

*Jane Eyre (Anon.)*

[Act] I

*Elegant Apartment*

*Christmas Carol without:*

God bless the master of this house  
And bless the mistress too  
And all the little children  
Who round the table go.

The lanes are frost and snow  
Our shoes are very thin  
But we've a little pocket  
To put a penny in –

*Enter Jane Eyre – kneels to portrait*

*Jane:* Dear kind uncle Reed, do you see your poor Jane? You smile – all here call me wicked, ungrateful. Did I not love you as you loved me? but all now hate me. This, dear uncle, is your birthday. You gave all to them – and now thou art in the silent tomb – accept this day the only tribute I can offer to thy memory – my tears!

*Enter Bessie*

*Bessie:* Jane, what are you doing here? You are forbidden to enter this apartment.

*Jane:* I only came to look on Uncle Reed – this is his birthday – all here seem to have forgotten it.

*Bessie:* 'Tis now more than five years since your uncle's death – quite an eternity.

*Jane:* Eternity – true – true. How happy I was while my uncle lived – I knew not then what it was to be an orphan – to be wretched and alone.

*Bessie:* Come away, Jane. I am afraid lest missus should come and find you here – how angry she would be – come away – directly!

*Jane:* I will not.

*Bessie:* Do be good, Jane – don't get me into trouble.

*Jane:* Bessie, don't scold me, my heart is full.

*Bessie:* Why will you be so perverse?

*Jane:* It isn't my fault Bessie. You are so seldom kind to poor Jane – let me stay here to read the books – this is Christmastide – all are busy with

joy and revelry – let me stay – it seems so long since I have even seen a book – Georgina has locked them all up.

*Bessie:* But if any one should know it!

*Jane:* Don't fear, Bessie. (*Takes book*) Hume's *History of England* – see, I've found it at once – now I'll hide myself behind these curtains – nobody will see me – here I can read the history of my native land.

*Bessie:* Don't move, Jane, for your life. Remember – in half an hour I shall come for you.

*Jane:* Fear not, I shall be as quiet as a mouse.

*Bessie:* Poor girl, Missus may scold as much as she likes, but I can't find it in my heart to deny her – (*going*)

*Enter John Reed*

*John Reed:* Hallo! Bessie! What are you up to – come here!

*Bessie:* I can't waste my time with you, Master John.

*John:* Stay here when I bid you. I want you to tell me a funny story – there's uncle Willis just returned from Spain and Mamma talking such twaddle – no fellow of sense can understand it, and there sits sister Georgina as stately as a queen listening to them. I kept pelting her with biscuit, just as if she was anybody.

*Bessie:* It doesn't become you, Sir, to treat your sister in that way – she is your elder, therefore you should be respectful to her.

*John:* Respectful to her! I have no respect for anyone. I don't care for Mamma – they will all one day be dependent on my charity. When I'm twenty-one the estate will be mine – and all those who offend me now will suffer for it.

*Bessie:* It won't grieve me.

*John:* What a pity Mamma has forbidden Jane to leave her room.

*Bessie:* Because you can't vent your spleen on her. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. How often have you struck her!

*John:* I beat her because I hate her! Didn't she scratch and bite me?

*Bessie:* Because you struck her on the head with a hammer.

*John:* She has no right to defend herself when I choose to beat her – she is a dependent on our charity. Dependent that – the curtains are shaking.

*Bessie:* It's only the wind – go to your Mamma, Sir – you've no business here.

*John:* I shan't. There is someone behind those curtains. (*Sees her*) It's Jane Eyre – I knew it. What do you want there, shameless hussy? Don't stare like that – can't you speak? I'll fetch you down quickly if you don't instantly tell me.

*Jane:* Don't come near me – remember I scratched and bit you.

*John:* I ain't afraid of you!

*Jane:* Touch me and I will kill you!

*John:* Then stay where you are.

*Bessie:* Come away, Jane!

