

A[ct I]

Room in Thornfield. He[arth with fire] burning.

Mrs [Fairfax and] Adèle discovered

Mrs Fairfax: Now you're a useful little girl – attend to your work and don't look about.

Adèle: But I want to see what hour it is, Madam. I cannot see if I do not turn my head.

Mrs Fairfax: It's a quarter to six, my pet.

Adèle: My new governess ought to be come down, n'est pas?

Mrs Fairfax: Are you very anxious?

Adèle: That is if she is gentle and charming.

Mrs Fairfax: Mind the ball – you'll drop it I believe. Miss Eyre is very charming.

Adèle: Can she talk French?

Mrs Fairfax: Remember that you are to talk English to her and till the company go away and you must keep with her entirely – there's Miss Blanche Ingram complains of you and says you are very troublesome.

Adèle: But her sister, Miss Mary, she says I am very pretty. Ravissante.

Mrs Fairfax: Better be good than pretty.

Adèle: Oh I am tired of {th}dis. When does Mr Rochester return?

Mrs Fairfax: He might be back tonight – he might be back tomorrow.

Adèle: [I] do wish he come, and bring me my new dress.

Mrs Fairfax: Oh, that's what you're thinking of.

Adèle: – Magnificent white dress and pink sash; and bows and I will come down after dinner like von leetle angle. (*Listens*) Ah, here is Miss Eyre.

Mrs Fairfax (*rising*): Now, Adèle, be very polite – your best manners, pet.

Adèle (*murmuring*): My new governante.

Enter Jane Eyre, Mrs Fairfax advancing with outstretched hands

Mrs Fairfax: How do you do, Miss Eyre! I hope you like your room – you've had a cold journey – come to the fire. We shall have tea directly. Mr Rochester is away. I am a relation of his and keep house for him – we expect him home every day.

Jane: This is my new pupil.

Adèle: Bon pour Mademoiselle.

Mrs Fairfax: This is your new pupil, Adèle Dupres.

Jane: Not Rochester?

Mrs Fairfax: No. This is a little French girl – a ward of Mr Rochester's whom he brought over from Paris – where he lived for many years.

Servant brings in tea

Mrs Fairfax: Now, Adèle, go and make friends with Miss Eyre. (*To Jane*): She talks English very well.

Mrs Fairfax goes to tea table.

Jane: We must be great friends, Adèle. (*Kisses Adèle on the forehead and sitting, draws her close to her*) Are you very fond of your lessons, Adèle?

Adèle: Ah Mademoiselle, I detest them – I do love the dance, the dress, the picture books. Oh, I am triste here.

Jane: It's a big house. I suppose we could play hide and seek here.

Adèle: Non – non – non; there is a ghost in this house.

Mrs Fairfax: Oh, nonsense – silly stories of the servants. You can have your tea on this little table – don't stir. (*Brings table over*)

Adèle: Oh, but it is true – it is true – why den do we bolt our bedroom doors every night?

Mrs Fairfax: There have been some robberies in the house, Miss Eyre, two years ago – and it is a good rule to bolt one's door.

Adèle: We are talking, Madame, Miss Eyre and I, pray do not interrupt.

Jane: Oh fie, you mustn't talk in that way.

Adèle: Can you tell stories?

Jane: Oh, yes.

Adèle: Do tell one!

Mrs Fairfax: Don't tease Miss Eyre. She's tired.

Adèle: Hush – hush – hush. (*To Jane*): Commence.

Jane: Well. I'll tell you an adventure that happened to me this very evening about two miles away from the gate.

Adèle: Tres bien.

Jane: Well, as I was I was coming along the road – taking great care not to slip, you know, the road is covered with ice, and it was growing dark – dark – dark – when what do you think I heard?

Adèle: What?

Jane: I heard behind me a great trot, trot, trot, and a Bow wow of a big dog.

Adèle: Oh – a Bow wow of a big dog!

Mrs Fairfax: Was that this evening, Miss Eyre?

Jane: About half an hour before I arrived, Ma'am.

Adèle: Avance!

Jane: Well. I looked round, my dear, and I saw a great black horse.

Adèle: One great black horse.

Jane: And on it was a great dark man.

Adèle: One great dark man.

Mrs Fairfax: You say there was a dog with him, Miss Eyre?

Jane: Yes, there was a large Newfoundland, that followed the gentleman.

Adèle: Eh bien.

Jane: Well, just as he was passing me – clatter – clatter – upon the ice, and I was standing by a gate to get out of his way, the horse gave a great slip on the ice, and down it fell, and the poor man with it – bang!

Adèle: But that is shocking.

Mrs Fairfax: Was he much hurt?

Jane: I really thought he must have been killed at first, but he got up and disentangled himself without assistance – I think he had only a slight sprain, Ma'am.

Mrs Fairfax: Was he coming this way?

Jane: Well, I helped him to his horse, but I think he stopped at a surgeon's in the village.

Mrs Fairfax: A large dark man, you say – dear me, it must be Mr Rochester – I must make enquiries immediately.

Jane: Mr Rochester!

Adèle: Had he a box, with a pretty white dress in it; ribbons and bows?

Mrs Fairfax: To be sure his luggage was sent on to day but I hardly thought he'd come till tomorrow.

Rochester (heard without): Are the ladies in?

Servant (heard without): No, Sir.

Mrs Fairfax: Why, that's his voice in the Hall!

Enter Rochester

Mrs Fairfax: Mr Rochester, I've been so alarmed about you: are you much hurt?

Adèle: Have you brought my cadeau – my present?

Rochester: Ah! this is my heroine of the high road – the pixie who put a spell upon my horse and took his legs from under him! I'm sorry I could not give you an earlier welcome.

Jane: I hope, Mr Rochester, that you've quite recovered your hurt.

Mrs Fairfax: Why Edmund, you limp a little!

Rochester: This young lady was my crutch – my prop – if she would lend me her arm now – I might reach my easy chair and we might make acquaintance.

Jane: With pleasure, Sir.

Rochester (to Mrs Fairfax): This is the way we went along, Mrs Fairfax – quite like old friends till I reached my horse. (*Takes a few steps with Jane affecting to be lame then with a laugh walks to his chair*) Thank you, Miss Eyre. I won't play the imposter longer. Any letters?

Mrs Fairfax: One; I put it on the Library chimney piece and for the moment it is mislaid – a foreign post mark.

Rochester: A foreign post mark? Won't you be seated? (*Jane sits.*)

Adèle: Monsieur.

Rochester: I know what you want, my little French lady – well, I didn't forget you.

Adèle: Merci beaucoup! Has Monsieur brought a present for Mademoiselle Eyre?

Rochester: Did you expect a present, Miss Eyre? Are you fond of presents?

Jane: I hardly know, Sir – I've little experience of them – they are generally thought pleasant things.

Rochester: Generally thought: what's your opinion?

Jane: It so much depends upon the giver.

Rochester: This little woman doesn't think so – a present is welcome from any hand – if you ran up to your room, Adèle, you would find what you love best.

Adèle: My new robe! (*She skips to the door. Hesitates as she opens it.*) No I have fear – the Ghost! Mrs Fairfax, come with me.

Mrs Fairfax: You little goose. (Exeunt)

Rochester: I think your name is?

Jane: Eyre.

Rochester: And your other name?

Jane: Jane.

Rochester: Well, Miss Jane Eyre. You've been very good to me tonight – you've shown courage, coolness and good nature.

Jane: Now you've given me my present, Mr Rochester.

Rochester: You've been resident in my house about an hour.

Jane: Yes, Sir.

Rochester: And you came from –

[*Jane:*] Lowood School in Yorkshire.

Rochester: Ah. A charitable concern. How long were you there?

Jane: About eight years.

Rochester: You must be tenacious of life. Who are your parents?

Jane: I have none.

Rochester: Nor ever had, I suppose! You were a sort of wraith or water witch – you spread that damned ice on the road – because I broke through one of your rings – well if you disown your parents you must have some sort of kinsfolk – uncles and aunts.

Jane: No – none that I ever saw.

Rochester: And your home?

Jane: I have none.

Rochester: Where do your brothers and sisters live?

Jane: I have no brothers or sisters.

Rochester: Who recommended you to come here?

Jane: I advertised and Mrs Fairfax answered my advertisement.

Rochester: Have you ever lived in a town?

Jane: No, Sir.

Rochester: Have you seen much society?

