arm, her fingers kneading the cuff of my long-sleeve, white shirt; I'd removed my frock coat.

"I am just being foolish," she said. "I don't know why."

I smoothed her hair and sighed. "We can choose another day if you think your fears will abate."

"Whatever day we choose, I will feel the same beforehand. I just wish I had a woman to confide in."

I felt the unfairness of her position then. Sexual education for men is largely predicated on exposure to their peers. Sexual education for women, on the other hand, seems to depend mostly on their mothers.

## ***Cross-Examination***

“Not that your almost-rape had anything to do with Pamela’s fears,” Gary said sarcastically.

Mr. B lowered his head, brows furrowed. Judge Hardcastle reckoned Mr. B did make the connection. Unfortunately, Gary—however inappropriately—had a point.

Deborah said, “Uncertainty before marriage is fairly customary in romance novels.”

That tickled the judge. “Pre-wedding jitters!”

“When people don’t know the facts of life—” Gary began.

“People in the eighteenth century knew the facts of life,” Leslie Quinn said. She sounded rather tired, but then the CLF consistently refused to acknowledge that people before the CLF came along knew anything about anything.

“Sometimes,” Deborah said, ignoring the seething assumptions around her. “Sometimes, the heroines know the facts of life; sometimes, they don’t. But they are always concerned they won’t satisfy their rake husbands.”

Mr. B began to protest, then shut his mouth.

“Of course, they always do satisfy them,” Deborah said blithely, and the judge saw Mr. B smirk at the table top. “Personally,” she continued, “I think the wedding was perfect: intimate and heartfelt.”

Gary rolled his eyes. “And, of course, romance novels *always* have perfect weddings.”

“Of course.”

“The whole novel is nothing but trite and shallow pandering,” Gary declaimed. “What about death, disease, poverty, slavery, racism—all the terrible issues of the eighteenth century? Hmm? I mean women couldn’t even vote! But no, we’re fixated on watching an inconsequential couple tie the knot.”

The judge glanced towards the characters’ table. Mr. B was still smiling faintly. He hadn’t flinched at being called “inconsequential.” Presumably, people of the eighteenth cen-

tury were less obsessed with getting their “day in court” than people of the twenty-first.

The judge reminded himself not to chuckle at his own pun.

“People hid their heads in the sand,” Gary was still declaiming. “Just like they do today.”

Deborah said, “That sounds like the end of a lecture,” and Gary reddened.

She was probably right—the man certainly loved to carp about stuff—but the judge didn’t want audience members giving the CLF any (more) reason to complain.

He said pacifically, “Different novels cover different topics.”

Leslie Quinn agreed, “People in the eighteenth century still had to work, love, have children, get along. Those topics never go away.”

Dr. Matchel said, “But romance novels don’t deal with real domestic problems. They end with the wedding, giving readers the false impression that married life will be eternally happy. Escapist literature!”

“This novel doesn’t end with the wedding,” Lonquist said.

Mr. Shorter muttered, “What’s wrong with escapism?”

Deborah added, “Dark and depressing isn’t automatically profound.”

“Let’s hear about the wedding,” the judge said.

### ***Testimony of Mr. B Corresponding to The Wedding Day***

The morning was something of a blur. I remember speaking to Pamela, who was even jumpier than she’d been the night before. She says I told her to cheer up or the parsons would think she wanted to marry someone else.

I don’t remember saying that. I do remember eating breakfast with Williams and Peters, then arranging to

visit the chapel, so Peters could see the restorations (part of our subterfuge).

I remember standing at the altar with Pamela. We were both rather solemn until Williams said, "If either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together in Matrimony, ye should confess it."

I murmured, "Do you?" to Pamela, and she blushed and said, "No, sir, only my great unworthiness."

That startled me—she was perfectly serious—but then Williams asked, "Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife?" and I said, "I will" since, "Of course, you idiot" would have been rude.

I held my breath when he asked Pamela if she would have me and begged Providence to dampen her doubts. She curtsied and pressed my hand. Williams faltered, but Peters nodded to him to continue.

Pamela spoke up when it came to the actual vows, agreeing "to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish, and obey" on which words, she raised her eyes to me and smiled.

And all uncertainties left me.

"You curtsied when I gave you the ring," I told her later in the carriage after we had drunk a celebratory toast and sent the parsons on their way.

"I don't remember."

"I hope you remember giving Mrs. Jewkes a hug." She'd done it on the church steps after the ceremony, startling Mrs. Jewkes.

"She was a great comfort last night," she said, "if a little crude."

## ***Cross-Examination***

Dr. Matchel said, "Our earlier point stands. Mr. B cared so little for his fiancée's state of mind, he exposed her to a bawdy, callous women—"

Mr. B said, "Pamela was grateful to Mrs. Jewkes. She was the only servant who knew we were marrying, and she helped Pamela through a difficult time."

"You'd like to think that."

"Pamela doesn't lie."

Gary said sarcastically, "Oh, I'm sure she always tells *you* the truth."

Mr. B spread his hands, looking bewildered and, for a rare moment, very young. *Apparently*, the judge thought, *he thinks she does*.

Dr. Matchel said, "Mr. B should have put off the wedding until Pamela could be joined by her mother."

"He explained that," Lonquist said. "He was afraid his sister would interfere—"

"Exactly. He was afraid of *another* woman who might have helped Pamela." Dr. Matchel had the grace not to look directly at anyone. From what the judge had heard, Lady Davers was the least helpful person in the entire novel. "Pamela was in a state of extreme anxiety."

Mr. B said desperately, "She got over it," and the judge motioned for him to continue.

### The Wedding Day (continued)

We returned home—the chapel lies opposite the pasture along a stone path—and went to our respective rooms to change. I was planning to spend the afternoon with Pamela when a messenger arrived.

Charles Hargrave was bringing two of his friends to dine. It is a sign of how much I'd changed that I didn't kill the messenger.

Instead, I stomped into the back parlor where Pamela was sitting with Mrs. Jewkes. "Charles and his friends are like huge snowballs," I complained, "rolling up companions as they gallop about the countryside."

Pamela produced a half-smile. She was pale again, and I frowned. When we were together, she was comfortable and relaxed. Apart, I couldn't imagine what she was dreading or envisioning.

"Stay here," I said. "I'll get rid of them."

I heard Charles and his companions before I saw them. They blew a bugle at the gate and then again in the courtyard while snapping their whips.

"Hullo, hullo, hullo," Charles said. "All better from your accident, eh? I told your sister you'd be fine!" He was off his horse by then, slapping my back and motioning to his friends to dismount.

"I have an engagement this evening," I said. "You can't stay long."

"We only wanted to see you before going on to Nottingham. Oh," Charles said, slapping his forehead, "I know what I wanted to ask you—Did you kidnap one of your maids?"

