

## **AI-Generated Graded Readers**

Masaru Uchida, Gifu University

Publication webpage:

[https://www1.gifu-u.ac.jp/~masaru/a1/ai-generated\\_graded\\_readers.html](https://www1.gifu-u.ac.jp/~masaru/a1/ai-generated_graded_readers.html)

Publication date: March 16, 2026

### **About This Edition**

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice. The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

### **Source Text**

Original work: History of Tom Jones, a Foundling

Author: Henry Fielding

Source: Project Gutenberg

<https://www.gutenberg.org/>

Full text available at:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/6593/pg6593.txt>

The original text is in the public domain.

### **Copyright and Use**

This simplified edition is intended for educational and non-commercial use only.

The source text is provided by Project Gutenberg under its public domain policy. Users should refer to the Project Gutenberg License for full terms:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/policy/license.html>

This adaptation was generated with the assistance of artificial intelligence and edited for readability and educational purposes.

### **Disclaimer**

This edition is an educational adaptation and is not affiliated with or endorsed by Project Gutenberg.

Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

## Part 1

Before I begin this history, I must speak to you in my own person. A writer should not think of himself as a rich gentleman who gives free food to a few chosen guests. He is more like the keeper of an inn, who opens his door to all who can pay. If people pay, they may judge the meal. If they dislike it, they may blame it. For that reason, I think it fair to place my bill of fare before the reader. Then each person may decide whether to stay at my table or leave for another house. The chief dish I offer is only one, yet it is large enough for many courses. That dish is human nature. Some readers may say this is too common. I say they are wrong. Bread is common too, and yet good bread is not easy to find. In the same way, true human nature is not easy to find in books. It must be prepared with care. At first I shall set it before you in its plain country form. Later, when the story moves into a wider and more dangerous world, I shall season it more strongly. For now, let us begin with simple fare.

In the western part of England, in Somersetshire, there lived a gentleman named Mr Allworthy. He was one of those rare men whom both nature and fortune seem to love. Nature had given him a sound body, a clear mind, and, above all, a kind heart. Fortune had given him a very large estate. He had once been married to a beautiful and worthy wife, and he had loved her deeply. They had children, but all died very young. Then his wife also died, and he remained alone. Yet he did not become hard or bitter. He still lived with calm feeling, and he often spoke as if his wife had only gone before him to a place where he too must one day go. Some people called this strange. Others doubted his religion, or laughed at his sincerity. But they were small people, and he was not. He lived quietly in the country with his sister, Miss Bridget Allworthy, for whom he had much affection.

Miss Bridget was past thirty, and she was one of those women who are praised less for beauty than for correct conduct. She spoke often with contempt of beauty,

as if beauty were little more than a danger and a trap. She thanked Heaven that she was not handsome enough to be led into foolish errors. She had prudence always ready at her side, though I have long observed that prudence is often most watchful where there is least cause for fear. It stands guard over those women whom no man troubles, and sometimes deserts those for whom many men sigh. Reader, I tell you here, once for all, that I mean to step out of my story whenever I think fit. I shall judge the right moment myself. Critics may be angry if they like. Until they show me the paper that names them my masters, I shall not answer to their court.

Mr Allworthy had been in London for three full months on important business. He returned home late one evening, tired from travel. After a short supper with his sister, he went to his room. There, as was his custom, he first knelt down and prayed. Then he prepared for bed. He pulled back the bedclothes, and at that moment he saw something so strange that he stood still in silence. In his own bed, wrapped in rough cloth, slept a baby. The child lay there in deep, peaceful sleep, as if the bed were made for him. For a short time Mr Allworthy could only stare. Then his usual goodness rose in him, as it always did. Surprise gave way to pity. He looked at the small face, bright with the soft color of healthy sleep, and he felt the helpless beauty of the infant so strongly that he forgot even his own state of dress.

He rang the bell and ordered that an older servant should come to him at once. This was Mrs Deborah Wilkins, a woman with a great opinion of her own virtue and decency. She did not hurry as quickly as she might have done, for she spent time before the glass putting her hair in order, though for all she knew her master might be dying. When she opened the door and saw Mr Allworthy standing there in his shirt with a candle in his hand, she started back in horror. He at once told her to wait outside until he had put on some clothes. Only then did she re-enter, guarded in mind and body by all the dignity of a woman who claimed never to have seen a man without his coat.

When she learned the reason for the summons, her wonder became louder than his. "My good sir, what is to be done?" she cried. Mr Allworthy answered quietly,

“Take care of the child tonight. In the morning I will provide a nurse.” But Mrs Wilkins was full of harsh advice. She wished the mother caught, punished, and publicly whipped. She said such wicked women were a danger to all decent society. She feared people might even dare to connect the baby with Mr Allworthy himself. Then she went farther still. She said the child should be put in a basket and left at the churchwarden’s door, since the parish was bound to keep it. If it died, she hinted, that might be best, for such children often followed the path of their mothers. Her words were cruel enough, yet while she spoke Mr Allworthy had placed one finger into the baby’s hand, and the tiny hand closed around it. That little touch pleaded more strongly than all Mrs Wilkins’s speeches. He ordered again, firmly this time, that the child must be cared for, fed, clothed, and brought to him in the morning.

Mrs Wilkins obeyed. Indeed, obedience often comes very quickly when a servant sees that a master is fixed in his will. She lifted the child at last, and now, under the light of Mr Allworthy’s kindness, even she declared it to be a sweet little infant. She carried it away to her own room. Mr Allworthy then lay down and slept with the peace that belongs to people whose hearts are satisfied by an act of goodness. I do not know any sweeter sleep. If I knew a tune that could call such sleep down upon my reader, I would gladly name it here.

The next morning was fair and bright. Mr Allworthy’s house stood in noble country, with woods above it, water running down the hill, and a wide view over valley and field. He walked outside in the freshness of May, looking over his land in the early light. The sun rose over the scene, and the whole place seemed full of calm order. Yet more beautiful than the land itself was the man who walked through it, for he was thinking not of pride or pleasure but of how he might do the most good in the world. Reader, take care: I have led you high upon a hill with this description, and I must now bring you down again. Miss Bridget has rung for breakfast, and I must go in with Mr Allworthy.

At breakfast he told his sister that he had a present for her. She thanked him, perhaps expecting a dress or some other fine thing. Instead, Mrs Wilkins brought in the baby. Bridget was struck silent. Then Mr Allworthy told her the story. She

had always spoken severely about female virtue, and Mrs Wilkins expected that she would cry out against the child and demand its removal from the house. But she did not. She saw at once that her brother had resolved to keep the infant and raise him, and she chose to agree with him. She said some kind things about the poor little creature and praised her brother's charity. Yet she turned all the sharpness she had held back from the child upon the unknown mother, calling her by every hard name that a respectable tongue can use. Still, the result was plain: the child would stay. Orders were given for a nursery, clothes, and all necessary care. Then they began to think how the mother might be found. Mrs Wilkins, proud of her skill in such ugly business, was sent out into the parish to inquire. Thus the foundling, who had come in silence during the night, was already changing the order of the whole house before the first day was half done.

When Mr Allworthy left the room, Miss Bridget gazed at the baby for some time. Then, unable to resist, she kissed him warmly. Mrs Wilkins saw this and immediately began kissing and praising him too, now calling him a dear, sweet, pretty boy. Such changes are common in this world. Many people begin with moral speeches and end with fond hands. Bridget gave generous orders for the child's comfort, though she muttered that her brother's whim encouraged vice. Such muttering often serves as a tax that weak souls pay before they do what goodness asks of them. For my own part, I care less for the mutter than for the act. The act here was kind. And so our story truly begins: with a gentleman of large fortune, a severe sister, a cruel servant, an unknown mother, and a sleeping child whose arrival will move many hearts, uncover many lies, and bring more trouble into this peaceful house than anyone at that breakfast table can yet imagine.

## Part 2

Mrs Deborah Wilkins lost no time in beginning her search for the unknown mother. Indeed, she performed this task with great energy, though perhaps not with great kindness. In her opinion, the chief duty of a virtuous person is to discover the faults of others. Therefore she moved from house to house through

the parish, asking questions in a tone that suggested she already knew the worst answers. Every poor girl was examined with suspicion. Every servant was watched. In a short time she returned with what she believed to be certain news.

She declared that the child must belong to a young woman named Jenny Jones.

Jenny Jones was the servant of a schoolmaster named Mr Partridge, who lived not far from Mr Allworthy's house. She had the reputation of being clever, perhaps too clever for her own safety. She read books, she wrote letters, and she spoke more boldly than many women thought proper. Such behavior often leads society to form dark opinions very quickly.

Mrs Wilkins therefore marched straight to Mr Partridge's house and demanded to see Jenny.

The poor young woman appeared frightened but calm. She listened quietly while Mrs Wilkins accused her of bringing disgrace into the parish. At first she denied the charge. Yet Mrs Wilkins continued her attack with such severity that Jenny at last seemed to lose hope of defending herself.

Finally she said something that surprised everyone.

She confessed that the child was hers.

This confession caused great excitement in the parish. Mrs Wilkins hurried back to Paradise Hall to report the discovery. Mr Allworthy listened carefully to her story. He then ordered that Jenny Jones should be brought before him at once.

When Jenny arrived, she behaved with surprising dignity. She answered Mr Allworthy's questions with calm respect. Yes, she said, the child was hers. No, she refused to name the father. She declared that she alone was guilty and that she alone deserved blame.

Mr Allworthy studied her face for a long moment.

"Young woman," he said gently, "I do not wish to punish you harshly. But truth is always better than silence. Tell me honestly—who is the father of this child?"

Jenny lowered her eyes.

"Sir," she replied, "I cannot reveal his name."

Mrs Wilkins immediately burst into angry speech.

"Cannot reveal it!" she cried. "That means she will not reveal it. Such stubborn

silence proves that the father must be someone respectable. No doubt she hopes to protect him.”

Jenny remained silent.

Mr Allworthy, however, did not lose patience. He believed strongly that mercy often leads people to honesty. Therefore he dismissed Jenny for the moment and asked several other questions about her life and character.

At this point the schoolmaster Mr Partridge himself appeared. He was a nervous man who spoke quickly and seemed greatly alarmed by the whole affair. When he learned the accusation, he protested loudly that he knew nothing about the child.

“Upon my honor, sir,” he cried, “I swear I have never behaved improperly with Jenny Jones. I treated her only as a servant.”

Mrs Wilkins shook her head with great certainty.

“Schoolmasters are often guilty in such matters,” she said. “They pretend to teach virtue while practicing the opposite.”

Partridge turned pale.

“Madam,” he replied anxiously, “your words do me great injustice.”

But suspicion spreads easily, especially when it agrees with people’s expectations. The story quickly grew worse. Some said that Partridge had secretly married Jenny. Others insisted that he had behaved very wickedly.

Mr Allworthy was not satisfied with these rumors. He questioned Jenny again. At last, perhaps wishing to end the matter, she repeated firmly that the child was hers and that she would not accuse anyone else.

Her answer seemed to confirm the general belief.

Therefore Mr Allworthy decided upon a moderate judgment. Jenny Jones must leave the parish. She would receive some money so that she would not suffer extreme poverty, but she could not remain where her example might encourage others.

Jenny accepted the decision quietly.

Yet before she departed, she spoke a few words that puzzled Mr Allworthy.

“Sir,” she said, “I thank you for your kindness. Perhaps one day you will understand more than you do today.”

With that she left the house.

Meanwhile the baby remained safely in Paradise Hall. A nurse was hired, and the child grew strong and healthy. Mr Allworthy visited the nursery often. He liked to watch the boy sleeping peacefully, as he had seen him on that first strange night.

The question soon arose of what name the child should bear.

Since no parent claimed him, Mr Allworthy decided that he must be known simply by the place where he had been found. Such children were often called foundlings. Therefore the boy was given the name *Thomas Jones*.