- Jane: I once was at Boulogne.
 Rochester: Mr Prior is, I think the Clergyman of your parish – he is young – I suppose your ladies of the school worshipped him.
 Jane: Not at all, but he and his mother were very kind friends of mine. If they had known I was going away they would have prevented me.
 Rochester: A village tyrant – eh?
 Jane: A tyranny of fondness, Sir.
 Rochester: So you stole a march upon the Reverend Mr Prior – that explains all – I met the reverend gentleman today hot foot – in pursuit – and having had a letter from Mrs Fairfax mentioning your name – I asked him up to the house.
 Jane: Oh, Mr Rochester, I am sorry you did that.
 Rochester: Well, well, you must meet him now and let the stray lamb take care of the shepherd's crook – I suppose I am the wolf?
 Jane: Now, Sir, you know all about me – is my examination ended?
 Rochester: I think I know less than when I began. (*He takes from his pocket bundles of letters.*) Now it's your turn – it's only fair, before I read my letters – that you should question me. Have you anything to ask me, Miss Eyre?
 Jane: Why do you treat that dear little girl so coldly, Mr Rochester?
 Rochester: Because she is nothing to me – because she is the memento of an unhappy time.
 Jane: But you have accepted her as your ward – are you just?
 Rochester: Well then, I am unjust – go on.
 Jane: I have no more questions, Sir.
 Rochester: What little interest you have in me. (*Rochester looks over letters*)

Re-enter Mrs Fairfax & Mrs Poole

- Mrs Fairfax: I think the Master seems busy, Mrs Poole – I'll choose my time to speak to him.
 Mrs Poole: Well Ma'am it's only this – here are all the company coming back and the laughter and noise comes up to us and drives her savage – she's as sly as a cat too.
 Mrs Fairfax: She's quiet now.
 Mrs Poole: Cause the house is quiet – but it's frightful when the company are here.
 Rochester (*rising*): What are you talking of? (*He advances.*)
 Mrs Fairfax: Oh, nothing, Mr Rochester.
 Rochester: Damn it, I heard you. Pardon me, Mrs Fairfax. Mrs Poole, I pay you liberally – are you satisfied?
 Mrs Poole: Oh quite, Mr Rochester, but –
 Rochester: For God's sake then, let me alone. Keep the memory of it from me. Hush there's a stranger here – you must not leave your charge for a moment.

- Mrs Fairfax: The foreign letter is found, Edmund – here it is (*gives letter*).
 Rochester (*takes letter looking at envelope*): From Jamaica. Mrs Poole, will you wait a moment (*opens letter*)?
 Mrs Fairfax (*going to Jane*): Here is a song Mr Rochester brought. Will you look over it – I think it pretty (*gives song*).
 Jane: Thank you ma'am. (*Mrs Fairfax resumes her knitting.*)
 Rochester (*to himself*): Coming back from Jamaica – coming here? (*Aloud*): this must be stopped. This letter is from Mr Mason.
 Mrs Poole: My patient's brother, Sir
 Rochester (*to Mrs Poole*): He wants to come over to see her.
 Mrs Poole: It would be a bad sight, Sir.
 Rochester: Mrs Poole, take this letter – you are the proper person to satisfy the inquiries and tell him from me I forbid his coming here.
 Mrs Poole: I'll do so, Sir.
 Rochester: I'm afraid you're careless – here's this child talking about a ghost.
 Mrs Poole: Me Sir? I'm mute as the grave.
 Rochester: Well, well, be temperate – be discreet – good evening.
 (*Exit Mrs Poole*)

Rochester returns to his chair, and as if thinking, leans his head on his hand – Jane stares at Mr Rochester. He looks up under his eyes.

- Rochester: Well?
 Jane: Well, sir!
 Rochester: Why, you've been staring at me.
 Jane: I beg your pardon, Sir.
 Rochester: Do you think me ugly?
 Jane: Yes, Sir, I mean –
 Rochester: Never mind the afterthought – you are blunt to the master of the house – what do you mean by it?
 Jane: Sir, I have only made a blunder and I beg your pardon. I should have said that tastes differ – that beauty is of little consequence –
 Rochester: Oh, is it?
 Mrs Fairfax: Miss Eyre, you mustn't mind Mr Rochester – he's only in jest.
 Rochester (*rising*): Forgive me, Miss Eyre – you are come to a strange house amongst strangers – whom you will not find very companionable – so I thought we might get at home with one another at once. You will never feel yourself as an inferior with me. I'm quite sure you'll receive my orders without being hurt by a tone of command – I'm rather a Turk. (*Jane smiles.*) What are you smiling at?
 Jane: I was thinking, Sir, that very few masters would trouble themselves to enquire whether or not their paid subordinates were hurt by their orders.

Rochester: Paid subordinates. What, you are a paid subordinate are you? Ah, I'd forgotten the salary.

Mrs Fairfax: Here they are, come back from their drive, Edmund.

Rochester (rises): Oh, you'll wait here, Miss Eyre. I must introduce you.

(Exit Mrs Fairfax & Rochester)

Jane: Shall I like them? Will he like me – I cannot tell yet. He is so different from all I ever met yet – a little rough but kind – he wishes to make me at home – that touched me – shall I like all this strange proud company and will they like me? This dreadful shy feeling will choke me – where's my presence of mind? Ah, here they come.

Enter Lady Ingram & her two daughters, Blanche & Mary. They advance to Jane smiling.

Lady Ingram: Allow me to introduce myself – Lady Ingram – my two daughters.

Jane (bowing): I'm Miss Eyre.

Blanche: We are so sorry you did not arrive in time to join our drive to the monastery, Miss Eyre.

Lady Ingram: Mr Rochester told us – we should find a young friend of his just arrived.

Jane: I'm just arrived, my Lady, but I'm afraid I can hardly claim to be a friend of Mr Rochester. I'm the new Governess.

Lady Ingram: Dear me. I beg your pardon. How very stupid.

Blanche: One of Mr Rochester's jests.

Jane: I'm very sorry you've been misled.

Lady Ingram: Oh, no consequence.

Mary (holding out her hand): I'm very happy to know you, Miss Eyre.

Jane (a little affected): Thank you for your kindness, Miss Ingram.

Jane retires to the roll of music & turns it over.

Enter the two Miss Beechers and Lord Desmond

Desmond: I absolutely deny the charge.

Miss A Beecher: You did – you said both our noses were red – oh, Blanche, he's been so impertinent.

Enter Rochester

Blanche: I hope you were very desolate without us, Mr Rochester.

Rochester: Without you, of course – my only relief was fulfilling your many commissions.

Desmond: Filled up your time pretty well, ah?

Lady Ingram: She missed you so much.

Blanche: Oh! Nonsense, Mama.

Desmond: She's been so cross and unmanageable.

Blanche: Will you hush. I'm thinking only of business, Mr Rochester.

Rochester: Madam.

Blanche: Have you got the lace?

Rochester: I've got the lace.

Blanche: Have you sent the box of new library books?

Rochester: The box has arrived.

Blanche: No dear naughty novels?

Rochester: All highly proper.

Blanche: What, no runaway matches? No divorces? No terrible French heroines? What not one nice naughty book?

Lady Ingram: You silly girl.

Rochester: Perhaps one.

Blanche: Charming.

Lady Ingram: I should pounce upon it, I can assure you.

Desmond: A bad child's guide, Rochester, eh?

Blanche: And the new song.

Rochester: I think Miss Eyre is looking over it.

Jane: Oh, I have done with it. (*Brings it over to Blanche*) It seems a pretty song.

Blanche (coldly): Oh, thank you.

Rochester: And now, how are you going to reward me for my faithful service?

Blanche: By singing it at once for you.

Rochester: That will more than repay me.

[Blanche] goes to piano

Enter Adèle in her new frock

Adèle: Bon jour Monsieur, et Mesdames.

Blanche: Oh, what a little puppet.

Mary: What a pretty dress.

Rochester: A little imp, just popped up from a trap and shockingly at home.

Jane (coming forward): Adèle, dear Miss Ingram is just going to sing such a pretty song. Sit over here beside me. A very pretty dress – now be very still.

Blanche (touching the chords): Good gracious, my fingers are so stiff with the cold I can't play accompaniment. What's to be done? (*Rubs her fingers*)

Lady Ingram: Surely Miss Eyre is able to play?

Blanche (coldly): Will you be good enough to accompany me, Miss Eyre? It's quite simple.

Jane: I play very badly, Miss Ingram, or I'd be very happy.

Lady Ingram (aside): Dear me! What an unqualified governess.

Desmond: Let her treat us to the scales.

Lady Ingram: You really must have a competent teacher.

Mary (kindly): Miss Eyre, will you let me take your place? I'm sure my sister
should be very much obliged.

Blanche (tossing her head): Not at all.

Rochester: I am, Miss Eyre.

Blanche sings the following song set to simple taking music. Mary accompanies.

The Birth of Love

The dew-[b]ent flowers were sleeping fast
In the pearly light of morn –
When the soft winds whispered it is past
And the infant Love was born.
And the birds sent up a song of praise
Far its charm was all around
And they circled in a giddy maze
As they made the hills resound.
And they circled in a giddy maze
As they made the hills resound.

And the wild beast in his tangled lair
Now felt the touch of its wand
And every youth and maiden fair
Rejoiced in the sacred bond.
E'en the big trees nodded in their joy
To the fleeting clouds above
As they mutely said this new born boy
Was the infant God of Love.
As they mutely said this new born boy
Was the infant God of Love.

Applause of company at end of song

Rochester: Thank you, Miss Ingram, and now I challenge you to a game of billiards to circulate your blood.

Blanche: Done – how many points will you give me?

Rochester: As many as you please.

Blanche: And what will you bet me?

Rochester: What you please.

Lady Ingram: I really must witness this game. Come, we'll all go in.

Desmond: I think I'll follow (*looking at Jane*).

Rochester (jocularly aside to him): No you don't, I'm not going to let you flirt with my governess. Come along.