*Jane:* If he goes first.

*Enter Mrs Reed and Willis*

*Mrs R:* What is the meaning of this disturbance? Ah, that creature here – how dared she?

*John:* She hid herself behind these curtains, and threatened to kill me.

*Mrs R:* My pet! – What brings you here?

*Jane:* Only reading, Aunt.

*Mrs R:* You were forbidden to enter this apartment – were you not?

*Jane:* Yes aunt.

*Mrs R:* How dared you then disobey?

*Jane:* Georgina and John have taken all my books away – I am so cold upstairs!

*Willis:* Let the poor girl remain.

*Mrs R:* You could have asked me for a book.

*Jane:* I did not come here to read only.

*Mrs R:* For what then – to play the spy?

*Jane:* No – to see dear uncle Reed – this is his birthday – I have no flowers to hang around his loved picture so I brought him the poor orphan's tears.

*Mrs R:* My late husband spoiled this stubborn vixen by his blindness – did I not also forbid you to dress your hair in curls?

*Jane:* It comes so naturally. I can't help it.

*Mrs R:* Like your wicked nature. Did you threaten John?

*Jane:* Yes, if he beat me.

*Mrs R:* Ask his pardon instantly.

*John:* Yes, ask my pardon!

*Mrs R:* Will you not?

*Jane:* No.

*Mrs R:* You dare –

*Jane:* Unless he first asks forgiveness of me.

*Mrs R:* You hear, brother! – quit my presence. But once again will you enter here. Quit the Room – (*Jane Exits*)

*John:* Bravo! I'll go and tell Georgina – won't she enjoy it. (*Exit with Bessie*)

*Mrs R:* Now, brother, you can understand what I have endured in fulfilling the duty my inflexible husband imposed upon me.

*Willis:* I can comprehend that the leaving this orphan girl an inmate here was a grievous error on my late brother in law's part since your hatred is so obvious.

*Mrs R:* Yes I hate her. She must quit this roof.



- Willis:* You had the same hatred towards her mother.  
*Mr R:* She brought shame on our house. Eloped with a poor officer – married him – she returned here a beggared widow – her brother, the weak minded Reed, received her with open arms – she died bequeathing her orphan brat – Reed in his last hours made me vow to tend and educate her but now my resolve is taken.  
*Willis:* What is your intention?  
*Mrs R:* To send her to Lowood Asylum – I momentarily expect the Director, Dr Brocklehurst, here.  
*Willis:* Lowood Asylum – is it not a Charitable Institution?  
*Mrs R:* I only know that young girls are there trained to labour and humility.  
*Willis:* Is not this resolve too late? – Jane Eyre is no longer a girl, sister – in the way you propose, are you acting up to the solemn promise you made to your husband?  
*Mrs R:* If you regard my plan as unjust, and desire to provide for the future of Jane, I will resign the charge with pleasure into your hands.  
*Willis:* You know that my profession and means render such a course impracticable.

*Enter Dr Brocklehurst*

- Dr B:* Your servant, Madam.  
*Mrs R:* You are welcome, Sir – I have awaited you with anxiety, for in you behold an instrument to cleanse unruly hearts.  
*Dr B:* Yes, Madam, such an instrument am I, and this wayward girl you would confide to my care –  
*Mrs R:* Come hither, Jane. In truth I can say that I have acted consistently towards this orphan, but the seeds of my bounty fell on stony ground. She is devoid of heart – unthankful – dissembles –  
*Dr B:* Horrible! – Fear not, madam – I have subdued many stubborn natures and trust that even here I shall be successful.  
*Mrs R:* Jane – in this worthy gentleman's hands I place your future destiny  
*Jane:* Am I to leave this house and go to school?  
*Mrs R:* Yes, to a school where all perversity will be effectually eradicated.  
*Jane:* That task was performed by my dear uncle. What else shall I learn?  
*Dr B:* First you will be taught humility – for humility alone is acceptable in Lowood Orphan Asylum.  
*Jane:* Uncle Reed – you hear! Your foster child – your darling Jane – henceforth the orphan's home is hers – they call me wicked – oppress and hate me – as their hate, so will strangers' be.  
*Dr B:* Oh, horrid! This to her benefactress! Madam, allow me to withdraw – too much have I seen and heard – you have been too sparing – wayward, stony heart.