I scowled at him. "No—that is, who told you that?"

"Your sister."

My sister. My sister was doing my reputation more damage than Williams had ever done.

Charles and his companions—Sedley and Floyd—were in the long parlor by then. Floyd said, "Let's fetch the fair prisoner," and Sedley said, "We'll search the house!"

"You'll do no such thing," I barked, and they stared at me, great-eyed.

"If you sit," I said, "I'll arrange for some food."

They were more subdued after that, but I could only get them away by agreeing to drive with them as far as Thorney.

The trip was tedious, to say the least. Charles and the others circled the carriage, hallooing and hooting at each other's riding tricks. I felt incredibly old and wished they would all break their necks in a ditch.

"I think you must be serious about this serving wench," Charles said when we parted at Thorney and I refused (several times) to go on with them to Nottingham.

"She isn't a serving wench," I said brusquely and left them.

I was glad to head home, but I found myself growing uneasy. During our engagement, Pamela had never, I swear, complained about my kisses or caresses. Our wedding night was, admittedly, different and for Pamela, entirely new.

I confess, Mrs. Jewkes is not the best person to put an innocent at ease.

As the carriage entered the road leading to the house, I saw Pamela and Mrs. Jewkes standing at the stile to the pasture. I rapped on the roof, got out, and sent the carriage on. When I turned back, Pamela was alone. I went and put my arms around her, and she relaxed against me with a little sigh.

"How can I deserve all this?" she said, and I remembered what she'd said in the chapel about her unworthiness.

"If I set my riches against your fine qualities, Pamela, I would owe you."

She laughed into my shoulder. "I will be less serious," she said, leaning back to look into my face, and I kissed her.

We entered the house together.

We ate supper and talked, then Pamela went to her room—to write, I assumed. I was grateful since writing usually calmed her. Near eleven, I sent a message that

I would attend her shortly. She asked me to come in a quarter of an hour. And I went.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Mr. B stopped speaking. There was a long silence.

Gary said pettishly, "Well? Aren't you going to regale us with a detailed description of your wedding night?"

"What's your prurient interest?" Lonquist said, and Gary bristled.

Mr. Hatch said, "I would like reassurances that Pamela's wedding night was a non-traumatic event."

"If he told you so, would you believe him?"

"If she is as sincerely religious as Mr. B claims," Gary proclaimed, "I can't imagine it was anything *but* traumatic."

Mr. B and Mr. Shorter looked confused. Leslie Quinn threw up her hands, and Lonquist sighed.

Judge Hardcastle said, "Are you suggesting that religious people do not enjoy good sexual relations with their spouses?"

Mr. B actually sniggered, then coughed when the judge raised his brows. He said, "My wife is a righteous woman, not a dead one."

"Augustine," Lonquist said, "separation of body and spirit. Bad body. Good spirit. That's where they are coming from."

"I know, but Pamela was no Augustinian."

"She had Puritanical attitudes," Dr. Matchel said, trying to make the most of Gary's assertion. "She was very conservative."

"Puritans actually had good sex," Leslie Quinn said. "As do many modern-day fundamentalists."

Mr. B waved a hand. "Pamela was modest. But once we married, sexual congress was no longer a disgrace. It really is that simple."

"She enjoyed her wedding night, in fact?" the judge queried.

“Yes. So did I, by the way.”

“I do not want a chapter out of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, but I am afraid that some detail will be necessary. Can you oblige?”

Mr. B sighed and ran a hand over his face. “I can provide more detail than Pamela does. There are twenty-four hours missing from her account. But not enough to satisfy the prurient moralists,” jerking his head towards the CLF table.

“I am not a prurient moralist, Mr. B. I’ll tell you when to stop.”

### ***Mr. B’s Testimony*** ***Corresponding to The Wedding Night***

I confess I was nervous when I entered Pamela’s bedchamber. The associations with that room were not pleasant ones, and I wondered if I should have moved the wedding night to my chamber. However, it is customary for the man to wait on the woman at this time.

Pamela was seated on the edge of the bed in a grey moiré dressing gown. I stood by the door and watched her. She’d let down her hair; it had been cut where she was struck by the bricks, and the short strands fluttered about her face, which was serene, remote, wholly contemplative.

I said, “I would rather not put off this evening, Pamela, but if you need time—”

She looked up, focusing on me, and I waited, hardly breathing. She smiled then, shyly, and I went to her and took her hands.

“Are you thinking of the night I tried to ravish you?” I said.

She looked surprised. “No,” she said. “I was considering what a strange path I’ve taken that has deposited me here.”

“Not an entirely happy path.”

“I suppose not. But I don’t remember it with reluctance. Only,” she studied me gravely, “I wonder if I will please you.”

I laughed and sat beside her. “I am not the libertine you have imagined, Pamela. There were indiscretions, a few liaisons, and some poor behavior, but I was never profligate. Wild behavior in young men does not always follow the same path. I have no diseases.”

She nodded, her head against my shoulder.

“You’ve enjoyed my kisses,” I pointed out; in the dim candlelight, I saw her blush.

“Even in my mother’s house,” I added boldly and waited for expostulation.

She slid off the bed then and faced me.

“You were very naughty there,” she said, and her lips twitched.

I pulled her between my knees and gave her a kiss, not the type of kiss I’d given her before but a kiss more frank and full. There was a brief moment when Pamela neither approached nor retreated—she must considered everything—and then she was there, in my arms, all of her with no restraint.

There is no need to detail our lovemaking. I know Pamela was grateful for my lack of ribaldry. It frankly never occurred to me to make jokes. I was wholly concentrated on Pamela.

She returned my fascination. Once the laws of man, God, and society permitted her full expression, Pamela expressed herself. Anyone who has read her writings should know how easily that would come to her.

I woke towards morning. Faint light from the hung sash windows showed me Pamela’s outline. She was seated cross-legged beside me, her back against my thigh. I wondered for a moment if she was writing her

parents about our wedding night and if they would thank her for such a letter, but the room was too dark for writing.

I reached out and touched her arm. “Do you have any pain?”

She turned and groped for my hand. “No. I was thinking about the marriage service.”

Trust Pamela to revert to theological considerations after a bout of more than satisfying sex.

She said. “A man is supposed to love his wife like his own body.”

“With my body, I thee worship.”

“Yes. We are one flesh.”

“Like my goods.” I yawned.

“Yes. Which means,” Pamela said, “that your body is my property.”

That woke me up.

“And,” she went on with legal precision, “I have rights to it.”

*Quod erat demonstrandum.*

Which she did.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Mr. B stopped and looked at Judge Hardcastle, brows lifted.

“That seems enough.” The judge glanced at the CLF table.

Gary sniffed. “You want us to believe she was really that assertive?”