Desmond (aside to Rochester): You reserve that for yourself, eh?

Lady Ingram: Come along – I'll back Blanche.

(*Exeunt all but Blanche who returns from the door*)

Blanche: Pardon me, Miss Eyre. Will you allow me to ask you a question – I don't mean to be rude.

Jane: Ah, certainly, Miss Ingram, but till I know what you're going to ask –

Blanche: I simply wanted to know what Mr Rochester meant by speaking of you as his friend.

Jane: Certainly not much, Miss Ingram. No doubt he meant kindly.

Blanche: Not to talk of a governess – it was not perhaps the thing to my mother and myself.

Jane: If Mr Rochester offers me his friendship I will respectfully accept it.

Blanche: Pray let me give you a word of advice. Mr Rochester may sometimes forget himself with his social inferiors, but I mean kindly when I warn you you should not forget your place with him.

Jane: My place is beside my pupil.

Lady Ingram (calling): Blanche, Blanche, Mr Rochester is waiting.

Blanche (frigidly bowing): You'll pardon me. (Exit)

Adèle: Ma Foi, is she not beautiful!

Jane: She is beautiful.

Adèle: And magnifique – sa robe –

Jane: Magnificent, dear.

Adèle: Oh, the beautiful flowers – I will put one in my dress.

Jane (to herself): Let me keep a brave heart. Let me keep the tears back. What a kind word and look he gave me.

Enter servant

Servant: Mr Prior wants to see you, Miss; shall I show him up?

Jane: Show him up (*aside*): Since it must be. (Exit Servant)

Adèle: Shall I go, Miss Eyre?

Jane: No, no, stay.

Adèle: How do I look?

Enter Mr Prior

Jane (advancing with outstretched hand): Forgive me for leaving the school. What – you won't shake hands? Indeed, I grew too miserable.

Prior: It's a grand place this, Miss Eyre. You need not explain – your village home was poor – but your duties lay there.

Jane: Won't you sit down, Mr Prior? No? One can find duties everywhere. I have found mind here.

Prior: You are among grand people here. Your social superiors. They will scorn and insult you.

Jane: I've felt it already. I'll bear it.
Prior: I've heard some of them sneer at you as I passed the hall.
Jane: I can bear that – the pain of this conversation I cannot bear, feeling what I owe you. It is useless – indeed it is useless.
Prior: We stood to you, Jane, when you had not a friend in the world. You had two faithful hearts to rely upon – my mother's and mine. Come back to us, dear Jane.
Jane: I cannot – tell me of the village, the School, of your dear mother, but don't press this subject.
Prior: Confess it was a heartless thing to leave the place without a farewell.
Jane: I meant it as a kindness – to spare pain to us both. I'll remember you and pray for you – all the same, if you'd allow me to be only a friend, I should not have left my post, though the hardship and poverty were wearing me out. But you would press. You would.
Prior: Say persecute at once.
Jane: You would wring my heart with imploring me daily, hourly, for what I could never give – my love –
Prior: You may have had a distasteful pastor, Miss Eyre –
Jane: No, no.
Prior: Here you have a master who is a notorious profligate.
Jane: Stop there, Mr Prior – I scarcely know Mr Rochester, but I have only experienced kindness, consideration and sympathy.
Prior: Yes the leopard has a pretty skin,
The snake; a playful rattle.
Jane: I utterly refuse to hear my master maligned.
Prior: Tell me one thing, Jane – in the village or elsewhere, have I a rival?

Mr Rochester enters, cane in hand

Jane: No.
Rochester (coming forward): I hope I'm not interrupting the meeting of two friends. I only want to ask you, Mr Prior, to give me the pleasure of dining and staying for the night.
Prior (stiffly): Thank you, Sir, but I have my duties at home. I've been impressing upon Miss Eyre – your governess – that my mother's home is open to her. We are much attached to her and I have begged of her to return.
Rochester: Well, Miss Eyre, will you return with this gentleman or stay with me? or rather with Adèle?
Jane: I will stay, Sir.
Rochester: I am glad of it.
Adèle: And me I am glad (*runs to her and puts her arm round Jane's waist*)

Act II

Library in Thornfield House

Rochester discovered

Rochester: Let me see, t'was two months since I received that letter from Mason. Two months before, he must have written it – no, nearer three – for the voyage and the vessel from Jamaica was in Southampton last Wednesday. What a frightful thing if Mason should come.

Enter Servant

Servant: Did you ring, Sir?
Rochester: That fellow from Southampton is below?
Servant: That Gipsy man you bought the horse from, Sir? He's below in the kitchen, waiting.
Rochester: Show him up. (*Exit Servant*)
Rochester: Oh the fetters we forge for ourselves – the cannon balls we fasten on our own ankles, till they work to the bone – the idea of meeting that man, a weak amiable gentleman, shakes my nerves to my centre – I have stood at the bar of my own conscience and I've asked the question – Have I a right to be happy as other men? to shake off a terrible incubus and be happy as others? and I have said yes – a hundred times yes – I am acquitted – but if this Mason comes, ruin, and desolation.

Enter Nat Lee

Rochester: Oh! Nat, you come from Southampton. Well?
Nat: Well, your honour. I was on the quay for four hours till she come in.
Rochester: The vessel from Jamaica. Well?
Nat: I stood at the gangway and kept my eye on the passengers as they coom ashore.
Rochester: Did you ask the steward the names of the passengers?
Nat: Arterwards. Your honour. I did.
Rochester: Well, did he tell you the name of Mason?
Nat: No, your honour.
Rochester (aside): Thank God! (*Aloud*): Well, you say you watched the passengers. What sort of a man did I tell you to look out for?
Nat: Why, a small gentleman with large dark eyes, a look of colour about him, and black hair rather long and curly.
Rochester: Well, man, did you see anyone like that?
Nat: No, your honour.

Rochester (aside): Safe. (*Aloud*): Now go down stairs, Nat, to my study – you know where it is. I’ve not done with you yet.

Nat (turning at door): Would your honour let me make a few shillings by telling the ladies’ fortunes before I go?

Rochester: We’ll talk of that presently. (Exit Nat Lee)

Rochester: The weight is lifted off my heart. Now I can mix in life and smile and plan like all the world around me. There’s Blanche’s laugh – I’ll put that young lady’s heart in the crucible and test it for alloy.

Enter Blanche, Lady Ingram, Lord Desmond, followed by Mary & Miss Beechers

Blanche: Oh, here he is – you surely are not going away, Edmund, again?

Lady Ingram: It’s really too bad.

Desmond: Why, Rochester, you’re not going out in all this rain?

Miss Beecher: You’ll be positively drowned.

Mary: Washed away.

Rochester (laughing): There’s only one here to whom I owe amends – that’s to you, Blanche. I am obliged to ride over to Mr Bushey, the Magistrate, on business and I shall be absent three whole hours, isn’t it heartless?

Blanche: I’ll pardon you, but I’ll never pardon the Magistrate.

Rochester: I’m not going yet, no sentiment till the fatal moment. I’m coming back. (Exit Rochester)

Blanche (yawning): What on earth’s to be done?

Lady Ingram: My love, Mrs Fairfax assures me there are some pretty costumes in the house and we’ll have a capital charade, in the drawing room.

Blanche: Well then, Mamma, we might possibly survive till five o’clock – but what’s to be done after?

Desmond: Egad! I’ve thought of a word!

All: Tell us – do tell us.

Desmond: Why, Sorrel.

Mary: What does it mean?

Desmond: Why, don’t you know – its a plant and the colour of a horse.

Miss Beecher: Capital!

Lady Ingram: Well, my Lord, let us hear – ‘sor’. How would you represent that?

Desmond: I[t] don’t mean anything.

Mary: And ‘rel’.

Desmond: Don’t mean anything either. Confound it, I must try again.

Mary (aside): The dear stupid thing.

Blanche: My dear Mamma, this is the third day of the deluge. I am tired of everyone, and everything, do tell me what to do.

Desmond: Billiards!

Blanche: Sick of them.

Mary: Where’s your French novel?

Blanche: Left the heroine dead and the hero a lunatic.

Lady Ingram (slyly): I know the matter with you, my darling.

Miss Beecher: Her dear Mr Rochester is going away.

Blanche: I’ll grow tired of him bye and bye.

Lady Ingram: Much too soon to begin, love.

Blanche: Oh. I suppose I must wait for the honeymoon?

Mary: Nonsense, Blanche, he’s never out of your thoughts.

Blanche: Mary, don’t be silly.

Mary: Take comfort, poor lamb, her grim ugly blue-beard won’t be so long away – he’ll come back to it again.

Blanche: How can you be so absurd?

Desmond: If you’d accepted. Me. Miss Ingram. –

Blanche: Your absence might have been a relief, my Lord. Mamma. I’ve got a capital notion.

Lady Ingram: And what’s that, my dear?

Blanche: A delightful, mischievous, splendid idea for a wet day.

Miss Beecher: Do tell us, what – what?

Blanche: You know that proper demure creature Miss Eyre?

Lady Ingram: Oh, the governess?

Blanche: The Governess. Let us get her down, and draw her out – let us bait her. I’m sure we shall have some fun.