- Jane:* Stay, Sir – before I quit this roof for ever you shall hear the truth – Aunt Reed has told you I am ungrateful – 'tis false – the smallest kindness is for ever indelibly engraven on my heart! She has told you I dissemble – 'tis false, for could I lie I would say I love aunt Reed – were I a hypocrite I should mourn that I am thrust forth from this threshold – never again will I return – never more call her Aunt!  
*Mrs R:* Dare you thus address me?  
*Jane:* Yes. I dare because it is truth. You said my heart was stony: it needed love – to make me good and gentle – you knew not mercy – never shall I forget your treatment. You ordered me to be locked up in the death chamber of my uncle – there in suffering and darkness did I languish – in vain I implored mercy – you were deaf to my cries – if I am wicked 'tis you are the cause – 'tis you are the hypocrite – the perjurer – yes, perjurer to the dead and the living – did you not whilst grasping the death hand of my uncle swear to use me as though I were your own child – never to forsake me? How have you kept that oath? At another tribunal you will meet my uncle again – he will say, 'Where is the orphan girl I confided to your care? What have you made of her – how fulfilled thy vow?' Answer – 'I have persecuted – beaten her, banished her from my roof – to the stranger bequeathed her as a pauper homeless and friendless' – now Sir, I am yours!

*Picture*  
*End of Act I*

## Act II

*Eight years have elapsed*

*Drawing Room*

*Sam discovered*

- Sam:* There, all is ready. I flatter myself Sir Rowland won't have much to complain of when he returns to Thornfield. I can't make out why he is so often away.

*Enter Mrs Fairfax*

- Mrs Fairfax:* What can't you make out?  
*Sam:* Why Sir Rowland is so often from home.  
*Mrs F:* Sir Rowland is Master here, and can do as he pleases.



- Sam:* Ah! there was a time when I was everything, but since this pale-faced Miss Eyre made her appearance I am nobody.
- Mrs F:* You are a ninny. This young girl has restored us to life, spared us all the trouble we used to have with Adèle – Within a few months Miss Eyre has quite mastered her.
- Sam:* I only hope Sir Rowland may discover such a treasure in her as you do.
- Mrs F:* I am sure by his manner that he is delighted with her appearance and accomplishments.
- Sam:* She won't reign long at the Hall – and the child too, no-one knows her history.
- Mrs F:* Being no business of mine, I have not enquired.
- Sam:* Nothing to be got out of her, but I'll ferret it out – I am determined!
- Mrs F:* Where can Jane be, I wonder.

*Enter Jane*

- Jane:* Any news of Sir Rowland's return?
- Mrs F:* None.
- Jane:* Always mystery – do you know I have not found him the terrible being I at first imagined. Do you remember how he questioned me, how strange and mysterious he seemed as he examined one by one my poor sketches? He took my portfolio with him. I have never been able to get a glimpse of it since.
- Mrs F:* Jane, have you not often remarked a strange and singular laugh ringing through the old mansion?
- Jane:* Yes, a terrible ghostly laugh which in the stillness of the night has made my very blood curdle.
- Mrs F:* Be cautious, Jane, never to speak of those sounds in Sir Rowland's presence.
- Jane:* I thank you, Madam, for all your kindness to the poor orphan, who after passing eight years of my life in Lowood Asylum, through your goodness has found a home at Thornfield.
- Mrs F:* Bless you, Jane –
- Jane:* To me all appears a dream – without, all is life – within, all quiet and gloom – 'tis now a fortnight since Sir Rowland left Thornfield. He seems not displeased with me – yet rarely exchanges a word. He is a riddle I should like to unravel yet I dare not attempt the task. (Exit)
- Mrs F (without):* Sam! Quick, get the visitors' chambers in order directly.
- Jane:* Visitors at Thornfield.