“Pamela’s own words bear me out. She was embarrassed the next morning but not uneasy. We were sleeping in the same room by Saturday night. I’ve rarely slept apart from her since—until now. When may I see her?”

The judge harrumphed. “More patience, Mr. B.”

“I’ve defended my courtship of Pamela and my marriage. Within the context of the novel, the romance, whatever you

want to call it, we are happy.”

“A marriage built on kidnapping and near rape.”

“We’ve covered all of that,” Mr. B shouted at Dr. Matchel.

The judge snapped, “No shouting,” and Mr. B retreated, pressing a hand to his head. “Stupid, stupid,” he muttered.

Mr. Hatch said, “She is adjusting remarkably well to *Herland*. The question is what is best for her.”

“You think Pamela would be better away from me?”

“I think that possibility should be explored.”

Mr. B scowled at the windows. “She wants to come back to me.”

“You wish,” Gary muttered.

“I think she probably does,” Deborah said. “It’s not like the *Herland* characters hate men.”

Leslie Quinn said, “I thought the *Herland* women poured scorn on the idea of heterosexual marriage.”

“You’re probably thinking of that Russ short story about the planet with no men and lesbian marriages. Gilman had a different objective from Russ. *Herland* women worry more about being pregnant all the time than male-female relationships. I mean, Gilman invented birth control before birth control really existed.”

Mr. Shorter looked bewildered. Mr. B laid his head on the table. The judge glanced at him, at the clock, and sighed.

“I think we should break for today. Tomorrow, nine a.m.”

## Day Five

### *Committee for Literary Fairness v. Mr. B*

Mr. B contemplated the table's glossy wood finish, following a long grain in the wood with his eyes over and over and over again.

He heard Lonquist and Leslie Quinn enter the courtroom, chattering about a novel with a governess heroine. It wasn't *Herland*, so he wasn't interested.

Deborah came in, and Mr. B motioned to her. She pressed her hand to her bosom in surprise, then neared him, grinning.

"Hi, Mr. B."

"Hello, Deborah. Yesterday—the novel my wife is in—yesterday, you said something about the characters there controlling their pregnancies."

"Yeah. Gilman, the author, didn't have the greatest experience with pregnancy. *Herland* makes it all very idyllic—no pain, no fuss, no accidents."

Mr. B said slowly, "Pamela and I have three children."

"I know," Deborah said. She studied his creased brow, then patted his arm. "Your wife loves children."

She did. But Mr. B didn't doubt Pamela would welcome more control in that area. Pregnancy—the idea of preg-

nancy—had always made her nervous.

Simply not having sex was unthinkable. He could hardly handle sleeping alone. And Pamela was an eager participant in the marriage bed whatever his detractors might think.

They were an odd people, these twenty-first century inhabitants—far more obsessed with sex than most libertines, but strangely repressive and easily shocked. Only this idealistic young girl, who reminded him of his oldest daughter, seemed to take him at face value.

Deborah said, “Don’t worry. *Herland* isn’t your wife’s type of novel. She likes flirting with men too much. In a totally platonic way,” she added quickly, and Mr. B had to chuckle.

Mr. Shorter came in, carrying his cup of coffee. He nodded to Deborah and sat down. Today, he also had a donut. Mr. B tore off a piece and chewed it absently.

Mr. Shorter said, “There’s another editorial about *Pamela* in this morning’s newspaper.”

Deborah said, “I read it. It addresses the CLF’s negative attitude towards religion. Whoever is writing these editorials has definitely seen the hearing transcripts.”

From her bench across the aisle, Leslie Quinn called, “Judge Hardcastle will be annoyed. Religion clouding the road to judgment, that sort of thing.”

Beside her, Lonquist said, “I have to agree with him. Eighteenth-century Anglicanism was a fairly engrained concept. It shouldn’t be an issue, just an underlying point of view.”

Leslie Quinn shook her head. “If Pamela was a Dissenter, she would have been appalled by the apathy and amorality of supposed churchmen.”

“She is,” Mr. B said.

Lonquist said, “A Victorian lady before Victoria was born. A prude without the accompanying antiseptic obsessions.”

“Actually,” Deborah said, “Victorians were pretty earthy.”

“True. True. It’s only us moderns with our one-bedroom-per-child, anti-bacterial everythings that see sex as some-

thing rather naughty.”

Mr. B glanced at him, at the women’s good-humored faces. He opened his mouth.

“Of course,” Lonquist said, “they were far more obsessed with issues of paternity than us. You could mess around but only if you gave your husband an heir first!”

He laughed. So did the women.

Mr. B closed his mouth. They were right about husbands needing bona fide heirs. Still, he didn’t think the limerick he’d thought up would go over well. He’d save it to make Pamela blush.

When she came home.

Judge Hardcastle wanted to wrap up the hearing. They’d already taken up a week. He could review the transcripts over the weekend and render a decision on Monday.

As he sat at his desk, he said, “We appeared to have covered most of the material. Does the Committee for Literary Fairness wish to continue with its petition?”

Dr. Matchel rose. “Yes. In fact, we would like to expand it.”

Of course they did. The judge sighed and waved a hand.

“The marriage should be ended not only due to physical and mental abuse, but for its inequality. Pamela was hurt socially by this marriage.”

Astonished, Leslie Quinn said, “By any standards, Pamela did very well for herself in marrying Mr. B.”

Dr. Matchel glanced at Mr. Hatch. He said, “Pamela was psychologically injured by marrying a man above her in rank.”

Everyone except Mr. B gasped.

“You wanted us to argue context,” Gary said to Lonquist. “So that’s what we’re doing.”

“Sure, Fielding’s *Shamela* argument—beware servants who aim too high. Not a terribly democratic perspective.”

Mr. Hatch was standing now. “It is clear from my sessions

with Pamela that she worries constantly about her position as lady of the manor.”

Mr. Shorter looked ready to protest, but Mr. B—white-faced—tapped him lightly on the arm and shook his head.

“She does worry,” he said, “and suffer.”

The judge said, “In what way?”

Mr. B said, “In the first years of our marriage, Pamela became more proper and dignified and just and magisterial than any lady of the manor has ever been or needed to be. Even towards me.”

“While still suffering discrimination and maltreatment,” Gary said.

The judge looked from the CLF’s triumphant faces to Mr. B’s strained one. The CLF had finally struck a nerve. He sighed and leaned back in his chair:

“I think, Mr. B., you had better tell us about it.”

***Mr. B’s Testimony***  
***Corresponding to Mr. B and Pamela’s Marriage***

Week 1

Pamela did suffer for marrying me. The first, and worst, occasion came a week after our wedding.

I received news on Monday that a friend of mind, Carlton, was dying. I had a mortgage on part of his estate and was also his executor. I needed to attend his deathbed in case he wished to change his will.