Desmond: Drawing the badger, eh?

Mary: Oh, for shame, Blanche!

Lady Ingram: I don’t think it quite, a ladylike employment, my love.

Blanche: On the contrary, we’ll all be so condescending, and charming. We’ll pretend we’ve had an argument and make her the arbiter, don’t you see? I’m quite sure she knows – nothing of history.

Lady Ingram: And I don’t think she knows French – a most incompetent person – but, my sweet love, I can’t approve.

Blanche: Do you want your sweet love to lie dead at your feet, Mamma? I *must* be amused – (*Rings bell*).

Desmond: I’ll examine her in the Globes.

Mary: What do *You* know of them?

Desmond: All the more competent because I know nothing. I’ll lay you a pair of gloves, Blanche, the Lady takes the change out of us all, and I hope she may, six against one isn’t fair.

Blanche: Done.

Enter Servant

Blanche: Where is Miss Eyre?

Servant: In the conservatory, Miss.

Blanche: Would you tell her that Lady Ingram –

Lady Ingram (aside): My love, I cannot –

Blanche: – that Lady Ingram would be much obliged if she would be so good as to come to the library. *(Exit Servant)*

Mary: I know if Mr Rochester comes in, he'll stop your baiting.

Blanche: On what plea? Cruelty to animals?

Lady Ingram: Do be careful, Blanche love.

Enter Jane

Blanche: Oh, Miss Eyre, thank you – we've had an argument.

Desmond: Flying at one another.

Blanche: And we've all agreed to appeal to you as the learned person in the house.

Jane: But I'm not learned, Miss Ingram.

Blanche: Oh! That's modesty.

Lady Ingram: I think I understood you to say Miss Eyre, you were clever at embroidery. Would you be so good as to finish that flower?

Jane: With great pleasure. *(Sits at embroidery)*

Blanche: The question in dispute is this. What is the date of the 'Diet of Worms'?

Desmond: We all know that worms are the diet of fish, but it ain't that, Miss Eyre.

Blanche: Can you tell us?

Jane: Do you really wish to know?

Blanche: Of course, we are dying.

Jane: It was in the year *(gives date)*.

Miss Beecher: Wonderful. Amazing.

Desmond: Egad *(turning Globe)*: Miss Eyre, you can't think how stupid I am. I spend an hour every morning twirling this globe here looking for Great Britain.

Blanche: Of course you are a good French scholar?

Jane: I can talk French.

Desmond: Hams-cat-ska. Deuced hard to get one's tongue round Hams-skatska.

Lady Ingram: You've been abroad?

Jane: I was at school in Boulogne.

Lady Ingram: Oh, English-French.

Desmond: Grim Tartary.

Blanche: Donner un plat de *sa* metier! What's that, Miss Eyre?

Jane *(promptly)*: Bad French – *son* metier.

Blanche: I said, '*son metier*'.

Lady Ingram: How can you be so presumptuous? My daughter has had the most expensive masters – impossible!

Blanche *(put out)*: I beg your pardon, Miss Eyre. I am quite correct.

Desmond: Cochin China. Miss Eyre, could you tell me where to find Great Britain?

Jane: Oh, if you look to the North West of France, my Lord.

Desmond: Ah. Thanks, but where are all its little islands? Here are some little dots to the West, like a small eruption. I should know 'em.

Jane: Probably the *Scilly* Isles.

Desmond: I've had enough of the Globes for the present.

Adèle bounds in, clapping her hands

Adèle: De beautiful dresses are found – de drawing room is ready – de Charades!! De Charades!!

Miss Beecher: Oh do come. Delightful.

Lady Ingram: Now love, be happy.

Blanche: Come, I'll lead the forlorn hope. *(Exit all but Lord Desmond)*

Desmond: I don't pay compliments. I'm not clever enough, but I like clever women. I say, you're a deuced clever one.

Jane: What, because I knew where to find Great Britain? Why, *you* found Crim Tartary, my Lord.

Desmond: Eh. And caught a Tartar – eh. Gad! I have you there.

Jane: You have.

Desmond: I say! Let's get up a conspiracy – you play up to my lead in the drawing room. What's this? – you say – I found Crim Tartary, and then I say the other thing you know. Deuced good.

Jane: You can't open a bottle of Champagne twice, My Lord, it gets flat.

Desmond: Ah, you have *me* there. I say, how in Heaven's name do [you] pass the day? I can't pass the day for the life of me. A fellow can't smoke two dozen cigars in the day, and Rochester's so deuced bad at billiards – it's no fun. How do you pass the day?

Jane: Well, I read and work, and I teach and I think.

Desmond: Think, I'd like to try. How do you begin?

Jane: Well, my thoughts are like a circle, my lord, no beginning and no end.

Desmond: Egad! my thoughts are like a circle too, that means a nought, you know *(laughs)*. By Jove, I've done it again. We might lead up to that in the drawing room you know.

Jane: We might.

Desmond: I'd rather like to pass the day with you.

Jane: We should bore one another to death, my Lord.

Desmond: I'd like the death. Now you couldn't suggest to a fellow, Miss Eyre, some amusement on a wet day? Not books you know, I hate books, some little sporting, interesting, amusement, you know, that would last till the dressing bell.

Jane: Killing flies.

- Desmond:* That's like telling a fellow to hunt in July. There ain't any flies in January. Capital game we might have else, you and I. I've won a lot of money on it in India – you put a lump of sugar there, and I put a lump of sugar here, and we see who attracts the most flies in six hours – capital game – we might play for love you know.
- Jane:* My Lord, look around you, your mother, and your sisters, and the Miss Beeche[r]s are all gone.
- Desmond:* Egad, I thought I was gone too. We'll play that game in the summer, Miss Eyre. Deuced clever. Egad. (Exit)

Jane sits in window.

- Jane:* Now if I saw Mr Prior's horse coming up the road in the distance, I think I would run upstairs, pack up my things and return with him. He was right – he was right – what is this misery which dogs me, upstairs and downstairs – which gives the venom to my humiliation – poor fool, are you in love? I must weed out this nonsense from my heart. (*Distant merriment heard*) Yes. Yes. Your mirth would be louder and longer if you knew the contemptible weakness of this heart – and yet – and yet she is not worthy of him: he cannot care for her.

Enter Blanche & Rochester, not seeing Jane

- Blanche:* But I tell you I can be jealous.
- Rochester:* Impossible.
- Blanche:* Frightfully jealous – I could be jealous of a canary – I could be jealous of your horse, if you fondled it too much.
- Rochester:* I say – quite impossible that you could be jealous.
- Blanche:* I am even jealous of the attention you pay to that \prim/ demure creature – the governess – oh, I have watched you.

Jane pulls down blind & rises.

- Blanche (aside to Rochester):* Send her away.
- Rochester:* Miss Eyre, don't disturb yourself. We've no secrets. My horse is being saddled in the yard, and I have some directions to give you before I go.
- Blanche:* I think you are very unkind.
- Rochester:* Why, my girl?
- Blanche:* Going away in this way. What takes you from home?
- Rochester:* I've no objection to tell you, and to tell Miss Eyre – it may concern you both. My neighbour and I have speculated very heavily, and this morning I received disastrous news.
- Blanche:* Good gracious. Mr Rochester, what will be the consequence of this?

- Rochester:* Oh don't be alarmed. By no means ruin. My friends –
- Jane:* I'm so glad of that.
- Blanche:* Oh, then, it won't affect you at all?
- Rochester:* No more than this – I shall be obliged to sell my horses, give up my town house, probably be waited on by a maid in a mop cap, and send my liveried servants to the right about.
- Blanche:* Have you informed my mother of this, Mr Rochester?
- Rochester:* My dearest Blanche. I thought you were the one to break it to her.
- Jane:* You may be happier so, sir, and those around you too.
- Rochester:* I have often pictured to myself, if I became a poor man, what a peaceful happy home I might create around me. No stately dinners – no chattering parties – but a ministering loving wife, such as you, Blanche, in your quiet alpaca gown, sharing with me my privations and turning by her sympathy – our common cares into joy.
- Blanche (aside):* That wouldn't suit me.
- Jane (aside):* How sweet that would be.
- Blanche:* I think Mamma must be wondering where I am. (Exit Blanche & Rochester)
- Rochester:* Let us go and find her.
- Jane:* Ah, that humble home with him: how coldly she listened to what brought my heart to my lips – I cannot live here – if she were worthy of him – well – I should, no doubt, have two tigers tearing my heart, love and jealousy, and they would soon make an end of me, but to see daily her unworthiness, and his devotion – I cannot bear it. I must go – oh what a fool I am! I'll set it down (*takes out diary*) I'll write on this page – Jane Eyre – brought up on charity – a poor country school mistress – without family – without beauty – vain – presumptuous – jealous. Now on the other side – Blanche Ingram – birth – beauty – position – accomplishments and the winner of my dear Master's love.

Enter Rochester, quietly. Jane sees him, and closes diary.