At the same time another child entered the household. This was Master Blifil, the son of Mr Allworthy's sister Bridget and her husband Captain Blifil.

Captain Blifil was a serious and thoughtful man who spoke often about religion and morality. He seemed to admire Mr Allworthy greatly. Indeed, he praised him so constantly that some people suspected his praise was not entirely sincere.

Unfortunately Captain Blifil did not live long. Only a short time after his marriage he died suddenly, leaving his young son in the care of Mr Allworthy.

Thus two boys grew up together in the same house.

One of them, Tom Jones, had entered Paradise Hall as a helpless foundling.

The other, Master Blifil, was the lawful nephew of the master of the estate.

From the very beginning the two children showed very different natures.

Tom was lively, warm, and generous. He laughed easily and ran everywhere with great energy. If another child cried, Tom was ready to share his toys or his food.

Blifil behaved in the opposite way. He spoke little, watched everything carefully, and rarely showed strong feeling. Adults often praised his seriousness and obedience. They called him a good boy.

Yet there was something cold in his eyes that few people noticed.

Mr Allworthy loved both children and hoped they would become good friends. He believed that kindness and education would form their characters into virtue.

But human nature does not always grow according to such hopes.

As the boys grew older, their differences became clearer. Tom loved play, adventure, and open laughter. Blifil preferred quiet observation and secret

judgment.

Two teachers were chosen to guide their education.

One was Mr Thwackum, a severe clergyman who believed that discipline and punishment were the best tools for forming the soul.

The other was Mr Square, a philosopher who believed that reason alone could teach a person how to live.

Both men admired Blifil's quiet behavior.

Neither of them understood Tom.

And so, within the peaceful walls of Paradise Hall, the first seeds of future trouble were already beginning to grow.

### Part 3

Before I carry the reader farther into the lives of the two boys, I must again take the liberty of speaking in my own person. Some critics dislike such interruptions and say that the author should remain invisible. I cannot agree with them. A cook who prepares a large feast may occasionally come out of the kitchen to see how the guests enjoy the meal. If they seem pleased, he is encouraged; if they complain, he may adjust the seasoning. In the same way, I sometimes step forward to speak directly with my reader. I promise, however, that these moments will not delay the story longer than is useful.

Now we return to Paradise Hall.

The house itself stood in the middle of a wide and pleasant estate. Green fields stretched far in every direction. Trees grew thickly along the hills, and a clear stream ran through the valley below. Travelers who passed the gates often stopped to admire the place. Yet the greatest honor of the estate was not its land but its master.

Mr Allworthy had gained the respect of the entire county. Poor people came to him for help, and he rarely turned them away. Farmers trusted his fairness. Even those who disagreed with him admitted that his character was generous and sincere.

His sister Bridget lived quietly under the same roof. She continued to speak often about modesty and virtue, especially when the behavior of other women was under discussion. Yet she showed real care for her son, Master Blifil, and she treated young Tom Jones with outward kindness, though perhaps not with equal warmth.

As the boys grew older, their education began in earnest.

Mr Thwackum, the clergyman, believed strongly in discipline. He carried a large book of sermons and an even larger stick. According to his theory, a boy's soul must be corrected as frequently as his lessons.

"Human nature," he often said, "is naturally wicked. Only strict punishment can bring it toward virtue."

Mr Square, the philosopher, held a different opinion. He believed that reason alone should guide the mind. He spoke often about moral order, balance, and philosophical harmony.

"If a boy understands the true rule of reason," he said, "he will naturally act well."

Both teachers admired Master Blifil greatly.

Blifil listened quietly to their lectures. He rarely argued, rarely laughed, and always appeared serious. When Mr Thwackum spoke about sin, Blifil nodded wisely. When Mr Square discussed reason, Blifil looked thoughtful and calm.

Tom Jones behaved quite differently.

He was quick to laugh and quick to act. When he saw injustice, he often reacted without thinking. Sometimes he defended weaker boys with his fists. Sometimes he spoke openly against unfair punishment. Such behavior earned him frequent scoldings from Mr Thwackum.

"This boy," Thwackum would declare, "has a rebellious spirit."

Mr Square agreed.

"His actions show a lack of philosophical balance."

Yet Tom possessed something that neither teacher understood very well: a warm and generous heart.

If a poor man asked for help, Tom offered what little money he had. If a servant

suffered trouble, Tom defended him boldly. When another child cried, Tom tried immediately to comfort him.

Unfortunately these acts did not impress his instructors.

One afternoon an event occurred that showed the difference between the two boys very clearly.

Tom had received a small piece of money from Mr Allworthy as a reward for his lessons. On his way through the village he met a poor boy who had torn his clothes and lost his bread. Without hesitation Tom gave the boy all his money.

When Mr Thwackum heard of this, he was not pleased.

“Charity is good,” he said, “but disobedience is not. You should have asked permission before giving away your reward.”

Mr Square added his own criticism.

“A truly rational act must be guided by careful judgment. You acted from impulse, not from reason.”

Blifil stood nearby listening to the conversation.

He said softly, “I fear Tom often follows his feelings rather than moral principle.”

Tom heard these words and grew angry.

“I only helped someone who needed help,” he answered.

“Yes,” replied Blifil calmly, “but a wise person considers the rules before acting.”

Mr Thwackum praised Blifil’s remark.

Mr Square agreed that it showed excellent reasoning.

Tom, however, felt that something about the situation was deeply unfair. He could not explain it clearly, but he sensed that kindness should not be treated as a fault.

Mr Allworthy later heard the story.

He smiled gently.

“Tom,” he said, “generosity is a good quality. But wisdom must guide generosity. Remember that.”

Tom promised to try.

Yet even as he promised, the reader may easily see that Tom’s nature would

always remain warm, impulsive, and open.

During these same years another person entered the life of the story.

Not far from Paradise Hall lived a country gentleman named Squire Western. He was famous throughout the county for his loud voice, his love of hunting, and his strong opinions. The squire had a daughter named Sophia.

Sophia Western was still a child at this time, but she already possessed a beauty that promised to grow greater with every year. More important than her beauty, however, was her character. She was thoughtful, kind, and intelligent.

Sophia visited Paradise Hall often.

At first she played with both boys. But as time passed she began to prefer Tom's company.

Tom treated her with simple friendliness. He admired her courage and enjoyed her laughter. When they rode horses together across the fields, Tom always watched carefully to make sure she was safe.

Blifil behaved politely toward Sophia, but his politeness felt cold and careful.

Sophia noticed the difference.

One small incident made her feelings clearer.

Tom had once caught a beautiful bird. Instead of keeping it in a cage, he opened his hands and let it fly away.

Sophia asked him why he had done that.

Tom answered with a smile.

"Because the bird looked happier flying than sitting in my cage."

Sophia never forgot this moment.

From that day she felt certain that Tom possessed a goodness that could not easily be explained by the strict rules of teachers or philosophers.

Meanwhile the years passed quickly. Childhood slowly turned into youth. The peaceful estate of Paradise Hall seemed calm and secure.

Yet beneath that calm surface, the different paths of Tom Jones and Master Blifil were moving steadily toward a future conflict that neither of them yet understood.

## Part 4

The years passed, and the two boys who had once run freely through the fields of Paradise Hall began to grow into young men. Their bodies grew stronger, their voices deeper, and their characters clearer. If any observer had watched them closely, he would already have seen that their paths in life would not be the same.

Tom Jones became tall, active, and handsome. His face was open and cheerful. He laughed easily and spoke with warmth. He loved riding, hunting, and every form of exercise that required courage and strength. Servants liked him, poor people trusted him, and children followed him gladly wherever he went.

Yet Tom also had faults.

He acted quickly, often without careful thought. He followed his feelings more than his judgment. When he saw something that seemed unjust, he reacted at once. Sometimes he spoke too boldly to people older than himself. Sometimes he rushed into trouble without considering the consequences.

Blifil developed in a very different manner.

He was not as handsome as Tom, nor as lively, but he appeared calm, serious, and thoughtful. He rarely laughed loudly. He spoke slowly and chose his words carefully. When others argued, he listened quietly and waited.

Mr Thwackum admired this behavior greatly.

“This boy,” he often declared, pointing toward Blifil, “shows true moral discipline.”

Mr Square agreed.

“He possesses balance of mind and respect for reason.”

Tom did not receive such praise.

Whenever he made a mistake—and he made many—the two tutors were ready to correct him. Mr Thwackum corrected him with harsh lectures and sometimes with punishment. Mr Square corrected him with long explanations about philosophical principles.

Blifil listened to these lessons with quiet approval.

Yet the reader should observe one small detail. When Tom received punishment,

Blifil often stood nearby watching with an expression of deep concern. He appeared sad that Tom had behaved badly. He appeared grateful that the teachers were guiding him toward virtue.

But the sadness in his face did not always reach his heart.

One afternoon an incident occurred that revealed this difference very clearly.

A poor farmer had come to Paradise Hall to ask Mr Allworthy for help. His family had suffered great loss after a storm destroyed part of his land. Mr Allworthy promised to assist him and sent him away with some money.

Later that same day Tom met the farmer again on the road. The man was still worried about his children and spoke sadly of the hard winter that might come.

Tom felt immediate sympathy.

Without hesitation he took several coins from his own pocket and gave them to the farmer.

“Use this for your children,” Tom said.

The farmer thanked him warmly and left with new hope.

Unfortunately the story did not end there.

Blifil had witnessed the entire scene from a distance. That evening he reported the event to Mr Thwackum and Mr Square.

They questioned Tom about the matter.

“Is it true,” asked Mr Square, “that you gave money away without permission?”

“Yes,” Tom answered honestly.

Mr Thwackum shook his head severely.

“You have once again followed your feelings rather than moral discipline.”

Tom felt confused.

“I only wished to help someone in need.”

“Helping others,” replied Mr Square, “must always follow rational principles.”

Blifil spoke quietly.

“Tom means well, but he does not understand proper judgment.”

The teachers praised Blifil for his wisdom.

Tom was ordered to spend the evening studying instead of riding with the hunting party.

Later that night Mr Allworthy heard about the incident. He thought carefully before speaking.

“Tom,” he said gently, “kindness is never wrong. But kindness must be guided by prudence.”

Tom promised again that he would try to be more careful.

Yet even while he made this promise, his nature remained unchanged.

Around this time Sophia Western began to appear more frequently at Paradise Hall. She had grown into a young woman whose beauty was now impossible to ignore. Her dark eyes were lively and intelligent. Her voice was gentle but firm. Everyone who met her admired her immediately.

Her father, Squire Western, was a loud and passionate man who loved hunting more than almost anything else in the world. When he visited Paradise Hall, his voice could often be heard long before he entered the house.

“Horses! Dogs! Good wine!” he would shout happily.

Yet despite his rough manners, the squire loved his daughter deeply.

Sophia and Tom soon became close companions.

They rode together across the countryside, walked through the woods, and spoke freely about their thoughts. Tom admired Sophia’s intelligence and kindness. Sophia admired Tom’s courage and generosity.

Their friendship slowly deepened into something stronger.

Blifil observed this change very carefully.

He did not speak openly against Tom, but he watched every conversation between Tom and Sophia with quiet attention.

One day Mr Thwackum and Mr Square began discussing Sophia’s future.

“She is a young lady of great fortune,” said Mr Square.

“Indeed,” replied Thwackum, “and she should marry a man of proper moral character.”

Blifil listened silently.

Neither teacher suggested Tom as a suitable husband.

Instead they began to praise Blifil’s seriousness and steady behavior.

These conversations reached Mr Allworthy’s ears in time.

He did not yet speak openly of marriage, but the idea slowly began to form in his mind.

Meanwhile Tom remained unaware of these plans.

He continued to enjoy Sophia's company and believed that their friendship would last forever.

But the reader already understands what Tom does not.

In stories of the human heart, friendship and love rarely remain simple for long.