Pamela and I had arranged to dine at the Darnfords on Tuesday. I told her to go on without me. They knew by then about our marriage, and I wanted Pamela to confirm her place in society as my wife.

Carlton died from acute pneumonia early Tuesday morning. I left as soon as I could suitably do so. I desperately wanted to see Pamela. Carlton was not an old man, only a decade or so my senior. I’d been reminded

how quickly death comes—how easily a person could be drowned by water. I got to the Darnfords at four, tired and unhappy.

Pamela wasn't there.

To say I was annoyed would understate the matter. The Darnfords were our neighbors and had been impressively supportive of our marriage. They deserved Pamela's patronage; I thought she understood that.

"Something kept her," said Miss Darnford, dimpling at me. "She'll be here. She hardly likes to be apart from you."

"She will arrive soon," Lady Darnford said, adding pacifically, "Come, join my husband at cards."

I went into the washroom to bath my face. I told myself I was angry because Pamela was behaving high-handedly, but the truth was I'd counted on her being there; I'd counted on being able to tell her about Carlton, on being calmed by her presence.

I went out and joined the card table where Sir Simon joshed me about missing my bride. "A wife should attend when commanded," I said bitterly, and he just laughed and slapped my shoulder.

I thought about sending a message, then decided it was beneath me to beg my wife's company. In retrospect, I should have sent a message plus a few footmen.

About an hour into the game, Miss Darnford called, "Here she is," and ran out. I played a hand, put down my cards, and followed, pretending I was merely curious. I didn't fool Sir Simon for a second.

In the front hall, Pamela sat on the cushioned bench by the door book-ended by Miss Darnford and Lady Darnford. She looked up at me, breathing quickly.

"Don't be annoyed," she said, seeing my expression. "I tried to get here for dinner."

"I told you," Lady Darnford said to me, and Miss Darnford said, "Oh, men."

They all frowned at me, so, "What happened?" I said.

Pamela said, "Your sister and her nephew arrived."  
Damn it to hell.

I sat beside Pamela on the bench and put my arm around her. "You should have sent for me."

"She kept me prisoner," Pamela said, and even allowing for Pamela's dramatic flair, I didn't doubt the tremble that went through her. She tucked herself against me more tightly and let out a long sigh. Her breathing had begun to settle.

"My sister is an insolent woman," I said as levelly as I could.

"It is only because she believes we are not married," Pamela said, but I didn't believe that for an instant. My sister hunts for quarrels, even quarreling with her maids (though she also rewards them handsomely for their services).

"How did you get away?"

"I jumped out the parlor window," my extraordinary bride said, "and ran to the carriage—Robert kept it waiting at the elms. Mr. Colbrand prevented Lady Davers's servants from stopping me. He was very fierce."

I couldn't help but look at our listeners. Miss Darnford had covered her mouth with her hand; over it, her eyes twinkled. Lady Darnford was shaking her head bemusedly.

"We should join the company," I said. I didn't want to. I wanted to go home and put my sister and her obnoxious nephew in their places. I wanted to order my sister's servants out of the house. I wanted, in fact, to yell at someone.

But we were in company, so I stood. Pamela slid her arm through mine, and we followed the others into the creamy white parlor.

“I’m sorry I misjudged you,” I told Pamela. “My family has caused you nothing but trouble,” and she smiled at me from her seat at the card table. I began to relax. I told myself that things would be alright.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Judge Hardcastle interrupted. “Did you sister really lock up Pamela?”

“Yes. Pamela has been subjected to multiple imprisonments, including her current one.”

The CLF was noisily offended, but the judge, still focused on Lady Davers’s outrageous behavior, ignored them, saying, “I don’t understand what she hoped to accomplish.”

Mr. B sighed. “It was pure spite. She hoped I hadn’t married, and she wanted Pamela to say as much, only Pamela very rightly wouldn’t. Barbara was mostly just angry that I’d married without her input. That’s what brought her rushing to Lincolnshire. She would have been equally angry if I’d married a countess, but she wouldn’t have been able to show her outrage so obviously.”

“It’s a pity your wife couldn’t send her away.”

Mr. B grimaced. “The Bedfordshire estate is our family home. My sister was born there.” He hesitated. “Even if Pamela had felt confident enough to claim the house, she wouldn’t have refused Barbara access. I resented Pamela’s restraint at the time, but my wife sees further than I do. Barbara is my only sister, and she was my confidant during my youth. I wouldn’t want to ever truly break with her. In retrospect, Pamela handled her as best she could.”

The judge nodded and made a note. “Then the problem resolved itself.”

Mr. B said reluctantly, “It actually got worse before it got

better.”

The judge leaned back in this chair and gestured Mr. B to continue.

### Week 1 (continued)

My sister was already in bed when Pamela and I got home from the Darnfords. Mrs. Jewkes, however, wanted to tell us all about my sister’s behavior after Pamela got away. She followed us up to Pamela’s chamber where I was beginning to keep clothes and papers.

“She called me to the parlor,” Mrs. Jewkes said while I was stripping off my frock coat and Pamela was unbuckling her damask shoes, “after the young lady escaped. She said she had a question to ask me, and I was only to answer *yes* if I dared. I said I’d go ahead and answer *no* before she asked.”

I laughed. Pamela looked troubled.

“She asked me, *Will the young harlot lie with my brother tonight?*”

I didn’t laugh at that, and Pamela stared at the floor.

“She wanted to sleep in here,” Mrs. Jewkes continued, “but I wouldn’t let her since you have the key, sir.”

“Quite right,” I said.

Mrs. Jewkes left us with cheery encouragement to Pamela, and I dropped onto the bed. Pamela stripped to her shift and sat beside me, wrapping her arms around my neck and settling her cheek against mine.

“I’m sorry about your friend. Did he die?”

“Yes,” I said, sliding my arms around her. “What a tiresome world this is, Pamela. Everything was going so well.”

“It still will,” she said, brushing back my hair and smiling when her fingers got tangled. “I am already very happy.”

I crawled under the covers, she settled beside me, and I fell into a haven of pure contented sleep.

I was woken by repetitive thudding and piercing shrieks. Pamela clutched me, saying, “Don’t let her in.”

It was my sister at the chamber door, and she was shrieking loud enough to waken the household. Based on the light outside the sash window, it was not much past six. I cursed and got out of bed, groping for my dressing gown.

“Don’t,” Pamela said.

I said, “If she wants proof we’re married, she might as well get it,” I said and stomped to the door.

My sister, Barbara, barreled in. “Witness this,” she cried to her nephew, Jackey, and her waiting woman, Beck, who stood in the corridor. “The creature is in his bed.”