*Enter Mrs Fairfax and Pat*

- Mrs F:* Sam! Sam! Within an hour, Pat?

- Pat:* Faix, ma'am, it can't be much longer for the masther is following at my heels; and the grand folks are coming behind the masther in a carriage.
- Mrs F:* Now Jane, prepare yourself – you'll find a parcel for you in your room – there's not a moment to lose. Oh, dear me! I had almost forgotten – read that letter and then you will understand – Sam! Sam! (Exit)
- Jane (reads):* 'One hour from receipt of this I shall reach Thornfield. You will prepare the visitors' chambers – ladies are among the company – a parcel accompanying this contains a silk dress for the governess – she will do the honors of the tea table.' The governess – is my name so difficult to remember? So, Patrick we are to have lady visitors at the Hall?
- Pat:* Yes, indeed, Miss, and beautiful creatures they are – that is to say – the young lady – as to the ould 'un I can only say she wouldn't suit my taste in the laste.
- Jane:* But the young lady, Patrick?
- Pat:* Faix, ma'am, she's as fresh as a rose in June.

*Enter Mrs Fairfax*

- Mrs F:* Now, Jane – make haste – put on Sir Rowland's present.
- Jane:* Thanks, Madam – but I must decline.
- Mrs F:* Not wear it! Sir Rowland will be displeased. Pat tells me he had it made in town expressly.
- Pat:* I'll swear to that – it's made from the pattern of one of Lady Claremont's who is as much like Miss there in figure as two peas.
- Jane:* Indeed! Who is Lady Claremont?
- Mrs F:* A very handsome, proud, yet poor young widow.
- Jane:* I presume, then a marriage is on the tapis.
- Mrs F:* Ever since Sir Rowland returned from France she has set her cap at him, but he is not smitten.
- Pat:* Faix, ma'am, I rather think that this time she has set her cap to some purpose. He's coming with mother and daughter and a whole tribe of relations – and if that isn't quite enough Pat knows nothing at all about it.
- Mrs F:* I can't believe it.
- Pat:* Why not – because master happens to have reached the middle of his age – faix that's just the time we men get a bit maddish, and once caught with a pair of bright sparkling eyes – the devil himself couldn't relase you.
- Mrs F:* Now you be off Pat – get ready to receive the company. (Exit Mrs F)
- Pat:* All right, ma'am, but if this doesn't mane a matrimonial marriage – Pat knows nothing about it. (Exit)



*Jane:* A marriage! Why should he not marry? What is it to me? Hark! Sir Rowland himself – I know his proud step.

*Enter Sir Rowland*

*Sir R:* See to the horse – now then, where are you all? Ah, good evening, Miss Eyre!

*Jane:* Good evening, Sir Rowland!

*Sir R:* Running away from me? – afraid?

*Jane:* I fear no one.

*Sir R:* Then stay. I have something to say to you – you approve my choice in dress I hope?

*Jane:* Yes – thank you.

*Sir R:* I trust to see you wear it this evening.

*Jane:* I must decline.

*Sir R:* Why?

*Jane:* Because I prefer a costume befitting my position – I equally appreciate your kindness.

*Sir R:* Humph! I thought so – singular girl! Doubtless my way may appear somewhat rough, the result of my Indian associations – of what are you thinking now?

*Jane:* Whether there existed many employers who trouble themselves about the sensibilities of their *paid servants*.

*Sir R:* Paid servants. I think, Miss Eyre, you do not rank yourself as such – you are Adèle's governess – you believe her to be my child – (I ought to have been more communicative ere this). It is your prerogative to ask, 'whose child am I educating?' She is an orphan. I brought her from Paris – have tended her as though she were my own, in fulfillment of a sacred promise made to one who is now no more. I feel myself bound to make this explanation – you possess intellect, talents, accomplishments and will one day realize a position in the families of the rich and noble.

