

Dear Friend,

It is impertinent to call you that, after what I have done, but I cannot bear to lose you also. I know you cannot read, my good, kind Bessie but I hope you will ask John (the lawyer) to read it to you, for I know that he will be very obliging.

Do you remember when you used to do my hair, and we used to talk about handsome Colonel Willoughby, and what an Apollo he looked in his red jacket. And you used to moan so about wanting to meet him, but always too busy! We were fools then Bessie, pretty, happy fools and now our unintended sins have finally caught up with us, for the honourable Colonel Willoughby has proposed and I refused him.

You must be shocked. But you must know that he is a wicked, impertinent man. We have ignored it far too long. When he insulted the plainer ladies, we sighed because we knew ourselves to be prettier, and when he treated the servants like pigs, I ignored it because of my own high birth. But if I marry him, he will treat me just the same, as you must know.

I knew father would never accept my refusal of him, so I have decided to go to London. I must assure you that I have not eloped, and indeed I have no plans of doing so. Hampshire is too firm on woman but in London, there is a whole world of opportunities for the educated. Did you know that there are even female doctors? I shall try to live on my writing, and a little of my inheritance and if not, I will teach or work in the factories, and one day, if I am very good, I shall like to go to India as a missionary.

I know this will all come as a big shock. Please keep it from father as long as possible. I will work very hard to try to make you proud and I hope one day be comfortable enough to allow you into my household again (as a confidant, not a servant). Please don't worry about the dangers of a young woman alone in a big city for I am perfectly capable of looking after myself and I am not at all as silly as I was.

With a hasty hand, I say goodbye.

Yours, Lily