“Get out of here,” I roared at Jackey before he could witness anything, and he slinked away. I stomped back to the bed and put my arm around Pamela. “Come closer, Beck,” I said, “if you wish to see my dear wife.” Beck intelligently remained in the corridor.

Barbara chortled. “Look at him,” she said. “The master of the house with his personal strumpet.”

I got up, grabbing her arm to force her out of the room. She clung to the curtains like a little girl rather than a woman in her thirties. And suddenly, Pamela was between me and Barbara, which was not wise.

“Don’t,” she said, “don’t be unkind to your own sister.”

“That’s enough, Pamela,” I said. I let my sister go and marched Pamela into her closet/study. She was

crying, and if I'd been less angry, I would have comforted her. But I couldn't bear her to take my sister's part against me.

Barbara called after me, "Suppose I'd married father's groom, what do you say to that?"

I turned back, folding my arms. "Does your pride see no difference? A man ennobles the woman he takes, whoever she is. He adopts her into his rank, whatever that is. But a woman, though nobly born, debases herself by a mean marriage, descending to the rank of the man."

I suppose the members of this democratic hearing will find that appalling. But it is the reality of my existence. And my sister's. And Pamela's. The man is the head of his household, the wife a member of that household.

"Excuses," Barbara said but half-heartedly. "Should all young men marry their serving wenches?"

"If they are all like Pamela," I said, "why not? She's better than either of us."

"Oh, you make a wonderful idolater." She was back to sneering. She strode into the closet. I didn't stop her but followed closely.

"Well, Pamela," she said to my wife, "you have made my rake brother a preacher. But don't you dare call me sister."

Pamela didn't answer. She was no longer crying, and her chin was set, but I saw how her hands gripped her writing desk. If I had been less angry, I would have sent my sister out and spent time comforting Pamela, but I wasn't thinking entirely rationally.

And then my sister said, "Poor Sally Godfrey never got him as far as this."

I had not wanted Pamela to hear about my ex-lover this way—thrown at her head in the middle of an argument.

It wasn't a charge that could stand unanswered whatever the circumstances. I told Pamela about my ex-lover and my daughter, ending, "That's all the bad my sister can tell you. I wanted to tell you at a more proper time."

Both Barbara and Pamela were silent. I looked straight at Pamela who met my eyes and gave me a small half-smile; ordinarily, I would have relaxed from her support, but I was still fuming over Barbara's indiscretion.

Barbara knew she'd gone too far. "Oh, brother," she said in a pleading voice, her hand on my sleeve. "Stay to hear me beg your pardon."

It was always the same—she would rage and destroy and then act the innocent. I broke away and fumed downstairs to the stable yard.

"Get my carriage ready," I said to Colbrand. I needed to get away, to be somewhere other than that house. I stomped from the stable yard to the terrace. I saw Barbara and Pamela come out and turned away from them. I didn't want to speak to anyone. I didn't want Pamela to see me so angry.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Judge Hardcastle interrupted: "Is all this necessary? I have to tell you, Mr. B, I don't care for domestic quarrels."

Mr. B's face shuttered.

Bewildered, Dr. Matchel said, "But the entire novel is a domestic quarrel."

"It's been rather action-oriented up to now," the judge said. "This is—" *The Twisted Tales of Bleak Expectations* "—rather modern," he concluded grumpily.

"It is there in the original text."

Lonquist said, "I don't think Mr. B can leave this part out, Judge."

“Hmm.” The judge was beginning to appreciate the restraint and good taste of Golden Age murder mysteries. He’d take a clean murder—or clean kidnapping—any day over screeching siblings. He flapped a hand. “Go on.”

### Week 1 (continued)

Barbara and Pamela cornered me near the pond.

“Stop,” Barbara called, rushing towards me, “I have asked Pamela to be my advocate. That should pacify you.”

It didn’t. She had co-opted Pamela like she tried to co-opt everything in my life. And Pamela had agreed. Pamela was urging her on.

“If you’ll forgive me, I’ll forgive you,” Barbara said.

Typical. Typical of my sister to cause an upheaval and then try to pass around the blame.

“We should no longer associate,” I said. “I’m going to Bedfordshire.”

“Without me?” Pamela said uncertainly, and there were tears in her eyes.

“You’ll break her spirit,” Barbara said, shaking her head.

She was ranging herself on Pamela’s side—as she would do when I quarreled with anyone other than herself. I wish I could say I did it on purpose. I didn’t. I was furious with both of them, more so since I knew my anger at Pamela was irrational.

Barbara threw up her hands. “I only said what I did because I love you.”

“It was spite,” I told her.

“Very well. I own it. And now I will go.” She turned to Pamela. “God bless you,” she said and kissed her.

She’d gone from “creaturing” to “God blessing” Pamela in less than twenty-four hours. I groaned.

“Women are the devil,” I said. I looked at Pamela’s white, stunned face. I thought: *Welcome to the family, Pamela.*

I went and put my arms around her and Barbara’s waists.

“You see how he behaves when offended,” Barbara said to Pamela. “Though I’ve never known him make up so soon.”

“I’ll take care how I behave in the future,” Pamela said shakily.

### ***Cross-Examination***

Judge Hardcastle had abandoned grumpiness for outrage. He hunched across the desk and scowled at Mr. B. “Poor family history does not excuse unkindness towards one’s wife.” He glanced towards the CLF table. “This behavior doesn’t bother you?”

The CLF team looked surprised. “Of course, of course,” Dr. Matchel said quickly.

Leslie Quinn started to say, “Physical and verbal abuse were more common in the eighteenth—” but stopped when Mr. B jerked his head in a negative.

Mr. Hatch broke the silence. “In all honesty, Judge, the release of emotion between estranged parties is necessary to the healing process. Mr. B obviously comes from a dysfunctional background.”

Mr. Shorter snorted, “Doesn’t everybody?” and Mr. B grinned, releasing a careful breath.

Mr. Hatch continued, “I am concerned about Mr. B’s temper and would recommend anger management. I would recommend it for his sister as well.”

Mr. B strangled a snort that turned into a cough.

“However, to be frank, few spouses in my experience are as upfront as Mr. B about their pasts.”

Gary said, “He talks a good talk.”

“Yes, yes.” Mr. Hatch remembered whose side he was supposed to be taking. “I am not opposed to Mr. B seeing his wife under supervision, but I would not suggest cohabitation. Not yet anyway.”

Mr. B said, “We did make up. We fixed the problem.”  
After a long pause, the judge motioned him to continue.

### Week 1 (continued)

I truly disliked seeing Pamela cowed. She needed a break from me. I sent her into the house and took Barbara and Jackey on an airing. Barbara was in high good humor as she usually is after a fight.

I am not so inclined.

“Oh, you are so stiff,” she said, laughing.