*Jane:* Think not, Sir Rowland, the dazzling fortune you would picture can either charm or delude me. My post is far more glorious. Adèle, you say, is an orphan – let me then supply a mother's place. I am an orphan too, and know what it is to be parentless – with love will I tend and guide her – with love entwine myself around her heart – I will never leave, never forsake her unless you bid me hence.

*Sir R:* Miss Eyre, you are a noble girl – I take you at your word – you promise never to quit this house until I bid you?

*Jane:* I promise.

*Sir R:* Your hand to the bargain! You smile – until now I was not aware you could smile!

*Jane:* Sir Rowland!

*Sir R:* You must often smile – 'tis as a bright ray of sunlight in this gloomy hall. (*Carriage heard*) Hey day! already arrived. You will receive my guests whilst I make some change in my toilette.

*Jane:* With pleasure.

*Sir R:* You will wear the dress I sent you.

*Jane:* No, Sir Rowland.

*Sir R:* Well, as you please – self-willed gipsy! (*Exit*)

*Jane:* Strange unaccountable man! (*Sam places candles*)

*Enter Mrs Fairfax, Georgina, Lord Harwood and Mrs Reed*

*Mrs F:* This way, ladies, if you please.

*Mrs R:* Thank you, my Lord.

*Georg:* Very kind of you, madam, to receive Sir Rowland's guests – I presume he is occupied?

*Mrs F:* Sir Rowland did not anticipate so early an arrival.

*Jane:* Georgina Reed!

*Lord H:* Probably the extra care Sir Rowland devotes to his toilette.

*Georg:* The first time in his life Sir Rowland has submitted to the tyranny of fashion. His example will never lead the fickle goddess.

*Lord H:* Lady Claremont must have devoted much time to the study of the character of her admirer.

*Georg:* No, only one experiences some pleasure in seeking to solve problems – Madam will you kindly ascertain whether we can retire to our apartments – the drive has fatigued us.

*Mrs F:* I will see to the arrangements at once, your ladyship. (*Exit*)

*Mrs R:* It is excessively oppressive and gloomy here.

*Georg:* Intolerably warm.

*Lord H:* Possibly the effect of conscience.

*Georg:* Conscience! Ha! ha! ha!

*Lord H:* That smile, Georgina, doesn't become you in the least – remember you once gave me hope, before this Creosus crossed your path.

*Georg:* We are often subjects of delusion.

*Lord H:* Although I possess no Thornfield, yet I have competence and an unblemished name – do you know what people say of Rochester?

*Georg:* The vulgar generally ascribe something to singularity.

*Lord H:* There is a secret and I will fathom it.

*Mrs R:* What feeling is this?

*Georg:* Mamma! What ails you?

*Mrs R:* An oppression has stolen over me as though some calamity lurked in the very atmosphere of this dwelling. Let us return.

*Georg:* Dear Mamma – how ridiculous – superstitious I declare.

*Mrs R:* No, no, 'tis not superstition, but reality –

*Georg:* Call Bessie here, my Lord.



*Lord H (sees Jane)*: Oh, here is a person – what a magnificent creature – Miss – aw – I haven't the honor of your name –

*Jane*: Jane Eyre – you are –

*Lord H*: Lord Francis Harwood – and so you are Jane Eyre? Do you know that you are very – aw – pretty?

*Jane*: My Lord.

*Lord H*: 'Pon my life you are!

*Jane*: May I ask, my Lord, if you have sisters?

*Lord H*: Yes – I have, two sisters and very fine girls they are.

*Jane*: Were any one to address either of them, as you have now addressed me, what would be the result?

