

**CLARISSA HARLOWE**  
or the  
**HISTORY OF A YOUNG LADY**

**By Samuel Richardson**

**Nine Volumes**  
**Volume III.**

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# **THE HISTORY OF CLARISSA HARLOWE**

# LETTER I

## MISS HOWE, TO MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE TUESDAY, NINE O'CLOCK.

I write, because you enjoin me to do so. Love you still!—How can I help it, if I would? You may believe how I stand aghast, your letter communicating the first news—Good God of Heaven and Earth!—But what shall I say?—I am all impatient for particulars.

Lord have mercy upon me!—But can it be?

My mother will indeed be astonished!—How can I tell it her!—It was but last night (upon some jealousies put into her head by your foolish uncle) that I assured her, and this upon the strength of your own assurances, that neither man nor devil would be able to induce you to take a step that was in the least derogatory to the most punctilious honour.

But, once more, can it be? What woman at this rate!—But, God preserve you!

Let nothing escape you in your letters. Direct them for me, however, to Mrs. Knolly's, till further notice.

Observe, my dear, that I don't blame you by all this—Your relations only are in fault!—Yet how you came to change your mind is the surprising thing.

How to break it to my mother, I know not. Yet if she hear it first from any other, and find I knew it before, she will believe it to be my connivance!—Yet, as I hope to live, I know not how to break it to her.

But this is teasing you.—I am sure, without intention.

Let me now repeat my former advice—If you are not married by this time, be sure delay not the ceremony. Since things are as they are, I wish it were thought that you were privately married before you went away. If these men plead AUTHORITY to our pain, when we are theirs—Why should we not, in such a case as this, make some good out of the hated word, for our reputation, when we are induced to violate a more natural one?

Your brother and sister [that vexes me almost as much as any thing!] have now their ends. Now, I suppose, will go forward alterations of wills, and such-like spiteful doings.

Miss Lloyd and Miss Biddulph this moment send up their names. They are out of breath, Kitty says, to speak to me—easy to guess their errand;—I must see my mother, before I see them. I have no way but to shew her your letter to clear myself. I shall not be able to say a word, till she has run herself out of her first breath.—Forgive me, my dear—surprise makes me write thus. If your messenger did not wait, and were not those young ladies below, I could write it over again, for fear of afflicting you.

I send what you write for. If there be any thing else you want that is in my power, command without reserve

Your ever affectionate ANNA HOWE.

## LETTER II.

### MISS CLARISSA HARLOWE, TO MISS HOWE. TUESDAY NIGHT.

I think myself obliged to thank you, my dear Miss Howe, for your condescension, in taking notice of a creature who has occasioned you so much scandal.

I am grieved on this account, as much, I verily think, as for the evil itself.

Tell me—but yet I am afraid to know—what your mother said.

I long, and yet I dread, to be told, what the young ladies my companions, now never more perhaps to be so, say of me.

They cannot, however, say worse of me than I will of myself. Self accusation shall flow in every line of my narrative where I think I am justly censurable. If any thing can arise from the account I am going to give you, for extenuation of my fault (for that is all a person can hope for, who cannot excuse herself) I know I may expect it from your friendship, though not from the charity of any other: since by this time I doubt not every mouth is opened against me; and all that know Clarissa Harlowe condemn the fugitive daughter.

After I had deposited my letter to you, written down to the last hour, as I may say, I returned to the ivy summer-house; first taking back my letter from the loose bricks: and there I endeavoured, as coolly as my situation would permit, to recollect and lay together several incidents that had passed between my aunt and me; and, comparing them with some of the contents of my cousin Dolly's letter, I began to hope, that I needed not to be so very apprehensive as I have been of next Wednesday. And thus I argued with myself.

'Wednesday cannot possibly be the day they intend, although to intimidate me they may wish me to think it is: for the settlements are unsigned: nor have they been offered me to sign. I can choose whether I will or will not put my hand to them; hard as it will be to refuse if my father and mother propose, if I made compulsion necessary, to go to my uncle's themselves in order to be out of the way of my appeals? Whereas they intend to be present on Wednesday. And, however affecting to me the thought of meeting them and all my friends in full assembly is, perhaps it is the very thing I ought to wish for: since my brother and sister had such an opinion of my interest in them, that they got me excluded from their presence, as a measure which they thought previously necessary to carry on their designs.