- Rochester:* Why are you taking notes – you are a spy upon the house! Come let us have a look?
- Jane:* No – no – it couldn't interest you.
- Rochester:* Oh. You have secrets?
- Jane:* One can have private thoughts without having secrets.
- Rochester:* Hallo. Look round. Mr Prior's at the window. (*Jane turns quickly. Rochester gently takes diary & pretends to read:* 'Dreamt of Mr Prior last night'.)
- Jane (trying to seize it):* Give it back. You must give it back. (*He gives it back.*)
- Rochester:* Little friend, you've noticed my tender 'penchant' for Miss Ingram?
- Jane:* Yes Sir.
- Rochester:* She's a rare one, is she not, Jane?
- Jane:* Yes. Sir.

- Rochester:* She's an armful – a strapper – a real strapper – big, blonde, and buxom.
- Jane:* Mr Rochester, I got a letter, yesterday, from Mr Prior telling me his kind mother was ill. Here is the letter.
- Rochester:* Well I don't want it.
- Jane:* But I want your leave to go for a week.
- Rochester:* When do you wish to go?
- Jane:* Early tomorrow morning. Sir.
- Rochester:* Well. You must have some money – I've given you no salary yet. How much have you in the world, Jane?
- Jane (taking out purse):* Five shillings. Sir.
- Rochester (taking purse, pours money on his hand, chuckles over it, takes out his pocket book):* Here.
- Jane:* Fifty Pounds! I thought you were poor. Sir.
- Rochester:* Oh did you?
- Jane:* You only owe me six pounds – I've no change.
- Rochester:* I don't want change – take your wages.
- Jane:* Not more than my due.
- Rochester:* Ah, right, I forgot that you might stay away three months., if you had fifty pounds. Here are three sovereigns – that's plenty.
- Jane:* Yes, Sir. But now you owe me three.
- Rochester:* Come back for it, then. I am your banker for forty-seven pounds.
- Jane:* Mr Rochester. I may as well mention another matter of business to you, while I have the opportunity.
- Rochester:* Matter of business – I am curious to hear it.
- Jane:* You have informed me, sir you are going shortly to be married.
- Rochester:* Yes, what then?
- Jane:* In that case Adèle ought to go to school.
- Rochester:* To get her out of my bride's way – I see – not a doubt of it. Adèle, as you say, must go to school and you of course must march straight to the devil.
- Jane:* I hope not, Sir, but I must seek another situation somewhere.
- Rochester (with a comic stare):* Of course, and you will ask Mr Prior to get you a place?
- Jane:* No, Sir, I shall advertise.
- Rochester:* You shall walk up the Pyramids of Egypt – at your peril you advertise. I wish I offered you only a sovereign instead of three – give me back two, Jane. I have use for them.
- Jane:* And so have I, Sir. I couldn't spare the money on any account.
- Rochester:* Little niggard. Give me one sovereign, Jane.
- Jane:* Not one shilling, Sir – not one penny.
- Rochester:* Just let me look at the money.
- Jane:* No, Sir – you're not to be trusted.
- Rochester:* Jane!

- Jane:* Sir.
- Rochester:* Promise me *one* thing.
- Jane:* I'll promise you anything that I think I am likely to perform.
- Rochester:* Not to advertise – trust to me – I'll find you a situation.
- Jane:* I shall be glad to do so, Sir – if you will promise that Adèle and I shall be safe out of the house before your bride enters it.
- Rochester:* Very well. I pledge my word on it. You go to morrow then?
- Jane:* Yes. Sir. Early.
- Rochester:* Then you and I must bid good bye for a while.
- Jane:* I suppose so, Sir.
- Rochester:* And how do people perform that ceremony? of parting, Jane? Teach me. I'm not quite up to it.
- Jane:* They say farewell.
- [Rochester]:* Then say it.
- Jane:* Farewell, Mr Rochester, for the present.
- Rochester:* What must I say?
- Jane:* Why the same.
- Rochester:* Farewell, Miss Eyre, for the present. Is that all?
- Jane:* Yes.
- Rochester:* It seems stingy. I'd like something else. One might shake hands. There is something, Jane, which makes this farewell difficult for each of us.
- Jane:* We have been good friends – I grieve to leave Thornfield. I've not been trampled on – I've not been petrified and I've had a kind master.
- Rochester:* Something more than that. Jane, I've a queer feeling with regard to this friendship as if there was a string somewhere under my left ribs, that was joined to your heart, and if we parted overlong, I've a nervous notion I should take to bleeding inwardly – as for you – you would forget me.
- Jane:* That. I never should, sir – you know – such a friend as you, Sir, can never be forgotten.
- Rochester:* Well, well, we've said Farewell. (Exit.)
- Jane:* If he knew how hard it is to answer him gaily when my heart is full. Well done, Jane. You've got through it without a sob.

Enter Adèle.

- Adèle:* Oh Mademoiselle, that mechant Blanche. Do you know what she said to me?
- Jane:* What did she say?
- Adèle:* She said that I did not belong to Monsieur Rochester or anyone.
- Jane:* Never mind, Adèle. I love you all the better for that. As a child I was just like you – we love one another all the better – shall I tell you a ghost story?
- Adèle:* Oh, oui.

Jane: It's very very short – there was once a great, great, lord and a poor slave girl, and this great Lord sometimes smiled upon the girl, and the foolish girl used to watch for that smile, and long for it – she'd say in the morning to herself, 'I wonder will he smile on me to day', and at night, 'he looked on me today, but did not smile.

Adèle: Was she a Governess?

Jane: Hush. They're all coming in.

Mrs Fairfax appears at door.

Jane: And there's good Mrs Fairfax beckoning for you. Good night.

Mrs Fairfax: Come, Adèle, (Exit with Adèle.)

Enter Lady Ingram, Desmond, Mary, Blanche & Miss Beecher.

Blanche: Why can't you have the gipsy in here?

Mary: Oh do have him up in this beautiful moonlight.

Miss Beecher: It will be so sentimental.

Lady Ingram: My dear. You're not going to have a great dirty Gipsy up in the library?

Blanche: Well, we're not going down in the kitchen to him, that's certain, and I positively must have my fortune told.

Desmond: Let him come up. He's a funny old dog – have him up.

Enter Servant.

Servant: He's coming up in spite of me, my Lord – he says the master gave him leave to tell the young ladies' fortunes.

Desmond: And here he comes. (Exit Servant.)

Lady Ingram: How vastly absurd.

Enter Rochester disguised as a Gipsy.

Rochester: Good even to you gentle folk – good e'en to you and fair fortunes to you all.

Blanche: That depends upon *you* – be sure to give me a good one.

Rochester: Eh, my bonny leddy – I've a good will to do so – but that rests with the stars – show me your little palm.

Blanche: Must I cross it with silver?

Rochester: Ah, sure a bit o' siller – I'll sit me here (looks at her hand). Come round a bit, my Liddy, and let the moonlight on it. Ah, dear heart, bags o' gold and siller and my lord for a bridegroom – the black crow that followed you is a puir fowl not worth the plucking – gold peacocks, and pheasants are your sort.

Blanche: What nonsense – that's enough for me.

Rochester: Coom forrad, coom forrad – young and bonny ones, stretching your pretty necks in the darkness. (All advance except Jane.)

Mary: What's my fortune, Sir?

Rochester: Ah, you ken it well yourself – slybody – there's the cousin. He with the yellow hair and rides the white horse with the hounds.

Mary: Gracious. How do you know that?

Rochester: Ah. I knows it all – who'll speer her fortune next?

Desmond: What will be my fortune at the next Derby, my man?

Rochester: You back the foal 'Fiddler'.

Desmond: What then?

Rochester: Why, you'll lose!

Desmond (aside): Damn it. I've backed him heavily.

Lady Ingram: I don't think this is quite right.

Desmond: Seems to know all about us.

Blanche (to Mary): How do you feel?

Rochester: There's anither leddy here – she cant hide fra' me.

Mary: Oh, Miss Eyre, you must come and have your fortune told. (Leads Jane forward.)

Rochester: Well, you want to know your fortune?

Jane: I don't care about it – you may please yourself. I don't believe in it.

Rochester: Why, its like your impudence to say so – I heard it in your step.

Jane: Did you? You've a quick ear.

Rochester: Ah, and a quick eye, and a quick brain.

Jane: You need them all in your trade.

Rochester: Well I do specially when I get a customer like you. Why don't you tremble?

Jane: I'm not cold.

Rochester: Why don't you turn pale?

Jane: I'm not sick.

Rochester: Why don't you consult me, *saucy*?

Jane: I'm not silly.

Blanche (aside): What nerve that creature has.

Mary: Hush. (Rochester lights pipe & smokes.)

Rochester: You are cold – you are sick and you are silly.

Jane: Prove it.

Rochester: Let me look in your face – stand in the light there. Ye are cold because ye are alone. Ye are sick, because ye see happiness afore yer, at your lips and yer cannot taste it. Ye are silly 'cause ye will not stretch to it.

Jane: I can't guess riddles – what do you mean?

Rochester: I'll read your life for yer. Here you are *aloane* wi' all the foine folk around you – like figures in a glass, but there's one o' em that ye watch, wi' yer doleful ee'n night and morn.

Blanche: What can he mean?