*Lord H*: That's a very different thing – they are –

*Jane*: Made of different clay – Their hearts are more sensitive – their feelings more refined, perhaps – reverse the picture and you will be nearer to the truth. In the school of poverty is oftener found that intuitive delicacy which fears to wound – inured to suffering themselves, they know and feel for it in others.

*Lord H*: A regular sermon, by Jove! Did you get that out of the Spectator?

*Jane*: My Lord, assumption, much as it may be involuntary, is simply pitiable – but insolence where you know it cannot be averted is cowardly – can I do anything to serve you, Madam? Sir Rowland has deputed me to attend upon you during his absence.

*Georg*: Indeed, and pray what is your position here to be considered fitting for such an honor?

*Jane*: I am the Governess.

*Mrs R (recognizing her)*: Ah! I knew it (*sinks on sofa*).

*Lord H*: Madam!

*Georg*: Mamma, compose yourself!

*Mrs R*: Are you blind? Do you not see her, Jane Eyre? She will claim kindred with us.

*Georg*: She will not, if I know Jane Eyre.

*Lord H*: You know these ladies Miss?

*Jane*: No.

*Georg (to Mrs R)*: You are right, that is Jane Eyre.

*Lord H*: How very remarkable – ah – Sir Rowland – at last.

*Enter Sir Rowland*

*Sir Rowland*: Loveliest of Amazons – Madam – My Lord – welcome. You arrived earlier than anticipated – Lady Claremont – dismiss that cloud from your fair brow. It surely does not threaten me.

*Georg*: Well, I suppose we must grant our gracious pardon for your seeming neglect (*gives hand*).

*Sir R (kisses her hand)*: I trust your reception at Thornfield was satisfactory. You had no cause to regret the absence of the host.

*Georg*: Who could possibly supply your place? (*Sir Rowland kisses her hand again*)

*Lord H*: There'll be none left for me if he goes on like that.

*Georg*: This young person – though quite unknown to us –

*Sir R*: Has she not introduced herself?

*Jane*: At present I have had no opportunity.

*Sir R*: Miss Jane Eyre – Adèle's governess.

*Georg*: Adèle – Oh yes, I remember – the little French puppet you brought from Paris some three years since – I presume then the little Parisienne still exists here.

*Sir R*: Yes, still exists here.

*Mrs R*: Pray what instruction does Miss Eyre import to Adèle?

*Sir R*: The general rudiments of an English education with music and drawing – in that, Miss Eyre is a proficient.

*Georg*: Indeed! This praise from you is indeed astonishing – you are so exacting – and pray – Miss – really I cannot remember the name –

*Jane*: Jane Eyre.

*Georg*: Jane Eyre – where did you acquire so much excellence?

*Jane*: At Lowood Asylum.

*Mrs R*: I was not aware that in Lowood Asylum for orphans worldly accomplishments were acquired – I always understood Dr Brocklehurst implanted only the precepts of labor and humility.

*Georg*: That Jane Eyre should be so accomplished an artist is really astonishing.

*Sir R*: Your ladyship shall judge for yourself. (*Exit*)

*Georg (To Mrs R)*: Is it not strange that he should be so marked in his praise of that girl?

*Re-enter Sir Rowland with portfolio*

*Mrs R*: I never doubted her talent.

*Sir R*: Lady Claremont, look at these beautiful drawings.

*Georg*: Permit me to postpone the inspection till the morning – Mamma feels unwell and needs repose.

*Mrs R*: You must excuse us, Sir Rowland – come Georgina.

*Lord H*: Allow me, Madam.

*Mrs R*: Thank you, my Lord – one of us must yield – she or I. (*Exit Mrs R. and Lord [H]*)

*Sir R*: Lady Claremont, permit me – you are not angry with me?

*Georg*: We will decide that question tomorrow.