We ended up stopping to see Lady Jones who was dining with the Darnfords. I sent a note to Pamela that we would return later than expected. I wanted the Lincolnshire families to learn first-hand that Barbara was reconciled to my marriage. The Davers’ name carries some weight, after all.

Barbara put on a great show of amazement at hearing the Darnfords praise Pamela, but she did it mostly to tease me. I wasn’t in the mood, and she then teased me for behaving like a stately married man.

“I couldn’t be a tolerable husband to anyone but Pamela,” I said, wishing I was home, so I could discuss what had happened with Pamela.

But Barbara loves company, so we stayed until ten. Pamela was talking with Mrs. Jewkes and Beck in the back parlor when we returned. She looked up guardedly as we entered, and I went and kissed her.

“My sister has been hearing your praises, Pamela,” I said and grinned crookedly at her.

She nodded solemnly. My heart ached.

Later, in our bedchamber, I told her, “When I get angry, it is best to leave me alone. I always come to myself and am sorry! But when I’m in such a mood, it is better to be a reed than an oak—to bend with the hurricane rather than try to resist it.”

To let me work out the problem myself rather than fix it for me, in fact.

“I’ll try,” she said.

We’d dressed for bed. I sat against the paneled headboard, my arms around Pamela. She snuggled against me and I sighed in relief.

“My sister and I had terrible upbringings,” I said. “My father was a stern, humorless man, but he ignored my willfulness towards others because I was a gentleman. My mother was a fine woman, but even she saw society—her own marriage—as a game to be won.”

Pamela protested. She had liked my mother.

“Their unhappiness was more his doing than hers, but my mother still preferred to establish a separate life for herself than reach an understanding through compromise. Unfortunately, marriages of our class are often entered into by two headstrong and arrogant people. The gentleman has never been controlled, the lady never contradicted. Their expectations are wildly at variance with reality. They quarrel, appeal to parents and friends, end up in separate beds—” Pamela made a soft noise of disgust and I hugged her more tightly. “—finally settling into either indifference or aversion.”

I didn’t want that. I couldn’t bear the idea.

“And should I never challenge you?” Pamela said, running a finger down my arm.

“Yes,” I said, “but not for contradiction’s sake. I want us to behave reasonably, Pamela. I don’t want

you taking part in quarrels against me, especially when my quarrel is not with you.”

She nodded, and I raised her hand to my lips.

“It isn’t that you’ve done anything so bad,” I said, “or anything at all, really, but I don’t want divided loyalties in my household.”

She turned then and studied my face. I let her look, let her see my uneasiness—that my sister, however much I loved her, reminded me of worse scenes, scenes I never wanted to see repeated.

Pamela brushed my hair out of my eyes, leaned forward, and kissed me.

I honestly do not know, even now, what I did to deserve her.

### ***Cross-Examination***

“Hmm,” said Judge Hardcastle.

Deborah said, “This kind of spat is typical in romance novels.”

The judge gave her a friendly smile, so she continued. “After the hero and heroine marry, there’s always some sort of problem that has to be resolved before true marital bliss can be achieved.”

“We still have arguments,” Mr. B said *sotto voce*. The judge heard and might have asked a question (there were normal, spousal debates and then there were ugly, gut-wrenching rages), but Mr. Shorter stood.

“At the time of their marriage, Mr. B gave Pamela fifty guineas to send to her parents and a hundred to distribute amongst the Lincolnshire servants. Gifts to servants are customary when a gentleman marries. He later gave Pamela money to distribute amongst the Bedfordshire servants. Pamela’s total household budget is two hundred per year.”

“An allowance,” Gary said disgustedly. “Typical chauvinism.”

Leslie Quinn said, "Better than not giving her money at all," and Dr. Matchel murmured, "It isn't as if she could work, Gary."

"Not work?" Mr. B said. "My wife has to manage the servants plus her charities. She is excellent at both jobs. She also recently began sponsoring a local school." He caught the judge's eye and said, "Pamela has strong views on education."

"He gives her *two hundred a year*," Mr. Shorter said in the kind of voice that indicated his listeners might be weak in the head. "That is, uh—"

"—almost thirty thousand dollars in modern money," Leslie Quinn said, "allowing for the fact that money doesn't really translate between then and now. What a pound would buy in the eighteenth century isn't the same as what it can buy today. Services that could be had for cheap in the eighteenth century are extremely expensive now."

"This is all *financial*," Gary said in a dismissive tone of voice.

Mr. Shorter said, "Upon arriving in Bedfordshire, Mr. B wrote a will, providing independence for Pamela and her parents should he predecease his wife. He is a very good husband."

"Fiscally," Mr. Hatch said. "What about emotionally?"

Gary said, "Mr. B has admitted Pamela thought she had to be the perfect wife."

"That doesn't make the marriage bad," Lonquist pointed out. "Lots of couples feel that way."

"But he admits her anxiety was a direct result of lifting her out of the servant class."

"He was supposed to leave her there? I thought you CLF folks were equal-opportunists."

"So when we argue context, *you* argue universal principles?"

Mr. B spoke up. "Some things are universal. Cheating is always wrong."

Leslie Quinn said, “People apply universal emotions and moralities to contexts. Women in the past didn’t perceive themselves as more or less victimized than *us*. They perceived themselves as more or less victimized than other women in their own cultures.”

“Of course, you would defend a system built on rank,” Gary said, forgetting that the CLF just had. Dr. Matchel actually looked embarrassed. Gary didn’t pause to parse his own contradictions. He simply flipped positions. “What about honesty?” he said to Mr. B. “Isn’t that a universal concept? You didn’t tell Pamela about your out-of-wedlock daughter. Your sister did.”

“I planned to.”

“Oh, sure, you say that now. You had plenty of time before the wedding.”

“My daughter’s status is well-protected. I had an obligation to wait.”

“How convenient.”

“I took Pamela to see little Sally as soon as we returned to Bedfordshire.”

This time, Mr. B didn’t wait for the judge’s permission.

### ***Mr. B’s Testimony*** ***Corresponding to The Marriage***

#### Week 3

We returned to the Bedfordshire estate a week after we married. I’d reinstated the upper servants who were thrilled to see Pamela, especially Mrs. Jervis. Pamela met the neighbors in the capacity of my wife. We went to church. I took her to visit little Sally.

Little Sally’s school was six miles away near a farmhouse, which also functioned as an eatery. The school sent its pupils to the farmhouse on outings,

and I had arranged for Sally's governess to bring her there.

We were already seated at an outside table when the boarding-house chaise pulled up under alder trees. Little Sally and the other students scurried inside the house, chattering avidly as girls of six tend to do. Pamela went after them, and I heard her asking their names and what they were studying. I followed and leaned in the doorway.

Little Sally has my eyes and hair and her mother's chin. She knows me as her uncle since she knows my sister as her aunt. When the girls bounced up to visit the farm's beehives, she curtsied to me, and Pamela turned to study me gravely.