'Nor have I reason to doubt, but that (as I had before argued with myself) I shall be able to bring over some of my relations to my party; and, being brought face to face with my brother, that I shall expose his malevolence, and of consequence weaken his power.

'Then supposing the very worst, challenging the minister as I shall challenge him, he will not presume to proceed: nor surely will Mr. Solmes dare to accept my refusing and

struggling hand. And finally, if nothing else will do, nor procure me delay, I can plead scruples of conscience, and even pretend prior obligation; for, my dear, I have give Mr. Lovelace room to hope (as you will see in one of my letters in your hands) that I will be no other man's while he is single, and gives me not wilful and premeditated cause of offence against him; and this in order to rein-in his resentment on the declared animosity of my brother and uncles to him. And as I shall appeal, or refer my scruples on this head, to the good Dr. Lewen, it is impossible but that my mother and aunt (if nobody else) must be affected with this plea.'

Revolving cursorily these things, I congratulated myself, that I had resolved against going away with Mr. Lovelace.

I told you, my dear, that I would not spare myself: and I enumerate these particulars as so many arguments to condemn the actions I have been so unhappily betrayed into. An argument that concludes against me with the greater force, as I must acknowledge, that I was apprehensive, that what my cousin Dolly mentions as from Betty, and from my sister who told her, that she should tell me, in order to make me desperate, and perhaps to push me upon some such step as I have been driven to take, as the most effectual means to ruin me with my father and uncles.

God forgive me, if I judge too harshly of their views!—But if I do not, it follows, that they laid a wicked snare for me; and that I have been caught in it.—And now they triumph, if they can triumph, in the ruin of a sister, who never wished or intended to hurt them!

As the above kind of reasoning had lessened my apprehensions as to the Wednesday, it added to those I had of meeting Mr. Lovelace—now, as it seemed, not only the nearest, but the heaviest evil; principally indeed because nearest; for little did I dream (foolish creature that I was, and every way beset!) of the event proving what it has proved. I expected a contention with him, 'tis true, as he had not my letter: but I thought it would be very strange, as I mentioned in one of my former,\* if I, who had so steadily held out against characters so venerable, against authorities so sacred, as I may say, when I thought them unreasonably exerted, should not find myself more equal to such a trial as this; especially as I had so much reason to be displeased with him for not having taken away my letter.

On what a point of time may one's worldly happiness depend! Had I but two hours more to consider of the matter, and to attend to and improve upon these new lights, as I may call them—but even then, perhaps, I might have given him a meeting.—Fool that I was! what had I to do to give him hope that I would personally acquaint him with the reason for my change of mind, if I did change it?

O my dear! an obliging temper is a very dangerous temper!—By endeavouring to gratify others, it is evermore disobliging itself!

When the bell rang to call the servants to dinner, Betty came to me and asked, if I had any commands before she went to hers; repeating her hint, that she should be employed; adding, that she believed it was expected that I should not come up till she came down, or till I saw my aunt or Miss Hervey.

I asked her some questions about the cascade, which had been out of order, and lately mended; and expressed a curiosity to see how it played, in order to induce her [how cunning to cheat myself, as it proved!] to go thither, if she found me not where she left me; it being a part of the garden most distant from the ivy summer-house.

She could hardly have got into the house when I heard the first signal—O how my heart fluttered!—but no time was to be lost. I stept to the garden-door; and seeing a clear coast, unbolted the already-unlocked door—and there was he, all impatience, waiting for me.

A panic next to fainting seized me when I saw him. My heart seemed convulsed; and I trembled so, that I should hardly have kept my feet, had he not supported me.

Fear nothing, dearest creature, said he—let us hasten away—the chariot is at hand—and, by this sweet condescension, you have obliged me beyond expression or return.

Recovering my spirits a little, as he kept drawing me after him, O Mr. Lovelace, said I, I cannot go with you—indeed I cannot—I wrote you word so—let go my hand, and you shall see my letter. It is lain there from yesterday morning, till within this half-hour. I bid you watch to the last for a letter from me, lest I should be obliged to revoke the appointment; and, had you followed the direction, you would have found it.

I have been watched, my dearest life, said he, half out of breath—I have been watched in every step I took: and my trusty servant has been watched too, ever since Saturday; and dared not to come near your wall. And here we shall be discovered in a moment.—Speed away, my charmer—this is the moment of your deliverance—if you neglect this opportunity, you can never have such another.