*Sir R*: You trifler! Miss Eyre, you can retire. (*Exit with Georgina*)



*Jane:* He loves this woman – this Georgina who has worked the miracle – what evil power has conjured up these persecutors of my infancy? My sketches, now I can –

*Enter Sir Rowland – with Sam*

*Sam:* Sam, be careful that all is quiet in the Hall tonight (*exit Sam*). Miss Eyre, why have you not retired –

*Jane:* I did not feel fatigued – any further commands, Sir Rowland?

*Sir R:* No, stay – how do you like Lady Claremont?

*Jane:* Before I can judge of a person I must have time to know what she is, not what she appears. Good night. (*Exit*)

*Sir R:* Woman-like, not one point will she yield – what are you doing, Sam? (*Sam listening*)

*Sam:* I was waiting to see that all was safe. The night will be a stormy one. We can't be too careful.

*Sir R:* A stormy night – probably. See that the household retire to rest – I will follow their example. (*Exit*)

*Sam:* If I hadn't seen it I wouldn't have believed it. Sir Rowland to bemean himself to hold a conversation with this stuck-up orphan-Asylum product. Ah, it can't come to any good. (*Puts out lights*) How the wind grumbles – if Sir Rowland marries Lady Claremont she'll make short work of Jane Eyre. (*Exit*)

*Re-enter Jane*

*Jane:* All silent – what a stillness reigns through the Hall – I – fancied I saw a dark shadow flit noiselessly past the Library door, possibly my own. I cannot rest until I've possession of my sketches – they are here! He has forgotten them – these creations of my waking dreams would he show to her? No, never shall her scornful eyes rest upon them! (*Thunder, wind*) What is that – something certainly hurried past yonder door – all again silent – it must have been the hurricane – how foolish – because a gust of wind extinguished my candle a shudder must needs pass through me chilling my very blood – for shame, Jane – for shame – I must reach my chamber! (*Laugh heard*) Merciful heaven! that fearful yell – all is still now. I hear nothing but the beating of my own heart – I dare not remain and yet I fear to move. What choking and suffocating feeling is this – ah, 'tis fire – a bright glare through crevices of yonder door! (*She throws it open*)

*A maniac appears at door, laughs and exits*

*Jane:* Ah! 'tis Sir Rowland's chamber – awake, Sir Rowland! Awake! fire! fire! (*Rushes off – thunder, wind*)

*Re-enter Sir Rowland and Jane*

*Jane:* This way, Sir Rowland, this way – the air will revive you. I have torn down the blazing curtains of your bed and all immediate danger is past – that terrible woman – 'tis her work – be seated – I will arouse the household.

*Sir R:* No, no, remain. Would you rouse my guests, have me become the mock of the whole county?

*Jane:* But the fire!

*Sir R:* Pshaw, it only reached the curtain of my couch which you tore down.

*Jane:* But that woman who laughed so terribly – she seemed to be a perfect fiend.

*Sir R:* And you a perfect angel – but for your timely aid I should have been destroyed – breathe not a word of this night's work to living soul.

*Jane:* You shall be obeyed.

*Sir R:* I command it. Also promise never to enquire explanation of this event.

*Jane:* I promise, but will not this woman herself betray –

*Sir R:* That is my affair.

*Jane:* And now I would ask a favor of you.

*Sir R:* For the first time then. What is this favor?

*Jane:* To dismiss me from Thornfield.

*Sir R:* Why ask that which rests with yourself?

*Jane:* Because I pledged my word that I would never quit Thornfield till you bade me depart.

*Sir R:* True, I remember – if it is your wish – go.

*Jane:* Thanks! Thanks.

*Sir R:* One moment – what moves you to this sudden determination? You are silent – Mrs Fairfax has told you that I keep imprisoned beneath this roof an unhappy woman, and that woman my wife.

*Jane:* Not Mrs Fairfax, but others say so.

*Sir R:* And this report, added to the event that has just occurred, has confirmed your suspicions.

*Jane:* No, I believe it to be false.

*Sir R:* From whence do you infer this?