She followed the girls to the door but stopped beside me and to my surprise, slipped her arms around my waist.

I said, "She goes by Miss Goodwin. The name was her mother's choice."

"How can her mother bear to be apart from her?"

The question was sincere but also deliberate. I bent to look into Pamela's face. She gave me one of her sideways glances, and I realized that in my story of Sally Godfrey, I might not have mentioned what happened to my erstwhile lover.

I held Pamela a little tighter and smiled over her head.

"She lives in Jamaica," I said. "She left soon after the child's birth, passing herself off as a young widow. She married, three years ago now. Her husband knows there is a child; he believes little Sally is being raised by friends."

"Poor lady," Pamela said. "I am glad she is so happy."

"And that she is so far off," I said, and Pamela nudged me with her fist.

“Does the child visit you?”

“Occasionally.” I bent my head again. “She believes the story her mother created.”

I didn’t say I wished I could claim the child. What is the point of wanting what would only cause damage and pain? It would do little Sally no favors to be known as illegitimate, and she should not have to bear the knowledge of her stigma.

Pamela hugged me tighter as if she guessed my feelings, then detached herself and went into the garden. She knelt beside Sally, and they watched the beehives together.

“Will you let me be your aunt?” Pamela was saying as I neared, and Sally, looking up, waved at me cheerily.

“Hullo,” she said. “I haven’t seen you for ages.” Pure exaggeration. I saw her before I went to the Har-graves.

“Would you like to live with us?” Pamela said, and I actually gasped.

“Can I?” Sally said. “Can I go with you now?”

An ability to seize opportunities as they present themselves is a family trait.

“In the next vacation,” I said.

She agreed readily. She liked her school—I’d made sure of that—and her friends. There was no reason to burden Pamela with several households *and* a child in the course of three weeks. Not to mention her moody husband.

But I was light-hearted when we returned to the carriage. I had not hoped to bring my daughter home. I had anticipated Pamela’s kindness but never such magnanimity.

“Little Sally’s mother could have been me,” Pamela explained.

“I was stopped by your virtues,” I told her.

She gave me a skeptical glance, one eyebrow raised, and I laughed, but it is more or less the truth. Miss Godfrey was compliant and affectionate at a time in my life when I badly needed affection. But we were never more than lovers.

Compliance would never have been enough for me any more than antagonism attracts me. I wanted my wife to *want* to be my friend—that’s the best way I can explain it. And Pamela did.

### ***Cross-Examination***

“And I would like my friend back,” Mr. B said.

“She isn’t your property.”

“She is my wife. She wants to return to me, doesn’t she?”

His voice contained a curious mix of challenge and entreaty.

No one answered. Judge Hardcastle coughed. “Does the CLF wish to continue its petition?”

Dr. Matchel stood. “Although some of us are impressed by Mr. B’s love for his wife, we still agree the relationship was entered into precipitately. Both the courtship and marriage have caused Pamela great emotional and psychological harm. We recommend the marriage be annulled, and Pamela settled permanently in *Herland*.”

The judge cocked an eyebrow at Mr. Shorter. Mr. Shorter said, “Uh, we still object. Pamela should be returned to the novel that bears her name.” He’d clearly been saving that line all week.

The judge sighed. “Although I agree that Mr. B loves his wife, I confess I am concerned by the age and class differences.” He gathered up his papers. “I will render my decision when this hearing reconvenes Monday morning at nine a.m.”

Mr. B jerked to his feet. “Won’t you decide now?”

The judge looked pained but his voice was firm. “No, sir. I need time to review all the documents as well as the transcripts.”

“But you’ve heard have I reformed. You’ve heard Pamela loves me. This isn’t a complicated issue.”

The judge sighed. “Unfortunately, Mr. B, literary issues are rarely *uncomplicated*. My decision must reflect all the material presented.”

Mr. B bent over the table, hands pressed to the table top.

Mr. Hatch murmured, “If Mr. B needs counseling—”

Mr. B didn’t respond. Mr. Shorter gave Mr. Hatch a look of utter loathing the judge hoped wasn’t reflected in his own face.

Deborah called to Mr. B, “It’s another obstacle, that’s all. The hero and heroine are always reunited.”

*Hearings aren’t romance novels*, but the judge didn’t rebuke her as he left the courtroom.

## **Day Six**

### *Judge Hardcastle Renders His Decision*

**M**onday morning, Judge Hardcastle stalked into the courtroom, threw a newspaper onto his desk, and glared at the hearing's attendees, real and fictional. He said, "Editorials by poorly informed reporters are one thing. This is something else entirely."

### *The City Gazette*

Letters to the Editor

#### **To the Editor:**

I write to protest the ignoble treatment of my husband, Mr. B. No husband could be more just in his judgments, more forthcoming in his apologies, or more generous to his dependents. He has accepted my faults and corrected his own, all without bringing public reproach upon my person. I beg the court to reunite husband and wife and return us to our private lives.

MRS. PAMELA B.

*Pamela*

**To the Editor:**

We the undersigned feel duty-bound to publicly denounce a custom which keeps a woman from her desired future. We neither subscribe to nor deride the familial and marital duties to which Pamela B has applied her talents, but we rebuke a state of civilization that denies her those duties without her consent.

SOMEL, ZAVA, MOADINE

*Herland*

The judge said, "How did these letters get published? Well?"

At the CLF table, Dr. Matchel and Gary glared at Mr. Hatch. Mr. Hatch said reluctantly, "Pamela sent them during our last session."

"Sent them?"

"From my Blackberry."

"Your Blackberry?"

"I left it on the table. I saw her play with it. I didn't realize—I had no idea she would—she's from the eighteenth century!"

"My wife is very clever," Mr. B said. He sprawled in his chair, his eyes lit with amusement.

"And the previous editorials?"

Mr. Hatch sagged lower in his chair. "She sent them. I checked this morning. I didn't know!"

"I should hope not," the judge snapped. "Who are Somel, Zava, and Moadine?"

Lonquist said, "They are characters from *Herland*. In the novel, they mentor the main male characters who arrive unexpectedly in their country. Apparently, they've been mentor-

ing Pamela.”

“I see.” The judge straightened from his accusatory stoop.

“A new hearing?” Dr. Matchel said without much hope.

“If media involvement had been caused by the actions of the Respondent, I might consider a fresh hearing. Under the circumstances, however, I feel no need to force another judge to listen to these wrangling over historical context.”

The judge didn’t mention that he wanted to go back to the Agatha Christie hearings, where he could focus on which literary murders should be allowed and which prevented in accordance with the established rules of “Golden Age” detective fiction.