## Part 5

I must again speak a few words in my own voice before continuing the history. Some readers, I know, prefer a story to move quickly from one event to the next. They grow impatient when the author stops to talk about the meaning of what has happened. Yet I believe that a good story resembles a journey through a wide landscape. A traveler who runs too quickly may reach the end sooner, but he sees little of the country he passes through. I would rather move more slowly and allow the reader to observe the people and the nature that lie along our road. If any reader dislikes such pauses, he may skip them. I promise not to complain.

Now let us return to the affairs of Paradise Hall.

As Tom Jones entered young manhood, his character showed itself more clearly each day. He possessed great energy and courage. No hunt, no ride, no difficult road ever frightened him. He could leap a gate, swim a river, or climb a hill with ease. Yet the quality that made him most beloved was not his strength but his generosity.

When a servant was in trouble, Tom defended him.

When a poor family lacked food, Tom secretly carried supplies to their door.

If he had money, he gave it freely. If he had none, he offered his labor.

Unfortunately such actions did not always win approval from the people who guided his education.

Mr Thwackum believed that strict discipline was the only path to virtue. Mr Square believed that every action must be guided by careful reasoning. Since Tom

often acted from sudden feeling, both men continued to judge him severely.

Blifil, on the other hand, seemed to satisfy their expectations perfectly. He spoke often about duty, respect, and moral order. He quoted religious phrases when speaking to Mr Thwackum and philosophical ideas when speaking to Mr Square. In each conversation he appeared thoughtful and correct.

Yet the reader must observe that the two teachers saw only what they expected to see.

Tom's goodness was simple and direct. It did not hide itself in long speeches.

Blifil's behavior, however, was carefully arranged.

Around this time an event occurred that revealed Tom's weakness as well as his kindness.

Not far from Paradise Hall lived a gamekeeper named Black George. He had a daughter named Molly Seagrim. Molly was lively, attractive, and very proud of her beauty. She enjoyed admiration and did not always consider the consequences of her behavior.

Tom had known Molly since childhood. As they grew older their friendship became warmer and more dangerous.

Molly admired Tom openly. She laughed at his jokes, praised his courage, and followed him with bright eyes whenever he passed.

Tom, who was young and easily moved by affection, soon found himself strongly attracted to her.

One evening they walked together through the woods near the estate. The air was soft and quiet, and the last light of the sun rested on the leaves above them.

Molly spoke boldly.

"You do not visit me as often as before," she said.

Tom smiled.

"I have been busy," he answered.

"Busy with Miss Sophia Western, perhaps," Molly replied quickly.

Tom was surprised by her directness.

"Sophia is a good friend," he said.

Molly laughed softly.

“A friend? Perhaps. But every girl in the county knows that she looks at you differently.”

Tom did not reply at once. He felt uncomfortable discussing Sophia in such a way.

Molly stepped closer.

“And what do you feel for her?” she asked.

Tom hesitated. His feelings for Sophia were sincere, but he had never spoken them clearly, even to himself.

Molly interpreted his silence in her own way.

She placed her hand in his.

“You see,” she said, “I understand you better than others do.”

Tom was young. The evening was quiet. Molly’s voice was warm and confident.

Before long their conversation moved from words to actions that neither of them fully considered.

The reader does not need a long explanation of what followed. It is enough to say that Tom’s affection and Molly’s ambition soon created a relationship that would bring trouble.

News of this affair spread quickly through the village.

Some people admired Molly for capturing the attention of a gentleman. Others criticized her loudly. In small communities gossip travels faster than truth.

Sophia Western soon heard the story.

She had always believed that Tom possessed a noble heart. The rumor therefore caused her deep pain. Yet she said nothing openly. Instead she withdrew quietly and avoided Tom’s company for several days.

Tom noticed this change immediately.

When he met Sophia again during a visit to Paradise Hall, he saw that her usual brightness had faded.

“Miss Sophia,” he said, “have I done something to offend you?”

Sophia looked at him calmly.

“No,” she replied.

But the sadness in her voice told another story.

Tom felt troubled, though he did not yet understand the full reason.

Meanwhile the gossip about Molly grew louder.

Some villagers began to whisper that Molly expected to become the mother of a child.

If this were true, people asked, who could be the father?

Many immediately suspected Tom Jones.

Blifil listened carefully to these rumors.

One afternoon he repeated them in a quiet conversation with Mr Thwackum and Mr Square.

Both men expressed great disappointment.

“This confirms my fears,” said Mr Thwackum sternly. “The boy’s passions are stronger than his virtue.”

Mr Square nodded thoughtfully.

“His actions lack philosophical balance.”

The two teachers soon reported the situation to Mr Allworthy.

Mr Allworthy felt deep concern. He had always hoped that Tom’s generous heart would lead him toward honorable conduct. Now he feared that Tom’s weaknesses might lead him into disgrace.

Yet he did not judge the young man harshly.

“Youth often makes mistakes,” he said quietly.

“But character is revealed by how a man corrects those mistakes.”

Meanwhile Sophia struggled silently with her own emotions.

She could not easily forget Tom’s kindness, his courage, or the happiness she had once felt in his company.

But the story of Molly Seagrim had wounded her pride deeply.

Thus the peaceful fields around Paradise Hall now contained the first true conflict of the heart: love mixed with doubt, affection wounded by disappointment, and a young man whose good nature could not protect him from the consequences of his own actions.

Part 6

It is now time that I return again to the kitchen of my story and place before the reader another dish from the same large table of human nature. If the last part contained something bitter, let no one complain too loudly. Life itself serves bitter courses as well as sweet ones. A writer who pretends otherwise is like a cook who serves only sugar and calls it a meal. Therefore, reader, prepare yourself for a little noise, a little confusion, and perhaps a little laughter.

The matter of Molly Seagrim soon produced exactly the sort of noise that delights a country village.

One Sunday morning the parish church was unusually full. People who seldom attended worship suddenly discovered strong religious feelings. Their true purpose, however, was not devotion but curiosity. Molly Seagrim had appeared in public wearing a bright new dress, decorated with ribbons and colored cloth.

The dress was beautiful. That alone would have caused whispering.

But the whispers grew louder when people began asking an obvious question: where had Molly obtained such a costly dress?

Several young women in the village believed that Tom Jones must have given it to her. They therefore looked at Molly with sharp eyes and even sharper words.

Molly noticed their expressions at once.

She was not a woman who enjoyed silent humiliation.

During the service the murmurs grew louder. A few girls began speaking openly about Molly's behavior. One of them laughed loudly enough for the entire row to hear.

Molly's temper suddenly burst like a storm.

She turned, seized one of her critics by the hair, and within a moment the quiet church had become a place of shouting, pushing, and fighting. Ribbons flew through the air. Hats fell to the floor. Several respectable ladies screamed with horror.

The poor minister could not continue the service.

By the time the fight ended, Molly stood proudly in the middle of the church while several other young women attempted to repair their torn clothing.

News of the battle spread through the county before evening.

Mr Allworthy soon heard the story.

He felt deeply troubled, especially when Tom's name appeared in the conversation again and again. The rumor that Tom had given Molly the expensive dress seemed to confirm the earlier suspicions.

Tom himself was equally disturbed by the situation.

Although he cared for Molly, he did not wish to marry her. His feelings for Sophia Western remained far stronger. Yet Molly's condition now placed him in a difficult position.

After thinking seriously about the matter, Tom decided to visit Molly and speak honestly with her.

One afternoon he walked to the small house where Molly lived with her father, Black George.

When he knocked at the door, Molly's sister answered.

"Molly is not at home," she said at first.

Yet a moment later she smiled in a strange way and added, "Well... perhaps she is upstairs."

Tom climbed the narrow stairs and knocked on the door of Molly's room.

After a short delay Molly appeared. Her hair was loose, and she claimed she had been sleeping.

Tom spoke gently.

"Molly, we must talk seriously."

She looked at him with suspicious eyes.

"What about?"

Tom hesitated for a moment, then continued.

"It would be better for both of us if we ended our relationship."

Molly stared at him in disbelief.

"Ended it?" she repeated loudly.

Tom explained that he wished to give her money so that she could begin a new life elsewhere. He promised that he would never abandon her entirely and would help her if she truly needed support.

But Molly did not accept this plan calmly.

Her temper rose quickly. She shouted accusations and threw angry words across the room. As she moved about in her rage, she struck a large curtain that hung across part of the chamber.

The curtain fell suddenly to the floor.

And behind it stood a most unexpected figure.

Mr Square, the philosopher and Tom's respected tutor, was standing there in great embarrassment.

For a moment no one spoke.

Tom stared in astonishment. Molly's anger froze into silence.

Mr Square attempted to arrange his clothes with dignity.

"I came here," he said carefully, "to investigate certain rumors regarding Molly's conduct."

His explanation satisfied no one.

Tom could hardly believe what he saw. The same philosopher who had spoken so proudly about reason and moral discipline had clearly been hiding in Molly's room.

Molly soon recovered from her surprise.

She laughed loudly.

"It seems," she said, "that my visitors today are more numerous than I expected."

Tom felt both anger and disappointment. Yet the strange discovery also solved an important problem.

If Mr Square had been visiting Molly secretly, perhaps the rumors about Tom were not entirely correct.

Tom left the house with many thoughts in his mind.

Meanwhile the story of the hidden philosopher spread through the neighborhood almost as quickly as the church fight had done.

Mr Thwackum was extremely shocked when he heard the news.

Mr Square attempted to defend himself with long explanations about philosophical investigation, but few people believed them.

Mr Allworthy listened carefully to the various reports.

The truth remained uncertain. But one thing had become clear: the gossip surrounding Tom and Molly was more complicated than anyone had first imagined.

For Sophia Western the situation was still painful.

Although the discovery of Mr Square's visit suggested that Tom might not be the father of Molly's child, Sophia's pride had already been wounded. Her heart struggled between affection and distrust.

Tom himself felt ashamed of his past behavior. He had never intended to harm Sophia, yet he now saw that his careless actions had done exactly that.

These events did not end the difficulties of Paradise Hall.

On the contrary, they prepared the ground for an even greater misunderstanding that would soon change Tom Jones's life completely.

## Part 7

I must once again take the liberty of addressing the reader before continuing our history. Some readers imagine that virtue always receives immediate reward and that wrongdoing is quickly punished. If that were true, the world would be much easier to understand. Unfortunately human affairs rarely follow such simple order. Good people are sometimes blamed unjustly, while clever hypocrites often enjoy the praise that belongs to others. The reader should therefore not be surprised if the events that now follow seem unfair. In fact, the unfairness itself is part of the truth that this history intends to show.

After the strange discovery in Molly Seagrim's room, the rumors about Tom became somewhat less certain. Some villagers now suspected that Mr Square might have been more closely involved with Molly than he wished to admit. Others insisted that Tom must still bear responsibility for the whole affair.

Molly herself refused to give a clear answer.

She enjoyed the attention that the scandal brought her. Sometimes she hinted that Tom was the father of her expected child. At other times she allowed people to believe that another man might be responsible. Her behavior increased the

confusion rather than ending it.

Meanwhile Sophia Western continued to struggle with her feelings.

She could not forget Tom's generosity and warmth. Yet the story of Molly had wounded her pride deeply. When she saw Tom again at Paradise Hall, she greeted him politely but without the cheerful affection she had once shown.

Tom noticed the change at once.

"Miss Sophia," he said quietly during one visit, "I fear that I have somehow offended you."

Sophia answered with calm dignity.

"You have done nothing that requires explanation from me."

Such words might appear gentle, but the tone behind them was cold. Tom felt the distance between them more strongly than any harsh accusation.

At the same time another important event was taking place in the household.

Mr Allworthy had fallen seriously ill.

At first the illness seemed mild. But within a few days his strength weakened rapidly. The doctors who examined him looked grave and spoke cautiously. Soon the entire house believed that their generous master might be near death.

The servants moved quietly through the halls. Friends and neighbors sent messages of concern. Even the usually loud Squire Western spoke with unusual seriousness when he visited the house.