What is it you mean, Sir?—Let go my hand: for I tell you [struggling vehemently] that I will sooner die than go with you.

Good God! said he, with a look of wildness and surprise, what is it I hear?—But [still drawing me after him, as he retreated farther from the door] it is no time to argue—by all that's good you must go—surely you cannot doubt my honour, nor give me cause to question your own.

As you value me, Mr. Lovelace, urge me no farther. I come fixed and resolved. Let me give you the letter I have written. My further reasons shall follow; and they will convince you that I ought not to go.

Nothing, Madam, can convince me—by all that's sacred, I will not leave you. To leave you now, would be to lose you for ever—

Am I to be thus compelled? interrupted I, with equal indignation and vehemence.—Let go my hands—I am resolved not to go with you—and I will convince you that I ought not.

All my friends expect you, Madam—all your own are determined against you—Wednesday next is the day, the important, perhaps the fatal day! Would you stay to be Solmes's wife?—Can this be your determination at last?

No, never, never will I be that man's—But I will not go with you! [draw me not thus—How dare you, Sir? I would not have seen you, but to tell you so]. I had not met you, but for fear you would have been guilty of some rashness—and, once more, I will not go—What mean you?—striving with all my force to get from him.

What can have possessed my angel, said he [quitting my hands, and with a gentler voice] that after so much ill-usage from your relations; vows so solemn on my part; an affection so ardent; you stab me with a refusal to stand by your own appointment?

We have no time to talk, Mr. Lovelace. I will give you my reasons at a better opportunity. I cannot go with you now—and once more urge me no farther—surely, I am not to be compelled by every body!

I see how it is, said he, with a dejected but passionate air—What a severe fate is mine!—At length your spirit is subdued!—Your brother and sister have prevailed; and I must give up all my hopes to a wretch so truly despicable—

Once more I tell you, interrupted I, I never will be his—all may end on Wednesday differently from what you expect—

And it may not!—And then, good heavens!

It is to be their last effort, as I have reason to believe—

And I have reason to believe so too—since if you stay, you will inevitably be Solmes's wife.

Not so, interrupted I—I have obliged them in one point. They will be in good-humour with me. I shall gain time at least. I am sure I shall. I have several ways to gain time.

And what, Madam, will gaining time do? It is plain you have not a hope beyond that—it is plain you have not, by putting all upon that precarious issue. O my dearest, dearest life, let me beseech you not to run a risque of this consequence. I can convince you that it will be more than a risque if you go back, that you will on Wednesday next be Solmes's wife.—Prevent, therefore, now that it is in your power to prevent, the fatal mischief that will follow such a dreadful certainty.

While I have any room for hope, it concerns your honour, Mr. Lovelace, as well as mine, (if you have the value for me you pretend, and wish me to believe you,) that my conduct in this great point should justify my prudence.

Your prudence, Madam! When has that been questionable? Yet what stead has either your prudence or your duty stood you in, with people so strangely determined?

And then he pathetically enumerated the different instances of the harsh treatment I had met with; imputing all to the malice and caprice of a brother, who set every body against him: and insisting, that I had no other way to bring about a reconciliation with my father and uncles, than by putting myself out of the power of my brother's inveterate malice.

Your brother's whole reliance, proceeded he, has been upon your easiness to bear his insults. Your whole family will seek to you, when you have freed yourself from this disgraceful oppression. When they know you are with those who can and will right you,

they will give up to you your own estate. Why then, putting his arms around me, and again drawing me with a gentle force after him, do you hesitate a moment?—Now is the time—Fly with me, then, I beseech you, my dearest creature! Trust your persecuted adorer. Have we not suffered in the same cause? If any imputations are cast upon you, give me the honour (as I shall be found to deserve it) to call you mine; and, when you are so, shall I not be able to protect both your person and character?

Urge me no more, Mr. Lovelace, I conjure you. You yourself have given me a hint, which I will speak plainer to, than prudence, perhaps, on any other occasion, would allow. I am convinced, that Wednesday next (if I had time I would give you my reasons) is not intended to be the day we had both so much dreaded: and if after that day shall be over, I find my friends determined in Mr. Solmes's favour, I will then contrive some way to meet you with Miss Howe, who is not your enemy: and when the solemnity has passed, I shall think that step a duty, which till then will be criminal to take: since now my father's authority is unimpeached by any greater.