- Rochester:* Ye sit in yer winder to watch him. I ken yer habits I ken yer ways.
- Jane:* You've learnt them from the servants.
- Rochester:* Where's squire Rochester?
- Jane:* From home.
- Rochester:* Well, but he'll come back.
- Blanche:* Come out of this, for mercy's sake – lets light all the candles. Do give me your arm, Lord Desmond, I'm frightened.
- Lady Ingram:* Give her a good lecture, my lord, upon her superstition
- Desmond (aside):* I'll not back 'Fiddler'. (*Aloud*): My dear Miss Ingram, trust me, I'll save you from the bogies. (*Exit.*)
- Mary:* Won't you come, Miss Eyre.
- Jane:* I'm not afraid. I'll wait. (*All exit but Rochester & Jane.*)
- Rochester:* Ah, go along with all of you. I hae to talk to you. Ye saw, dearee, how she leaned on the lord's arm. I'd warn Squire Rochester to look out. If the silly lord come back to her now – the puir squire is counted out.
- Jane:* But I did not come to hear Mr Rochester's fortune. I came to hear my own.
- Rochester:* Kneel there on the bit stool. I'll read your fortune in your face. Why ye might pick the fruit fra the branch by the stretching of your hand. I saw good fortune herself, put that you wished for on the shelf for you. You've only to take it down. You fancy Mr Rochester!
- Jane (quickly):* If this is all you're to tell me, Good night!
- Rochester:* Ah, you silly daft – wi' half an ee' ye could see that Squire Rochester fancies you. That heart is galled wi' this chain that hawds him to the tall bowld faced lass. His thoughts are wi' ye now, fu' of love as he jogs along the dark road fu' i' love. Ha ye no love for him?
- Jane (agitated):* Who has told you this? Do you see into people's hearts and secrets? Old man? Yes, I love him – I thought no one knew it – if you know my heart, do you know his? You're mad to say he cares for me. I'll listen to you no longer.
- Rochester:* Ah, your voice trembles, your step totters. (*Throws off disguise.*) Well, Jane, don't you know me?
- Jane:* Mr Rochester.
- Rochester:* No other come back.
- Jane:* What have I said? I've been in a dream. Oh, Sir, t'was scarcely fair – I hardly thought I should meet you again, in travesty.
- Rochester:* You shall meet me, Jane, to night, without any disguise. I have found the situation for you. You are to undertake the education of Mrs Dionysus O'Gall's five daughters of Bitternut Lodge. Connaught. Ireland.
- Jane (moved):* I thought that Adèle and I – it is a long way off, Sir.
- Rochester:* No matter – a girl of your sense will not object to the voyage or the distance.
- Jane:* The distance and the sea – a barrier –
- Rochester:* From what, Jane?

- Jane:* From England – from Thornfield – and –
- Rochester:* Well? from me –
- Jane:* From you, sir (*agitated*). A long way, a long way.
- Rochester:* To be sure, and when you get to Bitternut Lodge, Connaught, Ireland – and you must go to morrow, never to return –
- Jane:* I wish I'd never come to Thornfield. I wish I'd never been born.
- Rochester:* Because you are sorry to leave it?
- Jane:* I have known you, Mr Rochester – your kindness. Your company – is what I have revered – is what I have delighted in – and the tongue will speak out at last. It strikes me with terror and anguish to feel I absolutely must be torn from you for ever. I see the necessity of departure and it is like looking on the necessity of death.
- Rochester (suddenly):* Where do you see the necessity?
- Jane:* Where? You, Sir have placed it before me in the shape of Miss Ingram – your bride.
- Rochester:* My bride! What bride! I have no bride.
- Jane:* But you will have.
- Rochester:* Yes, I will! I will.
- Jane:* Then I must go. You've said it yourself.
- Rochester:* No – you must stay – I swear it.
- Jane:* I tell you I must go. Do you think I can stay to be nothing to you? Do you think I am a machine without feelings and can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think because I'm poor, obscure, plain, that I am soul-less and heartless? You think wrong. I've as much soul as you and full as much heart. If God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave *you*. It is my heart and soul now that addresses yours. Not the servant addressing her master – but equal.
- Rochester:* As we are.
- Jane:* And yet not so, for you are as good as a married man – and wed to one inferior to you. One you cannot love – I would scorn such a union – therefore I am better than you – let me go.
- Rochester:* Where Jane – to Ireland?
- Jane:* I have spoken my mind and can go anywhere now.
- Rochester:* You shall act for yourself. I am no longer engaged to Miss Ingram.
- Jane:* No longer? (*Aside*): But what is this to me?
- Rochester:* You remember how I confessed to heavy losses before that paragon of fidelity? Her mother acted promptly – I found this letter on my table – very polite – deprecating anything sudden or unpleasant, she had long suspected the state of things – and regretted that the suit of Lord Desmond should have been repulsed – so and so – and Jane, I am free.
- Jane:* You play a farce, which I merely laugh at.

Rochester: Do you doubt me, Jane?
 Jane: Wholly!
 Rochester: You've no faith in me?
 Jane: Not a whit.
 Rochester (*passionately*): Am I then a liar in your eyes? Am I so little of the gentleman that I could insult you by such an offer in jest – I love you dearer than life – you poor obscure, dependent – I entreat you to accept me as a husband.
 Jane: What, me? Mr Rochester, let me look in your face.
 Rochester: Why?
 Jane: I want to read it. It's all the world to me to believe you are true, and your offer real. My only feelings to you must be gratitude and devotion.
 Rochester: Gratitude!! Jane – accept me quickly. Say Edmund – give me my name – Edmund, I will marry you?
 Jane: Do you truly love me? Do you sincerely wish me to be your wife?
 Rochester: I do. You do not want an oath?
 Jane: Then Sir. I will marry you.
 Rochester: Edmund!
 Jane: Dear Edmund.
 Rochester: Come to me – come to me entirely now – make my happiness – I will make *yours*.
 Jane: Leave me alone now, dear – I want to think – I haven't yet conceived my happiness.
 Rochester (*kisses her. Aside*): God pardon me, and man meddle not with me! I have her, and will hold her. (*Aloud*): Are you happy, Jane?
 Jane: All too happy.
 Rochester (*aside*): Then it will atone – it will atone. God will pardon me.
 (Exit)
 Jane: He's mine – Jane Eyre's own love is like a king's crown placed on a beggar's head – there never was a wilder, grander, fairy gift in a tale – nothing but death can snatch away this joy – and after all my life of labour and sorrows, God is too just to cut short my blossom'd life. Now come slight and insult on me, would be a sort of luxury – whilst I whispered *he is mine* – he is mine. Keep down, swelling heart, or joy may kill you – no mortal ever lived happier than I – no happiness was ever so cloudless – none can stand between him, and me (*Maniac laugh heard distant*) – Oh, what's that? God protect me, it was like a devil's laugh. (*Laugh repeated almost at door*) Edmund – Edmund – save me – I – I can't escape. What is it? what is it?

Door opens & Madwoman appears, sees Jane, approaches with horrible menaces; with a cry Jane drops on floor, Maniac is about to strangle her when Rochester enters quickly, advances – Maniac gibbers, & points from Jane to Rochester, & to herself. She retreats through door.

Rochester: Grace. Grace Poole – Here! (*Closes secret door*) Jane. Dearest one, you are safe. (*He supports her head on his knee & the company heard without calling*): – Open, what's the matter. What's the matter?

End of Act II

Act III

Library, about 4 o'clock, sunshine dying out and showing again across the books

Mrs Fairfax discovered arranging some books

Mrs Fairfax: Dear me, I don't like the task at all of giving this dear young lady a hint – and she has really been too ill, but I wi[sh] I could get her to leave the house and go home while Edmund's away in London.

Enter Jane

Mrs Fairfax: Well dear, you're up!

Jane: I have been ill.

Mrs Fairfax: You have had a great shock, dear Miss Eyre.

Jane: I remember it dimly. I want to know all about it. Can you tell me? Can you explain?

Mrs Fairfax: Sit down, dear. Sit Down.

Jane: What day is this, Mrs Fairfax?

Mrs Fairfax: Just a fortnight since that distressing evening, my dear.

Jane: The Ingrams are gone.

Mrs Fairfax: They are gone home, and, only fancy, dear, there's likely to be a match between Lord [blank] and the beautiful Miss Blanche.

Jane: Where's Mr Rochester?

Mrs Fairfax: He is [in] London. He ascertained from the doctor that you were only suffering from a nervous shock.

Jane: And he'll be back?

Mrs Fairfax: We expected him yesterday. We don't know what keeps him in London!

Jane (*smiling*): I think I can guess. Pardon my questions, Mrs Fairfax – and my pupil?

Mrs Fairfax: Adèle is gone to a relations of Mr Rochester's where she will remain, but you will have no difficulty, dear Miss Eyre, in finding a place.

Jane: Thank you, I've found a happy, beautiful place already.

Mrs Fairfax: Oh! Indeed!

Jane: I'll be glad to leave this house.

Mrs Fairfax: You keep looking at that secret door, dear, there's no cause for alarm. (*Jane draws chair to Mrs Fairfax*)

Jane: Perhaps not, but I would implore you to give me an explanation – it's something dreadful.