*Jane:* From my knowledge of your character – you have sheltered and protected the poor orphan.

*Sir R:* And never shall you be deprived of that protection. I will explain all. Listen – the fiend who in woman's shape would have destroyed me is a raving maniac. She who has tarnished the honor of our name is –

*Jane:* Lady Rochester.

*Sir R:* Lady Harriet Rochester, my brother's wife. She was my betrothed. I was the younger son. My father sent me to London, and I returned to find her married to my brother – the heir to our father's wealth. Stung by man's

perfidy and woman's faithlessness I fled the paternal roof – years past away. My father died. One day I received intelligence of my brother's death. I returned and took possession of my estates – on my arrival a letter was placed in my hands – it contained my dying brother's sad history. Shortly after their marriage they went on the continent – at Geneva his faithless wife fled with a foreigner. My brother tracked the fugitives and in a duel slew her seducer. His unhappy wife, tortured by the agonies of remorse, lost her reason for ever. He had satisfied his revenge but his health succumbed – he implored my forgiveness, beseeched me to tend and rear his orphaned child (Adèle) – also to remove his guilty wife to this mansion – Miss Eyre have I fulfilled my duty?

*Jane:* Nobly have you become the protector of the woman who deceived you – a father to her helpless child.

*Sir R:* Are you still resolved to depart?

*Jane:* Yes, it is my duty.

*Sir R:* Your duty.

*Jane:* You meditate marriage? Adèle will then be sent to school and my services no longer required – when you are married I could not remain beneath this roof.

*Sir R:* But whither will you go?

*Jane:* To my uncle at Madeira.

*Sir R:* 'Tis a great distance, Jane – the broad sea would be between you and your native land.

*Jane:* The broad sea – yes! yes.

*Sir R:* Also between us, Jane – we may never see or hear of each other more.

*Jane:* Never more – no, no.

*Sir R:* Why do you weep?

*Jane:* Because I love Thornfield, and grieve to quit it. It has been the orphan's refuge – here I have not been spurned – here I have learned to know myself – to understand you, Sir Rowland, and now I must separate from all I hold dear.

*Sir R:* Then stay.

*Jane:* No, I will endure this separation. I am no automaton, no machine to be moved at pleasure without sense or feeling. Think you because I am simple, poor, forlorn I have no heart? I am a woman – I know and understand better than any other. In heart and mind I am your equal if not in wealth. Soul speaks to soul as though we had already crossed death's barrier and stood equal. Unloose me Sir Rowland, you are betrothed – unloose me!

*Sir R:* No, Jane, the net encompasses you.

*Jane:* I can break it asunder – I am free to go where I will!

*Sir R:* At last you have spoken. From the first moment I beheld you, you have been part and parcel of my being. With all a man's might have I battled with you. Thy magic influence enthralled my very soul – Jane Eyre, this heart, this hand is yours.

*Jane:* No, no. Your promised bride stands between us.

*Sir R:* I have no promised bride.

*Jane:* Have you deceived Georgina?

*Sir R:* No.

*Jane:* What does she here then?

*Sir R:* To serve me as the key of thy fast-locked soul. Never have I breathed a word of love or marriage to any save you. I again offer you my hand and my heart – wilt take the offer? Answer quickly, 'Rowland Rochester, I will be thy wife, will love thee evermore' – speak ere this heart burst its bonds!

*Jane:* Rowland Rochester, I will be thy wife. (*Embrace*)

*Enter Georgina, Mrs Reed, Lord Harwood etc.*

*Lord H:* Delightful tableau – really, Sir Rowland, had we known we would not have intruded at this interesting moment.

*Sir R:* Allow me to present you my future wife, Lady Rochester.

*Omnes:* His wife!

*Mrs R:* I knew it.

*Sir R:* Yes, my wife, protected by this strong arm and heart from all persecuting and envious foes. We now only seek to complete their happiness by the approbation of all true friends –

*Curtain*

*End of Drama*