Instead, he turned to Mr. B and his voice was no longer peevish but stately and quiet. “I have considered all the testimony presented this week, applying the standard for literature hearings: customs of both a novel’s time period and genre are legally permissible. Out of the complaints made by the Committee for Literary Fairness, I recognize two main points against the marriage: one, the kidnapping of Pamela beforehand; two, the possibility of emotional abuse after.

“Regarding the first point, although a kidnapping did occur, I do not believe Pamela is suffering from post-traumatic stress or whatever the current popular malady is. Moreover, it is clear that many romantic heroines suffer similar adventures with no ill side-effects.”

Deborah clapped silently, and the judge dipped his head to her.

“Personally,” he added, “I deem the idea of kidnapping for romantic reasons unnecessary and ridiculous. Your wife, Mr. B, could easily have been wooed without recourse to such extremes.”

Mr. B nodded gravely.

“However, you seem to have a propensity for complications, not to mention a positive delight in debate.”

Mr. B protested, “I don’t like quarrels.”

“You provoke them, sir; you create little waves of chaos

wherever you go. Your wife seems equally inclined towards drama. She also seems more than capable at handling you, not to mention every other human being who gets in her way.”

The judge glared at the CLF table before continuing.

“I am concerned about the difference in age and background although I do not doubt that Pamela is Mr. B’s equal in intelligence and aptitude. Your wife, Mr. B, has a remarkable capacity for assimilation. I believe this capacity is inherent, rather than culturally produced.”

*Of course*, Mr. B’s smile seemed to say.

“This is not to say that differences of age and background cannot produce unhealthy domestic conflicts. Any man who would consider leaving his wife only five days after their wedding—however, I appreciate that Mr. B avoided such a drastic step. I also appreciate his attempts to keep his temper in check, both in the novel and in this courtroom. I would advise, sir, that you remain self-vigilant in this regard.

The judge waited for Mr. B’s acknowledgement—a dignified nod—then cleared his throat.

“Finally, I note that although Mr. B’s acts appear autocratic by modern, non-narrative standards, his actual behavior—in the novel and in this courtroom—indicate a frank and self-reflective mindset. Both his demeanor and testimony have demonstrated those qualities of honesty, wit, and consideration that Pamela attributes to him in her own text. I believe, Mr. B, that you respect and love your wife. I also believe you intend to treat her accordingly.”

He pounded his gavel. “The CLF’s petition is denied. Pamela should be returned immediately to her novel of origin and to her husband.”

He nodded to his clerk and swept out, the wrinkled robe wafting in the doorway. And if he heard the claps and cheers from Deborah, Leslie Quinn, and Lonquist, he didn’t smile until he’d reached his office.

## ***After the Hearing***

Mr. B waited for his wife in the courthouse rotunda. Mr. Shorter had stopped beside the coffee stand, saying, "I'll see you back in the novel."

Mr. B hardly heard him or anyone. Once he'd read Pamela's editorial—shoved under his nose that morning by Mr. Shorter—he'd known they would win. No one could stop Pamela once she put pen to paper. He would be seeing her soon—in a moment, second, minute.

Leslie Quinn, Lonquist, and Deborah passed him and waved. He waved absently back. He should thank them. He should be gracious. He always remembered to thank retainers. He always remembered to be the squire. But now all he could concentrate on was: *When is she coming?*

A slim young woman in a straight, white tunic and close-fitting breeches entered the rotunda ahead of Mr. Hatch. She paused and looked about her, gravely, carefully, and Mr. B had to stop himself from laughing. Typical Pamela—to assess her surroundings, to not let herself be hurried or bullied.

She saw him. She walked towards him, chin lifted, eyes grave, and he recognized the signs. She was furious. For the first time, he felt vaguely sorry for the CLF.

She stopped before him and said levelly, "I want to go home."

Mr. B laughed. He laughed so loud, the sound bounced off the domed rotunda. People turned to stare. But people always stared at him and Pamela. They were always surprised; over and over, no one believed the marriage would work.

Pamela's mouth quirked, and Mr. B took her in his arms. She didn't resist. She slid her arms around his neck and pressed her face to his neck.

"I missed you," she whispered to his throat.

People were clapping, even Mr. Hatch. At the coffee cart, Mr. Shorter turned and lifted his cup in a toast as Mr. B

picked up his wife and carried her back into *Pamela*.

They came out on the packed dirt road that stretched between the Bedfordshire estate and the local church. Pamela kept her arms around her husband's neck, and he kissed away her shivers.

She calmed quickly. He'd had practice soothing her. She leaned her cheek against his shoulder and said, "I was thinking it might be time to get Billy a tutor. A Scottish tutor—what do you think?"

"I think you should give me time to get used to having you back."

She grinned and swung her legs to the ground. Mr. B helped her stand, then took her chin and tilted it towards him.

"You did want to come back?"

"Of course. Didn't you read my letter to that newspaper?"

"I have a fragile ego, Pamela. I need reassurance."

She gave him one of her half-smiles. "I hated being away. I badgered people incessantly. I was very—saucy."

"Good girl."

She ducked her head suddenly and blushed. "I promise to be less magisterial."

He gave her a startled look, then, "You saw the transcripts," he said, stricken.

"You read my letters," she reminded him.

"And fell in love."

"Yes." She slid her arms around his waist. "I read your thoughts, and now I love you more."

He kissed her—with relief, with gratitude, with the unending good-humor that tinged their marriage. Keeping her hand in his, he started down the road.

It was good to be home.

## About the Author

**K**atherine Woodbury divides her literary interests between eighteenth-century classics and contemporary genre fiction. When not teaching composition and folklore at Southern Maine Community College and Central Maine Community College, Katherine (or Kate) watches *Star Trek*, *Diagnosis Murder*, and *Jake & the Fatman*, checks mystery and romance books out of the library (and forgets to return them), and updates her [blog](#). Her fantasy and science fiction stories have been published in *Cicada*, *Space & Time*, and *Tales of the Unanticipated*.

## **Also from Peaks Island Press**

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**A**daptations and explorations of Jane Austen’s most beloved and well-known work have too often transformed Fitzwilliam Darcy into the stereotypical alpha male of Regency romances. In order to correct that popular misunderstanding, Darcy now offers within the pages of this novella a more “balanced” view of the relationship between himself and Elizabeth Bennet.

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*Angel Falling Softly* by Eugene Woodbury

**Rachel** Forsythe’s daughter is dying of cancer. Milada Daranyi, chief investment officer at Daranyi Enterprises Inter-

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*The Path of Dreams* by Eugene Woodbury

**A**lthough they've seen each other only once, at a train station in Japan, Elaine Chieko Packard and Connor McKenzie have been haunted ever since by passionate dreams they cannot control. They determine to resolve the tension between the moral strictures of their religion and their own overpowering emotions by eloping, a decision that triggers an unexpected series of events.