

**Side: Anne. Mrs. Smith**

**ANNE:** Twelve years.

**MRS SMITH:** And those twelve years have transformed you into an elegant, beautiful woman. While I'm a helpless widow, who must receive her former protégé as a favour.

**ANNE:** To me, Henrietta, you seem as resolute as ever. Sickness and sorrow have neither closed your heart nor ruined your spirit.

**MRS SMITH:** Everybody's heart's open, you know, when they've recently escaped pain.

**ANNE:** Oh, I know people in perfect health who've much less inclination for action and happiness than you.

**MRS SMITH:** I expect it's submission. I just give in!

**ANNE:** No, there's something more. To bury your husband, to have known wealth but have it squandered by him, and with no health to make all the rest bearable –

**MRS SMITH:** Occupation is all, my dear. Our sorrows are much diminished with occupation, though we women are educated to be useless, are we not? Even making these silly things helps me.

**ANNE:** They're so pretty.

**MRS SMITH:** And when my spirits were at their lowest, God took care of me by sending someone along to take care of me. My landlady's sister. Nurse Rooke. She's taught me to knit, and she has a large acquaintance among the silly, rich creatures in Bath, of whom I mean to make my profit.

**ANNE:** You've a great elasticity of mind, Henrietta. I wish I had it. I could usefully employ it.

**MRS SMITH:** Oh, you must speak to Nurse Rooke about my bad days before you sanctify me, Anne! Sometimes human nature may be great in times of trial, but generally I wallow in self-pity and impatience!

**ANNE:** I don't believe you, my dear friend! And I'm determined to learn fortitude from your shining example.

**MRS SMITH:** Goodness, I hope you've no need of fortitude, for you're fully entitled to whatever your heart desires.

*Anne embraces Mrs Smith.*

There's so little real friendship in the world.

**ANNE:** I'll come and see you again tomorrow.

**MRS SMITH:** Tomorrow.