Tom felt deep distress at the thought of losing the man who had raised him.

One evening he left the house and walked alone through the dark fields. His mind was full of sorrow and anxiety. After some time he met a group of young men from the village who were returning from a small gathering.

They had wine with them and invited Tom to join them.

At first he refused.

"I cannot think of drinking tonight," he said. "Mr Allworthy is very ill."

But the young men insisted that a little company might lighten his troubled thoughts. They spoke warmly and reminded him that worry alone could not cure illness.

Tom's natural friendliness made it difficult for him to refuse them entirely. At

last he accepted a small cup of wine and remained with them for a short time.

Unfortunately this harmless moment later became the source of great misunderstanding.

While Tom was absent from the house, Master Blifil remained at Mr Allworthy's bedside. He behaved with perfect seriousness. He prayed quietly, spoke gently to the servants, and appeared deeply sorrowful at the danger facing his uncle.

When Mr Allworthy's condition suddenly improved the next morning, the entire household felt enormous relief.

The doctors now believed that he would recover.

Mr Allworthy himself soon regained enough strength to speak with the people around him.

Blifil was the first to approach him.

With an expression of deep concern, he began to describe the events of the previous evening.

"Uncle," he said softly, "I would not trouble you with unpleasant news while you were in danger. But now that you are recovering, I must speak honestly."

Mr Allworthy listened calmly.

"What is it, my child?"

Blifil hesitated, as if reluctant to continue.

"Last night, while the whole household feared for your life, Tom behaved in a manner that shocked us all."

Mr Allworthy looked surprised.

"Explain yourself."

Blifil lowered his eyes modestly.

"While we were praying and grieving, Tom gathered several companions in the house. They drank wine, sang loudly, and treated the evening as if it were a celebration."

Mr Allworthy frowned.

"That seems unlike Tom."

Blifil sighed.

“I wished to believe the same. Therefore I spoke to him privately and reminded him that such behavior was improper.”

“And what did he say?”

Blifil answered slowly.

“He became angry. He insulted me and even struck me.”

Mr Allworthy sat upright in his chair.

“Struck you?”

“Yes,” Blifil replied gently. “But I forgave him immediately. I only regret that he showed such ingratitude toward you.”

The story shocked Mr Allworthy deeply.

He had always hoped that Tom’s lively nature would mature into responsible conduct. Now he feared that Tom’s faults might be worse than he had imagined.

When Tom returned to the house later that day, he noticed that the atmosphere had changed.

The servants spoke to him with unusual caution. Mr Thwackum looked at him with severe disapproval. Even Mr Square appeared distant and thoughtful.

Soon Tom was summoned to Mr Allworthy’s room.

The old gentleman looked pale but serious.

“Tom,” he said slowly, “I have heard troubling news about your behavior last night.”

Tom listened in astonishment as Mr Allworthy repeated Blifil’s accusations.

“I never behaved in such a manner!” Tom cried.

“Did you not drink with companions while I lay dangerously ill?” Mr Allworthy asked.

Tom admitted that he had briefly joined the young men outside the house.

This admission strengthened the suspicion against him.

Mr Allworthy sighed heavily.

“Tom, I have always loved you. But your conduct continues to disappoint me.”

Tom attempted to defend himself, yet his explanation sounded weak compared with Blifil’s calm story.

The result was painful.

Mr Allworthy's trust in Tom was deeply shaken.

And this misunderstanding—carefully arranged by Blifil's quiet deceit—would soon lead to a decision that would drive Tom Jones away from the only home he had ever known.

## Part 8

The reader may remember that in the last part our generous Mr Allworthy had been dangerously ill. It is therefore only fair that I inform the reader of the happy result of that illness before I proceed further into the troubles of the younger people. For although illness may bring fear and sorrow to a household, recovery often reveals the true character of those who live within it.

Mr Allworthy's strength returned slowly but steadily. Each day he was able to sit longer in his chair and speak with more firmness. The servants, who truly loved him, moved through the house with renewed hope. Visitors arrived to offer congratulations. Even Squire Western, whose voice usually filled the entire neighborhood, tried—though not very successfully—to speak in a quieter tone.

Yet while the master's health improved, his opinion of Tom Jones remained clouded.

Blifil's story had left a deep impression on his mind. He could not easily forget the image of Tom celebrating while he himself lay near death. Even though Tom insisted that this was not the truth, Mr Allworthy believed that Tom's past behavior made such conduct possible.

"Your heart may be good," he told Tom one morning, "but your judgment is weak. And weak judgment often leads a man into serious fault."

Tom listened with sincere regret.

"Sir," he answered, "I would never willingly show disrespect to you. If my actions gave that appearance, I am deeply sorry."

Mr Allworthy nodded, but his disappointment did not disappear entirely.

Meanwhile Sophia Western watched these events with growing concern.

She had heard the rumors about Tom's behavior during Mr Allworthy's illness.

At first she believed them, for they seemed to agree with the earlier stories about Molly Seagrim. Yet when she saw Tom's honest distress and the sadness in his face, doubt began to rise in her mind.

One afternoon she met him alone in the garden at Paradise Hall.

Tom greeted her quietly.

"Miss Sophia, I fear that you also think poorly of me now."

Sophia hesitated before answering.

"I do not wish to judge you unfairly," she said at last.

Tom spoke with emotion.

"Believe me, I would never rejoice at the danger of the man who raised me."

Sophia studied his face carefully. His voice carried no sign of falsehood.

"Perhaps," she said slowly, "there is more to the story than I have heard."

Tom felt a moment of hope.

But that hope soon faded, for the influence of Blifil and the tutors remained strong within the household.

At this same time another conversation was taking place between Mr Allworthy and Squire Western.

The two gentlemen were discussing the future of their young relatives.

Squire Western admired strong hunting companions, and he had always liked Tom's courage in the field. Yet when the subject of marriage arose, he became practical.

"My daughter Sophia will marry a gentleman of good fortune," he declared. "And there is none better suited than your nephew Blifil."

Mr Allworthy considered the suggestion seriously.

Blifil was indeed his lawful heir. His behavior appeared calm and respectable. If Sophia became his wife, the two neighboring families would unite their estates.

The idea seemed sensible.

Mr Allworthy therefore began to consider the match with favor.

Unfortunately Sophia herself had a very different opinion.

When her father first mentioned the plan, she felt shocked and angry.

"I cannot marry him," she said firmly.

Squire Western stared at her in surprise.

“Cannot?” he shouted. “You mean will not!”

Sophia remained calm but determined.

“I do not love him.”

The squire waved his hand impatiently.

“Love! Love is nonsense. Marriage is about land, family, and good sense.”

Sophia answered quietly, “It is also about happiness.”

Her father did not appreciate this argument.

“You will do as I say,” he replied loudly.

The conversation ended in great tension.

Meanwhile Tom knew nothing of these marriage plans. His thoughts were occupied by a different problem.

The rumors surrounding Molly Seagrim had not disappeared. Although the discovery of Mr Square in Molly’s room had created doubt, many people still believed that Tom must be responsible for her condition.

Tom felt that his presence at Paradise Hall was becoming a burden for everyone.

Blifil continued to behave with perfect politeness toward him. Yet behind that politeness lay quiet hostility.

One evening Blifil approached Mr Allworthy again.

His voice was gentle, but his words carried serious weight.

“Uncle,” he said, “I hesitate to speak against anyone, especially one who has grown up beside me. But I fear that Tom’s influence may harm the peace of this household.”

Mr Allworthy looked troubled.

“Explain what you mean.”

Blifil sighed deeply.

“His conduct has already caused scandal in the village. Now his behavior during your illness has damaged your reputation as well.”

Mr Allworthy did not answer immediately.

After a long silence he spoke with sadness.

“If Tom truly brings trouble into this house, I must consider what is best for

everyone.”

Thus the decision slowly began to form in his mind.

Within a few days Tom was summoned again to Mr Allworthy’s study.

The old gentleman spoke with grave kindness.

“Tom,” he said, “I have long hoped that you would become a man of honor. Yet your recent actions have convinced me that you must learn discipline away from this house.”

Tom felt a sudden chill of fear.

“Sir... what do you mean?”

Mr Allworthy continued.

“You will leave Paradise Hall for a time. I shall provide money so that you may travel and find honest employment. If your conduct improves, perhaps we shall meet again in better circumstances.”

Tom stood silent.

The words struck him like a heavy blow. Paradise Hall was the only home he had ever known.

Yet he understood that arguing would only deepen Mr Allworthy’s disappointment.

At last he spoke quietly.

“If this is your wish, sir, I will obey.”

Thus, through misunderstanding and deception, the young man who had once been found sleeping peacefully in Mr Allworthy’s bed was now forced to leave the house where he had grown to adulthood.

And with that departure the true journey of Tom Jones was about to begin.

## Part 9

When the reader hears that a young man has been ordered to leave the house where he has lived since childhood, he may expect loud protest or bitter complaint. Such scenes often appear in plays and stories. Yet Tom Jones behaved very differently. The pain he felt was real and deep, but it did not turn into anger against

Mr Allworthy. Instead he blamed himself for the mistakes that had made such a decision possible.

After leaving the study, Tom walked slowly through the familiar halls of Paradise Hall. Every room held memories. The garden where he had played as a boy, the fields where he had hunted with Squire Western, the quiet paths where he had spoken with Sophia—all seemed suddenly distant, as if they already belonged to another life.

Word of his departure spread quickly through the household.

Some servants were openly sad. They knew Tom's generous nature and remembered many small acts of kindness he had done for them. Others, who admired Blifil's calm manners, believed that Mr Allworthy had made a wise decision.

Mr Thwackum declared that discipline had finally been applied to a rebellious spirit.

Mr Square spoke of moral order restoring balance.

Blifil listened to these conversations with quiet approval. Yet when Tom approached him to say farewell, Blifil's voice sounded full of sympathy.

"I am truly sorry that things have come to this," he said.

Tom looked at him carefully.

"If you are sorry," Tom replied, "I hope you will help Mr Allworthy think better of me in the future."

Blifil placed his hand gently on Tom's shoulder.

"I shall always wish for your improvement."

The words sounded kind, but they offered little comfort.

Meanwhile Tom had one farewell that mattered more than any other.

He wished to see Sophia Western before leaving.

This was not easy. Squire Western had become increasingly determined that Sophia should marry Blifil. He therefore watched his daughter closely and discouraged any meeting between her and Tom.

Yet fortune sometimes assists those who act with sincere hearts.

One afternoon Tom encountered Sophia walking alone in the garden near

Paradise Hall. Her maid had gone briefly into the house, leaving her mistress among the trees.

When Sophia saw Tom approaching, her expression changed at once. She had already heard the news of his departure.

“Is it true?” she asked quietly.

“Yes,” Tom answered. “Mr Allworthy believes it best that I leave.”

For a moment Sophia said nothing. Then she spoke with sudden emotion.

“This is unjust!”

Tom shook his head.

“Perhaps I have earned it.”

Sophia looked at him with troubled eyes.

“I cannot believe that you would behave as cruelly as they say.”

Tom felt a sudden warmth of gratitude.

“Your belief means more to me than you know.”

He hesitated before continuing.

“Miss Sophia, I must confess something before I go. I have long admired you—more than admired you. If circumstances were different, I would ask for your hand.”

Sophia lowered her eyes. Her voice became very soft.

“And if circumstances were different, I might not refuse.”

Tom felt his heart beat rapidly.

Yet Sophia quickly added, “But things are not different.”

She explained the pressure from her father and the plan to marry her to Blifil. The thought clearly filled her with distress.

Tom listened with growing anger.

“You must never marry him!” he cried.

Sophia looked at him firmly.

“That decision may not be mine.”

Tom struggled to control his emotions.

“If I were worthy, I would remain and defend my right to love you.”

Sophia answered gently, “Perhaps the best defense is patience.”

For a moment neither of them spoke.