Mrs Fairfax: Well, dear –

Jane (with hushed voice): Who is this fearful woman upstairs!

Mrs Fairfax: I always understood, my dear, that she was a half-sister of Mr Rochester. I believe a Creole by birth. He has acted very generously towards the poor creature. She has been cruelly treated, I understand in an asylum.

Jane: How was it the company in the house knew nothing of her?

Mrs Fairfax: Naturally Mr Rochester would be very sensitive.

Jane: How is it that she could be loose about the house!

Mrs Fairfax: It has very rarely happened. Once I heard she tried to set fire to Mr Rochester's bed -curtains, when he was asleep – but I mustn't alarm you.

Door opens, Jane starts. Enter Grace Poole.

Grace: How is the young lady?

Mrs Fairfax: A little nervous yet.

Grace: If I were the young lady. I wouldn't sleep another night in this house.

Jane: But why!

Grace: Oh! Many reasons, Miss. Some of them might offend you if I told. The coach passes at six o'clock, Miss. She up there – is dangerous and cunning. I wouldn't stop if I was you.

Mrs Fairfax: How can you frighten her!

Grace: But I would like to frighten her if it would make her catch that coach. If she wants the fare, we could make it up for her.

Jane: If your patient be so dangerous Why do you leave her!

Grace: I've an assistant, and she's quiet now. Her ear's so quick, bless you – that any loud talking or singing comes up to her when I can scarcely hear a sound.

Jane: I am going tomorrow, Mrs Poole. I don't think between this and then there'll be either singing or loud talking. I've a good friend to take care of me – when I go.

Mrs Fairfax: I think he's waiting for you now, dear.

Jane: What! Mr Rochester!

Mrs Fairfax: No dear, Mr Prior.

Jane: Oh! is he come! I'll see him.

Grace: She's got Mr Rochester on her lips.

(Exits with a keen look at Jane)

Jane (rises): I'll go down to him.

Mrs Fairfax: Why should you, dear! I'm going down and I'll send him up. No – no – don't be frightened, that door is fast nailed up. I'll send Mr Prior to you.
(Exit)

Jane: There's something chilly about everyone. I wish he were back – my happiness has taken flight, and that dream of the little child three nights always the same – dabbling its hand in the grasses. It always brought me ill-luck – I wish he were back.

Enter Mr Prior – she shakes hand with him

Jane: You don't forget me, dear Mr Prior – two long journeys to see me. Is your mother well?

Prior: I don't think she was ever well, Jane, since you left us.

Jane: Oh, then you shouldn't have left her.

Prior: She bade me come.

Jane: Won't you sit down, Mr Prior? How happy I could fancy you would be in this library all day. Do sit here – see you can turn this little book-stand on its swivel – open some deep book – light your candles – and there you are – happy.

Prior: You seem happy, Jane!

Jane: I am happy. I only want one thing.

Prior: And that – !

Jane: Some confidential friend to tell my happiness to.

Prior: You look pale.

Jane: I've had a nervous attack, Mr Prior. What do you think has happened to me since I saw you?

Prior: I'm very anxious, Jane, to know.

Jane: Spoken like a ghostly monitor – but there is nothing sepulchral in my news – fancy the wildest grandest dream [of] a poor governess. Fulfilled.

Prior: You mean that – !

Jane: Come, come, dear old friend. You know you always thought of me but as a friend and sister – I shall always be so.

Prior: But this news –

Jane: Tomorrow at this hour – I shall be Mr Rochester's wife.

Prior (half aside): Thank God, I am come in time!

Jane: You will be present –

Prior: It is time, Jane, to tell you what has brought me here. It has got about that Mr Rochester has been paying you attentions.

Jane: Well!

Prior: But it's not well, Jane – don't think I am speaking under jealousy.

Jane: I am sure you are not. But you are speaking of what you know nothing.

Prior: Jane, there are ugly rumours about concerning Mr Rochester.

Jane: Vile calumnies – I love him the more!

Prior: They've come to me from such a trustworthy source that I must see Mr Rochester.

Jane: Why not! But it is a pity to worry him and he mayn't be home for hours.

Prior: I must see him – Heaven forbid I should wrong any man unheard – but I must see him – I'll wait in the hall like one of his lackeys for any length of time.

Jane: Oh dear, Mr Prior, you get so excited and fall into that dear sermon-tone. You'll stay with me here, won't you! And I'll tell you all.

Enter Servant

Servant: Lady Ingram and the Miss Ingrams Miss.

Jane: Tell them that Mr Rochester's from home.

Servant: But they want to see you, Miss.

Jane (aside): Their sneers and their scoffs will be pleasure to me now. (*Aloud*): Ask them to walk in. (*Exit Servant*)

Prior: Jane, if you find him false – without truth – and without honour –

Jane: I know what you'd say – would I come back to the school! I will!

Prior: And trust me, I will never press my suit again. If this happens so, we'll work together as friends! (*Takes hand*)

Jane: As friends!

Prior: I wait below.

Enter Servant

Servant: Lady Ingram and the Miss Ingrams.

Prior passes them, bows, they bow slightly in return. Exit Prior & Servant.

Enter Lady Ingram, Blanche & Mary

Lady Ingram: Good morning, Miss Eyre.

Blanche: Good morning, Miss Eyre. (*Jane bows.*)

Mary (shaking hands): You've been unwell – I hope you've got over your fright.

Jane: Thank you, I'm much better (*all seated*).

Lady Ingram: I understand that your pupil has gone to school.

Jane: A fortnight ago she went to some friends of Mr Rochester's.

Lady Ingram: Oh!

Blanche: I presume, Miss Eyre, you are no longer her governess.

Jane: No, Miss Ingram. (*To Lady Ingram*): Mr Rochester is from home, Lady Ingram.

Blanche: We haven't come to visit Mr Rochester.

Lady Ingram: We were aware Mr Rochester was from home – we have come here from a kindly motive to you, Miss Eyre.

Blanche: In point of fact, to give you a warning.

Lady Ingram: When your pupil has left your care and the pretext for your presence here has ceased – how can you think of remaining here another day, in such a house, Miss Eyre.

Jane: Mrs Fairfax is here.

Lady Ingram: Mrs Fairfax is an elderly lady and a relation. Pardon me – if you wish to retain your respectability it is peremptory you should leave this house at once. Till you can secure a new place, Miss Eyre, – ah – I have noticed you are proficient at your needle and as my daughter's wedding with Lord [blank] is coming on, we could give you employment – in – a – making up the dresses.

Blanche: Not on the same terms as you've had here, of course. We should be very sorry to see you in want.

Mary: Oh! Blanche.

Jane (aside): What a luxury there is in their insults now. (*Smiling*): Thank you, my lady and Miss Ingram – you are very kind – I should be too busy and am in no want.

Lady Ingram: Oh!

Mary: My mother does not mean to offend you.

Jane: I am not the least offended.

Mary: You may always look upon me as a friend, Miss Eyre.

Jane: Except Mr Rochester, I have found no other friend here.

Blanche: You mentioned Mr Rochester. Since my mother and sister shrink from letting you [know] what that gentleman is I feel it my duty to let you know. Mr Rochester is a man who has been living under false colours before the world.

Jane: Miss Ingram!

Blanche: A dishonourable, despicable, unprincipled man whose life has been one system of hypocrisy.

Jane: What are you saying, Miss Ingram – can your anger with Mr Rochester –

Blanche: My anger! I thoroughly despise him – only contempt.

Jane: How can you descend to such idle slander?

Blanche: Facts are not idle slander. He is no gentleman – a hypocrite – almost a felon.

Lady Ingram: Gently, gently, Blanche!

Blanche: And if you don't know this, all the world knows it. (*Mockingly*): All the world knows it.

Jane: Miss Ingram. Mr Rochester is not here to answer you – you traduce him behind his back. When you call him hypocrite or a felon, I think you are raving – but – 'Not a gentleman'! There never was a gentleman in the largest sense – if he is not one!!

Lady Ingram: Don't be angry, Miss Eyre.

Jane: I am angry. It ill becomes your daughter to call him no gentleman, whom she has loved for his money and left when she heard he was poor.

Blanche: Miss Eyre. How dare you!