Dearest Madam—

Nay, Mr. Lovelace, if you now dispute—if, after this more favourable declaration, than I had the thought of making, you are not satisfied, I shall know what to think both of your gratitude and generosity.

The case, Madam, admits not of this alternative. I am all gratitude upon it. I cannot express how much I should be delighted with the charming hope you have given me, were you not next Wednesday, if you stay, to be another man's. Think, dearest creature! what an heightening of my anguish the distant hope you bid me look up to is, taken in this light!

Depend, depend upon it, I will die sooner than be Mr. Solmes's. If you would have me rely upon your honour, why should you doubt of mine?

I doubt not your honour, Madam; your power is all I doubt. You never, never can have such another opportunity.—Dearest creature, permit me—and he was again drawing me after him.

Whither, Sir, do you draw me?—Leave me this moment—Do you seek to keep me till my return shall grow dangerous or impracticable? This moment let me go, if you would have me think tolerably of you.

My happiness, Madam, both here and hereafter, and the safety of all your implacable family, depend upon this moment.

To Providence, Mr. Lovelace, and to the law, will I leave the safety of my friends. You shall not threaten me into a rashness that my heart condemns!—Shall I, to promote your happiness, as you call it, depend upon future peace of mind?

You trifle with me, my dear life, just as our better prospects begin to open. The way is clear; just now it is clear; but you may be prevented in a moment. What is it you doubt?—May I perish eternally, if your will shall not be a law to me in every thing! All my relations expect you.—Next Wednesday!—Dearest creature! think of next



Wednesday!—And to what is it I urge you, but to take a step that sooner than any other will reconcile you to all whom you have most reason to value in your family?

Let my judge for myself, Sir. Do not you, who blame my friends for endeavouring to compel me, yourself seek to compel. I won't bear it. Your earnestness gives me greater apprehensions, and greater reluctance. Let me go back, then—let me, before it is too late, go back, that it may not be worse for both—What mean you by this forcible treatment? Is it thus that I am to judge of the entire submission to my will which you have so often vowed?—Unhand me this moment, or I will cry out for help.

I will obey you, my dearest creature!—And quitted my hand with a look full of tender despondency, that, knowing the violence of his temper, half-concerned me for him. Yet I was hastening from him, when, with a solemn air, looking upon his sword, but catching, as it were, his hand from it, he folded both his arms, as if a sudden thought had recovered him from an intended rashness.

Stay, one moment—but one moment stay, O best beloved of my soul!—Your retreat is secure, if you will go: the key lies at the door.—But, O Madam, next Wednesday, and you are Mr. Solmes's!—Fly me not so eagerly—hear me but a few words.

When near the garden-door, I stopped; and was the more satisfied, as I saw the key there, by which I could let myself in again at pleasure. But, being uneasy lest I should be missed, I told him, I could stay no longer. I had already staid too long. I would write to him all my reasons. And depend upon it, Mr. Lovelace, said I [just upon the point of stooping for the key, in order to return] I will die, rather than have that man. You know what I have promised, if I find myself in danger.

One word, Madam, however; one word more [approaching me, his arms still folded, as if, I thought, he would not be tempted to mischief]. Remember only, that I come at your appointment, to redeem you, at the hazard of my life, from your gaolers and persecutors, with a resolution, God is my witness, or may he for ever blast me! [that was his shocking imprecation] to be a father, uncle, brother, and, as I humbly hoped, in your own good time, a husband to you, all in one. But since I find you are so ready to cry out for help against me, which must bring down upon me the vengeance of all your family, I am contented to run all risques. I will not ask you to retreat with me; I will attend you into the garden, and into the house, if I am not intercepted.

Nay, be not surprised, Madam. The help you would have called for, I will attend you to; for I will face them all: but not as a revenger, if they provoke me not too much. You shall see what I can further bear for your sake—and let us both see, if expostulation, and the behaviour of a gentleman to them, will not procure me the treatment due to a gentleman from them.

Had he offered to draw his sword upon himself, I was prepared to have despised him for supposing me such a poor novice, as to be intimidated by an artifice so common. But this resolution, uttered with so serious an air, of accompanying me in to my friends, made me gasp with terror.

What mean you, Mr. Lovelace? said I: I beseech you leave me—leave me, Sir, I beseech you.

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