Finally Sophia reached into her pocket and removed a small object—a delicate muff that she had once carried during the winter.

She placed it in Tom’s hands.

“Keep this,” she said. “It will remind you that not everyone doubts you.”

Tom held the gift carefully.

“I will guard it as the most precious thing I possess.”

At that moment the sound of approaching footsteps broke the quiet scene.

Sophia’s maid returned, followed closely by Squire Western himself.

The squire stopped suddenly when he saw Tom standing beside his daughter.

His voice rose like thunder.

“What is this! Are you still here?”

Tom bowed respectfully.

“I came only to say farewell.”

Squire Western shook his head angrily.

“You should have gone already!”

Sophia attempted to speak.

“Father—”

But he interrupted her loudly.

“Not another word! This fellow has caused enough trouble.”

Tom understood that any further argument would only harm Sophia.

He therefore bowed once more and turned away.

As he walked down the long road leading from Paradise Hall, he did not look back.

Yet in his pocket he carried Sophia’s muff, and in his heart he carried the hope that one day he might return with his honor restored.

Meanwhile Sophia watched from the garden path until Tom disappeared beyond the trees.

Her eyes filled with tears.

The road ahead for both of them had suddenly become long and uncertain.

## Part 10

When a young man leaves home under unhappy circumstances, the first miles of his journey often feel heavier than the longest road that follows. Tom Jones experienced exactly this feeling as he walked away from Paradise Hall. Although the countryside around him was beautiful, he could hardly notice it. His thoughts remained fixed on the house he had just left and on the people who remained there.

Above all he thought of Sophia Western.

The small muff she had given him rested safely in his coat. From time to time he touched it, as if to reassure himself that the memory of her kindness was still real.

Yet Tom was not a man who could remain sad for long without trying to improve his situation. As the day passed and the road carried him farther from Paradise Hall, his spirits slowly began to recover.

“If I cannot remain where I was,” he said to himself, “I must make the best of where I am going.”

Toward evening he reached a small inn beside the road. The building was simple but welcoming. Smoke rose from the chimney, and the sound of cheerful voices came from the open door.

Tom entered and ordered a modest meal.

While he was eating, he noticed a familiar face among the travelers in the room.

The man was older than Tom, with a thin figure and an expression that seemed both nervous and hopeful. After staring for several seconds, the stranger suddenly stood up.

“Mr Jones!” he cried.

Tom looked closely.

“Mr Partridge?”

It was indeed Partridge, the former schoolmaster who had once been accused of being Tom’s father.

Partridge hurried forward and shook Tom’s hand eagerly.

“What fortune to meet you here!” he exclaimed.

Tom welcomed the meeting warmly.

“I am glad to see you,” he said. “How have you been since leaving the parish?”

Partridge sighed.

“My life has not been easy. After the accusations against me, I was forced to travel from place to place seeking work. But I have always believed that one day the truth about that matter would be discovered.”

Tom nodded kindly.

“I never believed you were guilty.”

Partridge looked deeply grateful.

After a few minutes of conversation, Tom explained that he had been sent away from Paradise Hall and was beginning a journey without any clear destination.

Partridge listened with great attention.

Then he spoke carefully.

“Mr Jones, if you will allow it, I should like to accompany you.”

Tom looked surprised.

“Why?”

Partridge smiled nervously.

“Because I believe that our fortunes may improve together. And because I have always felt some attachment to you.”

Tom considered the suggestion.

The idea of traveling alone had not seemed pleasant. Partridge’s company, though sometimes amusingly foolish, was friendly and loyal.

“Very well,” Tom said at last. “You may travel with me if you wish.”

Partridge’s face brightened immediately.

“Excellent! I promise to be a faithful companion.”

Thus the two men began their journey together.

The next morning they left the inn and continued along the country road. The sky was clear, and the fields around them glowed in the warm light of early summer.

As they walked, Partridge spoke constantly. He asked questions about Paradise Hall, about Mr Allworthy, and especially about Sophia Western.

Tom answered patiently, though he avoided describing his feelings too openly. Late in the afternoon they heard shouting ahead on the road.

When they reached the place from which the noise came, they saw a disturbing scene. A young woman stood beside a broken carriage while two rough-looking men argued loudly with her driver.

The men appeared threatening, and the driver seemed frightened.

Tom immediately stepped forward.

“What is happening here?” he demanded.

One of the men turned toward him angrily.

“This is none of your business.”

Tom did not step back.

“It becomes my business when I see a woman being threatened.”

The situation quickly became tense.

The two men attempted to push past him, but Tom’s strength and courage soon convinced them that the argument would not end in their favor. After several angry words they finally retreated and disappeared down the road.

The young woman looked relieved.

“Sir,” she said, “you have saved me from serious trouble.”

Tom bowed politely.

“I am glad to be of service.”

She introduced herself as Mrs Waters, a traveler who had encountered difficulties on the road. Her carriage had broken down, and the two men had tried to take advantage of her helpless situation.

Tom offered to escort her to the nearest inn where she could rest safely.

Mrs Waters accepted the offer gratefully.

During the short journey she spoke with lively intelligence and charm. Tom found her conversation pleasant, though Partridge watched the lady with cautious curiosity.

When they reached the inn, Mrs Waters thanked Tom warmly for his assistance.

“You have behaved like a true gentleman,” she said.

Tom smiled modestly.

“I only did what any man should do.”

That evening the three travelers shared supper at the inn. The conversation was cheerful, and for a short time Tom forgot the sadness of leaving Paradise Hall.

Yet neither he nor Sophia could know that their paths were already moving toward another meeting—and toward another misunderstanding that would test their love more severely than ever before.

## Part 11

A traveler who leaves home often imagines that the world beyond his village will be simple and easy to understand. Yet experience soon proves the opposite. Roads bring together people of many different characters, and every inn becomes a small theater in which human nature performs its endless variety of scenes. Our young hero, Tom Jones, was now about to see more of this variety than he had ever imagined during his quiet life at Paradise Hall.

Tom, Partridge, and Mrs Waters continued their journey together the following day. The weather was clear, and the road wound through green countryside dotted with farms and small villages.

Partridge, who loved conversation almost as much as he feared danger, spoke constantly.

“Mr Jones,” he said, “I must confess that I admire your courage in facing those rough men yesterday. I myself felt quite certain they would attack us.”

Tom laughed.

“You exaggerate the danger. They were only bullies.”

Partridge shook his head.

“Bullies can be very dangerous when they carry sticks.”

Mrs Waters smiled at their exchange.

“Mr Jones seems quite capable of defending himself,” she said.

Tom accepted the compliment politely but changed the subject. Although Mrs Waters was pleasant company, he preferred not to encourage admiration that might lead to misunderstanding.

By evening they reached the town of Upton, where a comfortable inn offered rooms for travelers. The building was large and busy. Horses filled the stable yard, and voices from many different guests echoed through the halls.

The innkeeper welcomed them warmly.

“You arrive on a lively evening,” he said. “Several travelers are staying here tonight.”

Tom secured rooms for himself and Partridge, while Mrs Waters was given a chamber of her own.

Supper that night was noisy and cheerful. Merchants, soldiers, and country gentlemen filled the dining room. Stories and laughter passed freely around the tables.

Partridge enjoyed the excitement.

Tom listened politely but remained thoughtful. The long journey and the memory of Sophia often returned to his mind.

Meanwhile Mrs Waters observed Tom with growing admiration. His courage on the road and his natural kindness had impressed her greatly.

Later that evening she sent a servant with a message.

She wished to speak with Tom privately.

Tom hesitated when he received the invitation.

Partridge immediately looked alarmed.

“Sir,” he whispered nervously, “this seems dangerous.”

Tom laughed quietly.

“It is only a conversation.”

“Many troubles begin with conversations,” Partridge replied.

Nevertheless Tom went to Mrs Waters’s chamber.

She received him warmly and thanked him again for rescuing her on the road.

“I owe you more gratitude than I can easily express,” she said.

Tom answered with modest politeness.

“Any gentleman would have done the same.”

Their conversation soon became more personal. Mrs Waters spoke openly about the loneliness of travel and the dangers faced by women who journey

without strong protection.

Tom listened sympathetically.

The evening grew late. Outside the window the moonlight shone across the quiet town of Upton.

What followed between them need not be described in long detail. It is enough to say that Tom's generous nature and Mrs Waters's charm led them into a moment of weakness.

Meanwhile another traveler had arrived at the inn that same night.

This traveler was none other than Sophia Western.

After the argument with her father about marriage to Blifil, Sophia had made a bold decision. She had left her father's house and begun her own journey with the help of her loyal maid, Honour.

By coincidence—or perhaps by that strange power which sometimes guides events in stories—Sophia and Tom had arrived at the same inn on the same evening.

Yet neither of them knew it.

The next morning confusion suddenly broke the quiet order of the house.

An Irish gentleman named Mr Fitzpatrick rushed into the inn searching for his wife, who had run away from him. His temper was violent, and he demanded that the innkeeper reveal where she was hiding.

A servant, misunderstanding the situation, believed that the missing lady must be staying in Mrs Waters's room.

Fitzpatrick stormed up the stairs.

Finding the door locked, he threw his full weight against it.

The lock broke instantly. The door flew open.

Fitzpatrick fell forward into the room—and found himself staring at a surprising sight.

Tom Jones stood beside the bed.

Mrs Waters sat up suddenly behind him.

Fitzpatrick looked around the chamber. Moonlight from the window revealed clothing scattered across the floor—gowns, ribbons, stockings, and shoes.

The Irish gentleman's face filled with jealousy and anger.

"What is this?" he shouted.

Tom stepped forward.

"Sir, you have entered the wrong room."

Fitzpatrick suddenly realized his mistake.

"I beg your pardon," he said quickly, turning toward the door.

But as he stepped back, the objects on the floor caught his eye again, and his temper flared once more.

"Some villainy is clearly happening here!" he cried.

The noise soon brought the innkeeper and several other guests running upstairs.

The confusion lasted for several minutes before the situation was finally explained. Fitzpatrick had entered the wrong chamber while searching for his runaway wife.

Yet although the mistake was cleared up, the disturbance had another unexpected result.

During the same night Sophia Western had learned that Tom Jones was staying in the inn.

When her maid Honour quietly discovered that he had spent the night with another woman, Sophia's heart broke.

She tried to hide her feelings.

"I feel quite relieved," she told Honour bravely. "Now I see that I was wrong about him."

But even as she spoke these words, tears filled her eyes.

"He is not only bad," she whispered. "He is unworthy of respect."

Then she turned away and began to cry.

Thus fate had once again placed Tom and Sophia close to each other—only to separate them more painfully than before.

## Part 12

When lovers misunderstand each other, the reader may feel tempted to blame

one side or the other. Yet such situations rarely arise from simple faults. A careless action, a hidden observer, a rumor repeated at the wrong moment—any of these may twist the truth until it appears entirely different from reality. The events at Upton Inn were exactly such a case.

Sophia Western left the inn early the next morning.

She had no wish to remain in a place that now held such painful memories. With the help of her maid Honour, she ordered fresh horses and prepared to continue her journey.

Honour, who loved gossip almost as much as comfort, had spent part of the morning collecting information from the inn servants.

“Miss,” she said while packing their luggage, “I have learned something interesting.”

Sophia looked tired.

“What is it?”

Honour hesitated.

“They say that the woman staying with Mr Jones is called Mrs Waters. She seems very friendly with him.”

Sophia turned away.

“You need not tell me more.”

Honour, however, could not resist adding one more detail.

“And they say she is quite beautiful.”

Sophia felt another sharp pain in her heart.

“Enough,” she said quietly.

Within the hour they left the inn and continued toward London.

Meanwhile Tom remained unaware that Sophia had been so near.

After the disturbance with Mr Fitzpatrick the night before, he had slept poorly. The morning sunlight found him thoughtful and uneasy.

Partridge noticed his mood immediately.

“Sir,” he said cautiously, “I believe the events of last night have caused you some regret.”

Tom nodded.

“You are correct.”

Partridge lowered his voice.

“It is always dangerous when a gentleman becomes too friendly with a lady he has only recently met.”

Tom sighed.

“You may be right again.”

He was not thinking only about Mrs Waters. His thoughts returned again and again to Sophia Western. The gift she had given him still rested safely in his pocket.

“I must find her,” he said suddenly.

Partridge looked surprised.

“Find her? In London?”

“Yes,” Tom replied. “If she has gone there, I must at least attempt to speak with her.”

Partridge scratched his head thoughtfully.

“London is a large city.”

“Then we must search carefully.”

Before leaving the inn Tom thanked Mrs Waters once more for her company and wished her a safe journey. She seemed disappointed that he would not continue traveling beside her.

“You are leaving too quickly,” she said.

Tom answered politely.

“I have urgent business elsewhere.”

Soon afterward Tom and Partridge set out on the road again.

The journey toward London was long but lively. Travelers filled the highway: merchants carrying goods, soldiers marching toward distant towns, farmers leading animals to market.

Partridge enjoyed observing everything.

“London must be the most exciting place in the world,” he declared.

Tom smiled faintly.

“It is also the most dangerous.”

During one afternoon’s ride they encountered another traveler who soon joined

their conversation. This man was older than Tom and dressed in simple but respectable clothing. His manner was thoughtful and reserved.

After several miles of discussion, the stranger began to speak about his own life.

“Many years ago,” he said, “I also believed that the world would reward honesty and kindness.”

Tom listened with interest.

The man continued.

“Experience taught me that human nature is far more complicated.”

Partridge leaned closer to hear the story.

The stranger explained how he had once been wealthy and respected. Yet through a series of misfortunes and betrayals he had lost both fortune and reputation. Now he lived quietly in the countryside, avoiding society whenever possible.

Tom felt sympathy for him.

“Your story is sad,” he said.

The man shrugged calmly.

“It is simply the story of life.”

This traveler was known as *the Man of the Hill*, and his tale continued for many miles along the road. He spoke about friendship, betrayal, ambition, and the strange mixture of good and evil that exists in human nature.

Tom listened respectfully, though he did not fully share the man’s dark view of the world.

“I still believe that kindness has value,” Tom said at last.

The stranger studied him carefully.

“Then you are fortunate,” he replied. “Do not lose that belief too quickly.”

Eventually their roads separated. The Man of the Hill continued toward his quiet retreat, while Tom and Partridge moved onward toward London.

As evening approached they reached the top of a hill from which the distant towers of the great city could finally be seen.

The sight filled Partridge with excitement.

“There it is!” he cried.

Tom looked silently at the horizon.

Somewhere within that vast city Sophia Western might already be living.

Yet he did not know that new dangers and new temptations waited for him there—dangers that would test both his character and his love more severely than any trial he had faced before.

### Part 13

When travelers approach a great city for the first time, their feelings are often mixed with excitement and uncertainty. The noise grows louder with every mile. Roads become crowded. Carriages pass in both directions. Houses appear more closely together until the open countryside disappears entirely. Such was the experience of Tom Jones and his companion Partridge as they moved steadily toward London.

Partridge looked around with wide eyes.

“Mr Jones,” he said, “I have never seen so many people traveling at once.”

Tom smiled.

“This is only the beginning. Wait until we reach the streets.”

The closer they came to the city, the more varied the crowd became. Gentlemen on horseback rode past merchants with heavy wagons. Soldiers marched beside groups of farmers bringing goods to market. Street sellers walked along the road shouting the price of fruit and bread.

Partridge watched everything with great curiosity.

“How can anyone know so many strangers?” he asked.

Tom laughed softly.

“In London, most people do not try.”

At last they entered the outer streets of the city. Tall houses lined the roads. Shops displayed bright goods behind their windows. The sound of wheels, voices, and footsteps filled the air.

Partridge felt both excited and uneasy.

“I hope we shall not lose each other in this place,” he said nervously.

Tom reassured him.

“We will find lodging soon.”

After asking directions several times, they reached a respectable boarding house recommended by another traveler. The building belonged to a widow named Mrs Miller.

Mrs Miller greeted them kindly. She was a gentle woman who managed her household with patience and dignity.

“You are welcome here,” she said. “We always try to make travelers feel at home.”

Tom immediately liked her manner. He arranged rooms for himself and Partridge and began to settle into the house.

During the first evening he noticed that the family living there seemed troubled. Mrs Miller’s daughter looked worried, and her son avoided conversation whenever the subject of money arose.

Tom soon learned the reason.

The young man had borrowed money from several creditors and now faced serious danger if he could not repay his debts. In London such problems could quickly lead to imprisonment.

When Tom heard this story, his generous nature responded at once.

“Perhaps I can help,” he said quietly to Mrs Miller.

The widow tried to refuse.

“You are a stranger here. I cannot ask such a sacrifice.”

Tom insisted.

“I do not consider kindness a sacrifice.”

Within a short time he had paid the most urgent debts of the young man and protected the family from immediate disaster.

Mrs Miller was deeply grateful.

“You have saved my son,” she said.

Tom answered simply, “I only did what seemed right.”

Partridge observed the entire situation with admiration.

“Sir,” he whispered later, “your generosity will make you famous in this house.”

Tom smiled.

“Kindness should not be done for fame.”

Yet the reader may notice that Tom’s habit of helping others often left him with less money for himself.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in London, Sophia Western had also found a place to stay.

After leaving Upton, she had traveled safely to the city with her maid Honour. Through the help of relatives she obtained temporary shelter in the house of Lady Bellaston, a wealthy and fashionable woman.

Lady Bellaston possessed beauty, intelligence, and considerable influence in London society. She also enjoyed observing the romantic troubles of younger people.

When Sophia told her the story of Tom Jones, Lady Bellaston listened with interest.

“So this gentleman has disappointed you,” she said thoughtfully.

Sophia answered quietly.

“I believed him honorable.”

Lady Bellaston smiled slightly.

“Men are rarely as honorable as women hope.”

Yet Sophia did not completely abandon her faith in Tom. Despite the painful events at Upton, her heart still struggled between doubt and affection.

Fate soon arranged another meeting.

One evening Tom attended a masquerade gathering in London. Such events were popular in the city. Guests wore masks and costumes so that they could speak freely without revealing their identities.

The room glittered with light and music. Gentlemen and ladies moved through the crowd laughing and whispering.

Tom stood watching the scene with curiosity when a masked woman approached him.

“Sir,” she said softly, “I believe you are searching for someone.”

Tom looked surprised.

“Perhaps I am.”

The lady leaned closer.

“I may know where she is.”

Tom felt sudden hope.

“If you know Miss Sophia Western, I beg you to tell me.”

The woman hesitated.

“Follow me, and we shall speak privately.”

Tom agreed without hesitation.

The masked lady led him through several quiet streets until they reached a large house near Hanover Square. Servants opened the door and allowed them to enter.

Inside, the rooms were richly decorated and warmly lit.

The woman removed her mask.

Tom stared in astonishment.

The face before him was not Mrs Fitzpatrick, as he had expected.

It was *Lady Bellaston* herself.

She smiled calmly at his surprise.

“Mr Jones,” she said, “welcome to my house.”

#### Part 14

If the reader expected that the meeting between Tom Jones and Lady Bellaston would quickly lead him to Sophia Western, he must prepare for disappointment. In the great city of London, information rarely travels directly from one heart to another. Instead it passes through many hands, and each person who touches it often changes its direction slightly.

Lady Bellaston observed Tom carefully after revealing her identity.

She was a woman who enjoyed power, especially the power of guiding the emotions of others. The story of Tom and Sophia had already amused her greatly.

“Mr Jones,” she said with an easy smile, “you appear very eager to find Miss Western.”

Tom answered honestly.

“I wish only to explain certain misunderstandings.”

Lady Bellaston nodded slowly.

“Misunderstandings are common in matters of love.”

She invited Tom to sit beside her in a comfortable chamber. Servants soon brought wine and light refreshments.

“Tell me your story,” she continued. “I enjoy hearing about romantic adventures.”

Tom hesitated, but he soon realized that Lady Bellaston already knew much of the history. She listened with interest while he explained the events at Paradise Hall, the journey from home, and the painful misunderstanding at Upton Inn.

When he finished, Lady Bellaston leaned back thoughtfully.

“Your situation is unfortunate,” she said. “Miss Western is proud, and wounded pride can be difficult to heal.”

Tom spoke earnestly.

“If I could only speak with her once, I believe I could clear away her doubts.”

Lady Bellaston watched him closely.

“Perhaps I can arrange such a meeting.”

Tom felt immediate gratitude.

“If you could do that, I would be forever in your debt.”

Lady Bellaston smiled again, though her smile carried a meaning Tom did not yet understand.

“Do not promise too much too quickly,” she said lightly. “Let us say only that I will consider how best to help you.”

The conversation continued for several hours. At last Tom rose to leave.

“May I ask when I might see Miss Western?” he said hopefully.

Lady Bellaston lifted her hand.

“Patience, Mr Jones. Matters of this kind require careful timing. I shall send you word.”

Tom thanked her warmly and returned to his lodging at Mrs Miller’s house.

Partridge listened with great curiosity when he heard the story.

“Sir,” he said, “this Lady Bellaston sounds like a powerful woman.”

“She is,” Tom replied.

Partridge looked doubtful.

“Powerful people often enjoy games.”

Tom smiled.

“Not every action hides a trick.”

Yet Partridge’s caution was not entirely foolish.

During the following days Lady Bellaston continued to invite Tom to her house. At first the meetings seemed innocent enough. She asked questions about his life and spoke pleasantly about London society.

But gradually her interest became more personal.

She admired Tom’s appearance, his courage, and his open character. Tom, who had little experience with the complicated manners of fashionable society, accepted her friendship with simple gratitude.

Soon he found himself visiting her house frequently.

Lady Bellaston also began providing him with small favors. She introduced him to fashionable shops, helped him obtain elegant clothing, and guided him through the confusing customs of London life.

Partridge noticed these changes with increasing concern.

“Sir,” he whispered one evening, “you now dress like a gentleman of great fortune.”

Tom laughed.

“London seems to require it.”

Partridge shook his head.

“I hope these gifts do not carry hidden obligations.”

Tom dismissed the idea.

“Lady Bellaston has promised to help me meet Sophia again.”

Meanwhile Sophia Western continued to live under Lady Bellaston’s protection. At first she knew nothing of Tom’s visits. Lady Bellaston preferred to keep the two lovers apart while she observed their feelings.

Yet Sophia soon noticed changes in the household.

Servants whispered about a handsome young gentleman who visited frequently. One afternoon Sophia happened to glance from a window just as Tom Jones entered the house.

The sight shocked her deeply.

She believed that Tom had come to visit Lady Bellaston as her admirer.

Her pride and jealousy immediately returned.

“So he has forgotten me already,” she said bitterly.

Honour attempted to comfort her.

“Perhaps there is some explanation.”

Sophia shook her head.

“His explanation at Upton was clear enough.”

Yet the truth was far more complicated.

Tom continued to hope that Lady Bellaston would soon arrange a meeting with Sophia. Lady Bellaston, however, preferred to delay that moment. She enjoyed the strange position of holding both their fates within her hands.

The reader may already suspect that such power rarely produces happiness.

And indeed the next events would bring Tom Jones into even deeper difficulties—difficulties that would test his honor, his patience, and his love more severely than ever before.

## Part 15

If the reader has followed our history carefully, he will already understand that Tom Jones possessed a generous heart but a dangerous weakness. He could resist injustice bravely, he could defend the poor without hesitation, yet he often failed to guard himself against temptation. This weakness now placed him in one of the most delicate situations of his life.

Lady Bellaston’s interest in Tom grew stronger with every visit.

At first she had merely wished to observe him and enjoy the small drama between the young lovers. But as she came to know him better, she began to admire his courage, his warmth, and his handsome appearance.

Tom, meanwhile, believed that he must remain friendly with her if he wished to see Sophia again.

Thus their meetings continued.

One evening Tom arrived at Lady Bellaston's house and was led into a richly decorated chamber. The room was warm with candlelight, and soft music could be heard in the distance.

Lady Bellaston greeted him with unusual warmth.

"Mr Jones," she said, "you appear tired tonight."

"London can be exhausting," Tom answered.

She smiled.

"Perhaps you work too hard thinking about Miss Western."

Tom did not deny it.

"My thoughts return to her constantly."

Lady Bellaston watched him closely.

"And yet," she said slowly, "you spend many evenings in my company."

Tom felt uneasy.

"I am grateful for your kindness."

Lady Bellaston stepped closer.

"Gratitude can take many forms."

The meaning of her words soon became clear.

Tom suddenly realized that the situation had changed. Lady Bellaston no longer behaved like a helpful friend who wished to unite two lovers. Instead she expected a more personal relationship.

For a moment Tom hesitated. His feelings for Sophia remained sincere, but he also knew that refusing Lady Bellaston might destroy his chance of seeing Sophia again.

Thus he made a mistake.

Instead of leaving immediately, he allowed the situation to continue.

From that time forward Tom became closely connected with Lady Bellaston. She treated him with great generosity. She provided him with money, clothing, and entrance into fashionable society. Soon he dressed as elegantly as the most

fashionable gentlemen in London.

Partridge observed these changes with increasing concern.

“Sir,” he said one evening, “this lady gives you many favors.”

Tom answered with a troubled smile.

“Too many, perhaps.”

Partridge lowered his voice.

“Favors from powerful ladies are rarely free.”

Tom knew that his companion spoke wisely, but the situation had already become complicated.

Meanwhile Lady Bellaston still controlled the possibility of a meeting between Tom and Sophia.

At last, after several weeks, she made a promise.

“I will arrange for you to see Miss Western,” she said. “But you must agree to one condition.”

Tom listened carefully.

“When you meet her, you must promise to leave her afterward. You must not continue to pursue her affection.”

Tom felt shocked.

“Leave her?”

Lady Bellaston nodded calmly.

“One meeting only.”

Tom struggled with the decision. To see Sophia again—even once—meant everything to him.

At last he agreed.

Lady Bellaston seemed satisfied.

“Very well,” she said. “You shall have your meeting soon.”

Fate, however, does not always follow the plans of those who try to control it.

Before Lady Bellaston could arrange the meeting, Tom and Sophia encountered each other by pure accident.

One afternoon Tom entered a room in Lady Bellaston’s house without knowing that Sophia was already there.

When they saw each other, both stopped suddenly.

For a moment neither spoke.

Then Tom rushed forward.

“Sophia!”

She stood frozen with surprise and emotion.

“Mr Jones...”

Tom could not hide his feelings.

“My dearest Sophia, I would rather lose everything than lose your love.”

Sophia’s eyes filled with tears. For a moment she allowed herself to lean gently against him.

Tom held her hands and spoke with deep emotion.

“Even when I seemed unfaithful, my heart never left you. I swear that no other woman has ever held the place you hold in my life.”

Sophia struggled to remain calm.

“You speak beautifully,” she said quietly, “but words are not proof.”

Tom tried to explain the misunderstandings that had separated them.

But before the conversation could continue, the door suddenly opened.

Lady Bellaston entered the room.

She stopped at once when she saw them standing together.

The expression on her face changed quickly, though she recovered her calm manner almost immediately.

“What an interesting surprise,” she said lightly.

Sophia stepped away from Tom.

Tom understood at once that their private moment had ended.

The situation had now become far more complicated than before.

## Part 16

If the reader believes that the sudden entrance of Lady Bellaston ended the conversation between our two lovers peacefully, he will soon discover that such hope is foolish. For when three persons meet under circumstances where each

suspects the others of secrets, calm conversation rarely continues long.

Lady Bellaston looked first at Sophia and then at Tom.

“I see,” she said slowly, “that chance has done what I intended to arrange.”

Sophia answered with dignity.

“Madam, I did not expect to meet Mr Jones here.”

Lady Bellaston smiled politely, though the smile contained very little kindness.

“Nor did I expect it, I assure you.”

Tom attempted to speak.

“Lady Bellaston, the meeting was entirely accidental.”

“Accidents,” she replied, “are often the most revealing events in the world.”

Sophia felt deeply embarrassed by the situation. She had believed Lady Bellaston to be a friend who might help protect her from the pressures of her father and others who wished her to marry Blifil.

Yet something in the lady’s voice now made her uneasy.

Tom also sensed danger. Lady Bellaston’s patience was not endless, and he feared that she might use her influence to separate him completely from Sophia.

The conversation soon ended. Sophia withdrew, leaving Tom alone with Lady Bellaston.

The moment the door closed behind Sophia, Lady Bellaston turned toward Tom. Her voice lost its polite softness.

“Mr Jones,” she said, “you appear to forget your promises.”

Tom answered cautiously.

“Madam, I intended no deception.”

“Yet I find you embracing the very lady you promised to leave.”

Tom felt ashamed.

“My feelings overcame my judgment.”

Lady Bellaston watched him carefully.

“Yes,” she said quietly, “that is a weakness you possess.”

Tom could not deny the truth of this statement.

For several days afterward Lady Bellaston treated Tom with cold politeness. Nevertheless she did not dismiss him completely. The strange relationship

between them continued, though both now understood its fragile nature.

During this time another man entered the story.

Lord Fellamar, a nobleman of considerable wealth, happened to visit Lady Bellaston's house.

One day he saw Sophia.

The effect was immediate and powerful.

"Who is that young lady?" he asked eagerly.

Lady Bellaston answered with a calm voice.

"Miss Sophia Western."

Fellamar watched Sophia closely.

"She is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen."

Lady Bellaston noticed his admiration at once. An idea began to form in her mind.

If Fellamar became interested in Sophia, the connection between Tom and Sophia might be destroyed forever.

Thus she encouraged the nobleman's interest.

Fellamar soon became passionately determined to win Sophia's affection. But Sophia received his attention with clear indifference.

Lady Bellaston therefore suggested a more dangerous plan.

"My lord," she said one evening, "Miss Western is proud and cautious. Sometimes a woman's resistance disappears when a man shows great boldness."

Fellamar misunderstood—or perhaps preferred to misunderstand—the meaning of these words.

A few nights later he attempted something extremely reckless.

While Sophia was alone in her room, Fellamar secretly entered the house and forced his way into her chamber.

Sophia was shocked to see him.

"My lord! You must leave immediately!"

Fellamar approached her with intense emotion.

"I cannot live without you."

Sophia stepped back.

“You forget yourself.”

He seized her arm.

“You shall be mine!”

Sophia struggled desperately.

“Release me at once! I will call for help!”

Fellamar refused.

“Call if you wish,” he said. “I fear nothing except losing you.”

At that very moment loud shouting suddenly echoed through the house.

A powerful voice roared in anger.

“Where is my daughter? I know she is here! Show her to me immediately!”

The door burst open.

Mr Western himself entered the room, followed by several servants and companions.

Fellamar released Sophia instantly.

The situation had become impossible to conceal.

Western looked from one person to another with burning anger.

“What devil’s business is this?”

Sophia ran toward her father.

“Father!”

Fellamar attempted to explain, but Western had no patience for explanations.

“You scoundrel!” he shouted.

The house erupted in confusion.

And though Tom was not present during this scene, the consequences of these events would soon affect him deeply.

## Part 17

While these dramatic events unfolded in one part of London, Tom Jones found himself struggling with a problem of a very different kind. His connection with Lady Bellaston had become increasingly uncomfortable, and he now wished sincerely to free himself from it.

Yet breaking with a powerful woman is not always easy.

Lady Bellaston had given him many favors. She had improved his clothing, increased his income, and introduced him to fashionable society. If he suddenly abandoned her friendship, she might become his enemy.

Tom therefore sought advice.

One evening he spoke privately with his friend Mr Nightingale, a gentleman who possessed both intelligence and a certain mischievous sense of humor.

“My dear friend,” Tom began, “I am trapped in a most unpleasant situation.”

Nightingale smiled.

“Such situations usually involve a lady.”

Tom sighed.

“You are correct. Lady Bellaston.”

Nightingale listened with great interest as Tom explained everything—the favors he had received, the obligations he now felt, and his desire to end the connection without creating a scandal.

When Tom finished speaking, Nightingale remained silent for a moment.

Then he laughed.

“I have discovered the perfect solution.”

Tom leaned forward eagerly.

“What is it?”

Nightingale spoke calmly.

“Ask her to marry you.”

Tom stared at him in astonishment.

“Marriage?”

“Exactly.”

Tom shook his head.

“That would only make the situation worse.”

Nightingale raised a finger.

“Not at all. Consider the matter carefully. Lady Bellaston enjoys your company, but she values her independence far more than she values you. If you offer marriage, she will dismiss you immediately.”

Tom slowly began to understand.

“You believe she will reject me?”

Nightingale laughed again.

“Reject you? My dear fellow, she will flee from you.”

The plan seemed strange, yet Tom could think of no better method. After much hesitation he agreed to attempt it.

Soon afterward he wrote a respectful letter to Lady Bellaston.

In this letter he declared his gratitude for her kindness and expressed his deep admiration for her character. Then, with careful politeness, he asked whether she would consider becoming his wife.

The reply arrived the following day.

Lady Bellaston’s answer contained neither politeness nor gratitude.

Her letter was sharp and direct.

She wrote:

“Do you truly believe me such a fool? Do you imagine that I would surrender my fortune and my independence to a man who hopes to use me for his own advantage? If this is your idea of love, I advise you to seek another audience for it.”

Tom read the letter twice.

Then he smiled.

The plan had succeeded perfectly.

Lady Bellaston ended their connection immediately.

Yet the story does not end here, for wounded pride often produces revenge.

Lady Bellaston soon discovered an opportunity to harm Tom.

Some time earlier Tom had written the marriage proposal with his own hand. That letter still existed.

Lady Bellaston now sent it to Sophia’s aunt.

“Perhaps,” she suggested politely, “Miss Western might be interested in reading this.”

The effect was exactly what she intended.

When Sophia saw Tom’s letter to Lady Bellaston, she felt deeply betrayed. She

believed that Tom had been secretly attempting to marry another woman while pretending to love her.

Meanwhile Tom encountered yet another disaster.

Mr Fitzpatrick, the jealous husband of Mrs Fitzpatrick, suddenly attacked him in the street. Fitzpatrick had convinced himself that Tom was responsible for his wife's behavior.

The quarrel quickly became violent.

Swords were drawn.

During the struggle Tom wounded Fitzpatrick seriously.

Though Tom had acted in self-defense, the law did not immediately recognize this fact.

He was arrested and placed in prison.

While Tom sat in his dark cell, a letter arrived.

The letter came from Sophia.

He opened it with trembling hands.

Her words were painfully clear.

She wrote that she had seen his letter to Lady Bellaston. The date of the letter proved, in her eyes, that he had written it during the same period when he claimed to be suffering for love of her.

"I ask for no explanation," she wrote. "My only wish is never to hear your name again."

When Tom finished reading, he felt that his last hope had vanished.

Alone in his prison cell, he believed that both his freedom and his love were lost forever.

## Part 18

If the reader imagines that Tom Jones had already suffered enough misfortune, he will soon discover that fate had prepared for him one more terrible shock.

Tom remained in prison, deeply troubled by Sophia's letter. He walked slowly across the narrow room, reading the message again and again. Every word seemed

to strike his heart like a blade.

“Never to hear your name again.”

These words echoed in his mind without rest.

“I have lost her,” he said quietly to himself. “I have lost the only happiness I ever truly desired.”

At that moment the door of his cell opened.

Partridge entered, looking nervous and pale.

“Sir,” he said, “someone wishes to visit you.”

Tom turned quickly.

“Who?”

Partridge hesitated.

“The lady from Upton... Mrs Waters.”

Tom felt surprised, but he allowed the visit.

A moment later Mrs Waters entered the room.

She greeted Tom kindly.

“Mr Jones,” she said, “I am sorry to find you in such circumstances.”

Tom bowed politely.

“Madam, your visit is generous.”

They spoke for some time. Mrs Waters expressed sympathy for Tom’s misfortune and asked questions about his situation. Tom answered honestly, though his thoughts were still heavy with sorrow.

At last Mrs Waters prepared to leave.

“I hope,” she said gently, “that your troubles will soon end.”

Tom thanked her sincerely.

When she departed, Partridge returned to the room. His face now looked even more troubled than before.

Tom noticed this immediately.

“What is the matter with you?”

Partridge hesitated, trembling slightly.

“Sir... I must ask you something.”

“Speak freely.”

Partridge lowered his voice.

“The lady who just left... she is the same lady you met at Upton.”

“Yes,” Tom answered. “You know that already.”

Partridge swallowed nervously.

“And... you truly spent the night with her?”

Tom looked puzzled by the question.

“Unfortunately that fact is known to many people.”

Partridge suddenly began to shake.

“Sir, I beg you—tell me clearly. Did you sleep with her?”

Tom answered impatiently.

“Yes, I did.”

Partridge raised his hands in horror.

“May Heaven forgive you!”

Tom stared at him.

“What madness is this?”

Partridge spoke with great fear.

“Sir... that lady... she may be your mother.”

For several seconds Tom did not understand the meaning of these words.

Then the terrible possibility suddenly became clear.

His face turned pale.

“My mother?”

Partridge nodded miserably.

“I once heard that the woman called Jenny Jones was your mother. And I now believe that Mrs Waters is the same person.”

Tom stood frozen with horror.

“Good God...”

He tried to speak but no words came.

Both men remained silent, staring at each other in shock.

At last Tom collapsed into a chair.

“If this is true,” he whispered, “then I have committed the most terrible crime imaginable.”

Partridge could offer no comfort.

The possibility seemed so dreadful that neither man could think clearly.

Tom spent the rest of the night in deep despair. He believed that he had destroyed his own honor forever.

Yet the truth, as the reader will soon discover, was very different.

While Tom suffered in prison, Mrs Waters visited another person.

She requested a meeting with Mr Allworthy.

When she entered his presence, she spoke with seriousness and respect.

“Sir,” she said, “I must tell you the truth about the child who was found many years ago in your bed.”

Allworthy listened carefully.

Mrs Waters continued.

“It is true that I carried the child into your room. But I did not give birth to him.”

Allworthy leaned forward with sudden attention.

“Then who was his mother?”

Mrs Waters hesitated.

“The truth is difficult to speak.”

Allworthy’s voice became firm.

“You must tell me everything.”

Mrs Waters looked directly at him.

“The child’s mother was your own sister.”

Allworthy turned pale.

“My sister?”

“Yes, sir.”

She explained that the baby had been placed in her care secretly. She had been instructed to pretend that the child was her own, so that the true mother’s honor would remain protected.

Mrs Waters finished her story quietly.

“Sir, the abandoned child you raised... Tom Jones... is in truth your nephew.”

Allworthy remained silent for a long time.

At last he spoke softly.

“Then I have wronged him greatly.”

The truth had finally begun to emerge.

## Part 19

When Mr Allworthy heard the full story from Mrs Waters—whose true name, as the reader may now safely be told, was Jenny Jones—he remained silent for several minutes. Few men possess a heart so generous that the discovery of their own injustice brings more sorrow than anger, yet such was the character of Mr Allworthy.

At last he spoke.

“Madam,” he said slowly, “if what you tell me is true, then I have committed a great wrong against a man who deserved my protection.”

Jenny Jones bowed her head.

“Sir, I feared that speaking the truth might harm the honor of the lady who entrusted the child to me. But circumstances now make silence impossible.”

Allworthy walked slowly across the room.

“My sister... she was the child’s mother?”

“Yes, sir.”

She explained everything carefully. Years before, Allworthy’s sister had formed an attachment that could not be openly acknowledged. When the child was born, she feared disgrace and begged Jenny Jones to carry the infant secretly into Allworthy’s house.

Thus the baby had appeared mysteriously in the bed of the kind gentleman who now stood before her.

Allworthy remembered the moment clearly.

He had returned late at night after months in London. He had prayed beside his bed, preparing for rest, when he lifted the blanket and saw a sleeping infant wrapped in poor cloth.

The sight had astonished him, yet his natural kindness quickly overcame his confusion.

The helpless beauty of the child's face had moved him deeply, and he had resolved to protect the little stranger.

Now he realized that the child had been his own blood.

"And Blifil knew nothing of this?" he asked.

"Nothing," Jenny answered. "Only I possessed the secret."

Allworthy sighed heavily.

"Yet that young man persuaded me that Tom was ungrateful, immoral, and unworthy."

Jenny hesitated.

"Sir, there is more that you must know."

She then explained that Blifil had long suspected Tom's true importance in the household. His jealousy had grown steadily stronger as Tom and Sophia became closer.

Allworthy's face darkened.

"Then I have been blind."

The generous gentleman now saw that he had allowed deceit to triumph over justice.

"Tom must be freed immediately," he said firmly.

Meanwhile Tom still sat in prison, believing his future completely ruined. He had convinced himself that Sophia despised him and that his own actions had destroyed every hope of happiness.

Yet fate had not finished its work.

One afternoon the prison door opened.

Partridge rushed inside with great excitement.

"Sir! Sir! Wonderful news!"

Tom looked up without enthusiasm.

"What news could possibly be wonderful now?"

Partridge could barely speak from excitement.

"You are innocent! Everything has been discovered!"

Tom frowned.

"Explain yourself."

Partridge took a deep breath.

“Mrs Waters is not your mother!”

Tom stared at him.

“Not my mother?”

“No, sir! She confessed everything to Mr Allworthy. Your mother was his sister.”

Tom rose slowly.

“Then... I am Allworthy’s nephew?”

“Yes, sir!”

Tom felt as though the ground had moved beneath his feet. The terrible fear that had tortured him disappeared instantly.

“Then the dreadful crime I imagined—”

“Never happened,” Partridge said quickly.

Tom felt relief so powerful that he could hardly speak.

But one sorrow remained.

“Sophia still believes me faithless.”

At that moment another visitor arrived.

Mr Allworthy himself entered the room.

Tom hurried forward with emotion.

“Sir!”

Allworthy embraced him warmly.

“My dear nephew.”

Tom was deeply moved.

“You forgive me?”

Allworthy shook his head.

“It is I who must ask forgiveness.”

He explained everything that had been revealed: Jenny Jones’s confession, Blifil’s deception, and the truth of Tom’s birth.

Tom listened in amazement.

“Then I am no longer the abandoned child of unknown parents?”

“You are my sister’s son.”

Tom’s eyes filled with tears.

Yet Allworthy had not finished speaking.

“There is also the matter of Mr Blifil.”

The truth about Blifil’s lies soon became known. His false accusations against Tom were exposed completely. Even those who once admired his pious appearance began to see the selfishness hidden beneath it.

Allworthy felt deeply disappointed.

Nevertheless he did not act with cruelty.

“Blifil will receive a portion of my estate,” he said, “but he will no longer control the future of this family.”

Justice had at last begun to restore order.

Only one final question remained in Tom’s heart.

Could Sophia ever forgive him?

## Part 20

The reader who has followed our history from its beginning will not be surprised that the final reconciliation between Tom Jones and Sophia Western did not occur immediately. Love may be powerful, but pride and wounded trust do not disappear in a single moment.

After Tom was released from prison, Mr Allworthy explained the truth of his birth to several important persons connected with the story. News traveled quickly.

Sophia also heard the report.

At first she felt astonishment.

“Mr Jones is Mr Allworthy’s nephew?”

Honour, who always enjoyed dramatic news, nodded eagerly.

“Yes, miss! Everyone in London is talking about it.”

Sophia remained thoughtful.

This revelation removed one of the objections that society might have raised against Tom. He was no longer the mysterious foundling raised by charity. He now possessed a respectable family and a rightful position.

Yet Sophia’s heart still struggled with doubt.

“A change in fortune,” she said quietly, “does not change a person’s character.”

Honour attempted to defend Tom.

“Perhaps the stories about Lady Bellaston were exaggerated.”

Sophia answered firmly.

“The letter I saw was written in his own hand.”

Nevertheless she agreed to meet Tom once more.

The meeting took place in a quiet room arranged by Mr Allworthy himself. He believed that the misunderstanding between the two young people deserved an honest explanation.

Tom entered the room with deep emotion.

Sophia stood near the window, calm but serious.

For several seconds neither spoke.

At last Tom stepped forward.

“Sophia,” he said gently, “I know that I have caused you pain. I will not excuse my past behavior. But I beg you to hear the truth before you judge me forever.”

Sophia listened without interruption.

Tom explained everything: his foolish connection with Lady Bellaston, the strange advice that led him to write the proposal letter, and the misunderstanding that followed.

“My heart never left you,” he said. “Even when I behaved like a fool, my love for you remained unchanged.”

Sophia answered calmly.

“Men often separate love from their actions. Women cannot do so easily.”

Tom lowered his head.

“Then teach me to deserve your trust.”

Sophia studied him carefully.

“You say that other women never held your heart. Yet your actions suggest otherwise.”

Tom spoke with sincerity.

“Certain passions may arise without touching the heart. I did not understand this difference before. But the moment I believed I might truly lose you, I

understood it completely.”

Sophia remained silent for a moment.

Then she said quietly:

“Perhaps understanding can come after mistakes.”

Tom felt a small hope return.

“Then you may forgive me?”

Sophia smiled slightly.

“Forgiveness is possible. Marriage, however, requires stronger proof.”

Tom looked surprised.

“Proof?”

“Yes,” she continued calmly. “Your circumstances have changed. You now have position, family, and security. That means you will have many opportunities to show whether your character has changed as well.”

Tom answered earnestly.

“I welcome every opportunity.”

At that moment the door opened suddenly.

Mr Western, Sophia’s energetic father, rushed into the room with his usual enthusiasm.

“Well! What are you two doing standing around like statues?”

Sophia sighed quietly.

“Father...”

Western pointed at Tom.

“You there! If you want my daughter, say so properly!”

Tom, somewhat embarrassed, knelt before Sophia.

“Miss Western, will you honor me by becoming my wife?”

Sophia tried to remain calm, but her father’s excitement made the moment impossible to treat with quiet dignity.

Western clapped his hands loudly.

“Excellent! That settles it!”

Sophia protested.

“Father, please!”

But Western continued with cheerful determination.

“Why wait? Marry tomorrow morning!”

Sophia raised her voice.

“Father, you are impossible!”

Western laughed.

“Nonsense! If you don’t marry this fellow quickly, you’ll only quarrel again!”

Sophia finally turned toward Tom.

With a mixture of amusement and resignation she extended her hand.

“Mr Jones, it appears that my father has already decided our future.”

Tom kissed her hand with deep joy.

Western began dancing around the room in triumph.

“Tomorrow morning! Tomorrow morning!”

And thus the long history of Tom Jones reached its joyful conclusion.

The author himself must confess that he knows of no greater happiness that life can offer a man than to win the love of a woman like Sophia Western. For beauty may charm the eye, and wealth may comfort the body, but wisdom, kindness, and virtue bring peace to the heart.

Reader, we have now arrived at the end of our journey.

Our hero has survived misunderstandings, temptations, and many foolish mistakes. Our heroine has preserved her dignity and her good sense. Their friends have been rewarded, and their enemies exposed.

If any reader feels disappointed that Tom Jones should prove the happiest man alive, I can only answer honestly that I myself feel no such disappointment.

For my part, I know no greater reward that the world can offer than the love of a wise and generous woman.