- Jane:* Not a gentleman! When others wounded a poor dependent he knew how to heal the wound – he has no vulgar arrogance which now tramples on the humble. He is incapable of the petty insults of patronage – which hurts to the quick – his manly kindness – his thoughtful goodness – his delicacy for another's feelings and his staunch friendship, don't seem known to you – they are to me, and your words are empty spite and evil slander. I am glad my indignation has found a tongue to tell you so to your face!
- Blanche:* Don't go yet Miss Eyre – let your extraordinary passion cool down. I don't know the relation at present existing between you and Mr Rochester – but if you wish to retain a shred of respectability –
- Jane:* Tell me at once. What you mean!
- Mary:* Pray do not be shocked, Miss Eyre, at some startling news.
- Jane (to Mary):* What is it, what is it, I will not believe anything against Mr Rochester.
- Blanche:* A cold fact, Miss Eyre, will be enough for you without comment. You are aware of the relation to which Mr Rochester stood to me – 'Mr Rochester has a wife alive.' (*Jane sinks back on chair:*)
- Jane:* I don't believe it. Impossible.
- Blanche:* A wife alive – in this house.
- Jane:* Oh, this is monstrous – you startle me – now I see your mistake.
- Mary:* Indeed, it is true, Miss Eyre.
- Jane:* Don't you say it is true, don't you say it – with that kind beautiful face of yours (*aside*) or perhaps I should believe it and drop dead.
- Lady Ingram:* Dear me, what causes this agitation?
- Jane:* Lady Ingram – I see your mistake – I can explain it – I've learnt from Mrs Fairfax's own lips – there is a poor patient – a half sister –
- Lady Ingram:* Mrs Fairfax has been deceived among the rest.
- Jane (sternly):* You have made a monstrous charge. What's your evidence?
- Blanche:* Give me that letter, Mama.
- Mary:* I respect your loyalty to your friend.
- Blanche:* This patient, as you call it, has a brother – the news reached him of my engagement and he considerably wrote to me to tell me of the state of the case. Should you like to read it?
- Lady Ingram:* The first few lines will explain all. (*Jane snatches letter and staggers toward window.*) Most suspicious agitation.
- Blanche:* Why should we concern ourselves any farther about her, Mama?
- Mary:* Poor thing! Poor thing!
- Jane (returning):* What is this letter? Who is this Mr Mason! I'd sooner believe a word from Mr Rochester's lips than the cry of a whole slanderous world. I don't believe – (*tears letter in two*) some lying enemy.
- Blanche:* It was a pity you tore it. I was about to ask you to keep it, you seem so interested in Mr Rochester. (*Rising:*) We'll leave the interesting investigation to you – the letter refers you to one 'Grace Poole'. Let's hope her evidence will be satisfactory.

- Jane:* Grace Poole? (*She mechanically takes up letter.*)
- Lady Ingram:* Good Morning, Miss Eyre.
- Blanche:* We do not renew our offer, Miss Eyre.
- Mary (approaching her & taking her hand):* Write to me, Miss Eyre, and remember, I am your friend. (*Jane has seen nothing and heard nothing. Her hand drops dead beside her from Miss Ingram's, the other hand holds letter, her eyes are as if tranced.*) (*All Exit except Jane.*)
- Jane (after a pause):* What have they told me, something dreadful is ringing in my ears, a letter, yes – here's a letter (*looks at letter*). It couldn't be. Grace Poole! (*starts from her lethargy into sudden activity*) I must see her. I must know the truth – I must wring it from her.
- Grace Poole looks in.*
- Grace:* Hush. This loud talking Miss, is very bad for my patient. I am obliged – (*Jane darts to her side.*)
- Jane:* Grace Poole, you must answer me. I must know the truth – I've a right to it now, a sacred right, and you must – you shall tell me.
- Grace:* Tell me your right, Miss, and I may tell you the truth.
- Jane:* My right. He has asked me to be his wife. I love him beyond all created things – tell me – only tell me that patient is his sister – and I'll love you too. Woman, why are you silent! You've something horrible to tell.
- Grace:* Well, Miss, you don't seem fit to hear it. So you're to be his wife! Eh! Ah, Miss, I told you to quit the house.
- Jane:* Say no more (*she seems about to fall*).
- Grace:* I've said enough. (*Aside:*) The bullet has gone to her poor heart. (*Aloud:*) Sit there, dear, and I'll bring you some water. (*Exit*)

Jane seated, silent with the letter in her hand

Enter Rochester. He stands for a second to look at her.

Jane (to herself): He's come.

Rochester (aside): How pale she looks – she's not heard me come in. (*Aloud:*) Jane. (*To himself:*) Thinking of to morrow, Jane, our wedding day? (*He stops to kiss her, taking her hand.*) What, not a word? You turn your cheek from my lips and draw your hand from mine. What's the matter, my girl?

Jane: Nothing, Sir, that you can cure.

Rochester: Now I look at you, you are pale. Listen to me. Every mile of my long journey I've been thinking of this coming moment, when we should meet – rouse yourself. I have cheer for you – I had your measure for a certain dress – it's come, white as a sunbeam – I have in my pocket here that magic scrap of legal paper – called a marriage licence – throw off this nervous depression, dear – are you angry with me because I'm

a day later than I promised? Today was cloudy – tomorrow will be sunny and lucky is the bride, the sun shines on. (*Aside*): She is still under the shock. (*Aloud*): I have something here to make you smile – let me try on this band of gold!

Jane: It is a mockery, Sir, and you know it.

Rochester (*taken aback*): Jane, who has been talking to you? Who has been setting you against me! I am the victim of many cruel rumours – you will not believe them.

Jane: I have been listening to others and questioning others. I wish only to question and listen to you. Who is that terrible woman upstairs?

Rochester: I knew it. My girl, you are under a sort of spell of terror.

Jane: Terror at what! If what I have heard be true, I don't care what becomes of me – I could wish I'd been killed that night. Despair, Sir, has no fear.

Rochester (*after a pause*): What have they told you, Jane!

Jane (*handing the letter*): That! (*Rochester snatches the letter glances over contents.*)

Rochester: The hound! (*Tears letter.*) Jane, dismiss this letter from your mind. There, the infamous thing is in scraps.

Jane: Is that Woman Your Wife?

Rochester: Listen to me, listen to me with that patient, wistful look – I know and love you so well.

Jane: Is that Woman Your Wife?

Rochester: But you don't listen – Oh, Jane – what a change in my life your coming here has made in me – it has been a gentle charm, the daily delight in being kind to you. The sweetness of hearing my name pronounced by your lips. Let no one blame me, my girl, that I loved you – when your very smile was a festival to me. Let none dare blame me!

Jane: Is that Woman Your Wife?

Rochester: Have I ever told you what a wretched life has been mine, till I met you? Some time I will tell you, and your pity for me will kill your blame.

Jane (*rising*): Oh! Sir, you will not answer me, you turn me off when I am asking you a question of life and death.

Rochester: Sit down. I must be heard. The same act, Jane, that's condemned by man, may be pardoned in God's sight – who knows the heart, has watched all that's been resisted, and fathomed the depth of misery – you ask me have I a wife? Body and soul of me rise in writhing against the avowal. Yes. One who never loved me. One who basely deceived me again and again – brainless – intemperate and unchaste, one whose excesses ended in madness. You've seen her, a wild beast, loathsome and murderous. Do you call that wild beast – a Wife?

Enter Mr Prior with a knock

Rochester: We are private here!

Prior: I see my fears were groundless – Jane, the haven was always open to you. I will bring you back to it.

Jane: Mr Prior, before we go – look at that gentleman – when you see a face again that looks manly, honest, strong, mistrust it. Let us leave this wretched house.

Rochester: Jane, speak to me. I do not ask your pardon, I no longer excuse myself – I've told you what I am – call me by the name I deserve, but for God's sake, speak to me.

Jane (*to Prior*): I told you that he had asked me to be his wife – he has deceived me to the last. He has let others tell me the dreadful news – that he has a wife.

Prior: Mr Rochester, it is not my duty to give your conduct its true name, I leave that to your conscience. I have now stepped in between you and your designs. I take the position beside her, as a Clergyman and her only friend.

Rochester: Jane. I can only see you, only hear you. The only excuse I make was my great love for you. Why didn't I tell you this before – because I trembled to lose you – my silence was my great love for you. I thought we should go abroad, that you would be my wife before God, in your own conscience and in a happy strange country. We might have broken a mere human law, but who would be harmed? I should be saved from this horrible doom, and you would have been happy. It was still my great love. Won't you look at me and speak to me?

Prior: You compel me, Sir, to speak more strongly and tell you –

Jane: Be silent, Mr Prior, my grief is my own and I'll tell him what he has done for me. (*To Rochester*): You ask me to speak to you, Sir – what have I to say! but that I have been a poor truthful vain fool, and you have purposed to destroy me, without pity or warning. What have I to say, but that you spread your net well, and I could detect [no] false ring in all your kindness. Oh! Sir, in whom am I to believe, when the one I could have worshipped has proved an enemy? (*Rochester sits with pale face in hands, affected.*) You have done me a bitter wrong, that will follow me through life. Henceforth I'll distrust everything I love, I'll think everything happy must be hollow. The misery you have made for me, I must bear – and – and – when I remember – and – (*She is overcome, as she hears him sob heavily, she runs to him and kneels at his feet.*) My own kind, beloved master, I forgive you heartily and freely.

Prior: Jane, be firm.

Jane: Though we must part, I'll never forget you – don't let my words grieve you, God bless you a hundred times and may he give you peace – my happiness shall be to pray for you night and day. (*Rochester sobs.*) Don't. Don't. Turn your face to me. (*She turns his face gently towards her.*)

Prior: This is weakness, Jane. Come or I must leave you.

Jane: Leave us, my kind Friend, a moment. I'll follow.

Prior: I'll await you below. (Exit)
 Jane: My dear Master, we've got to say Farewell.
 Rochester: What shall I do, Jane! Where shall I turn for a companion, for some life? Think of my misery – you will leave me reckless and drift[ing.]
 Jane (kissing his hand): Farewell, and God comfort us both.
 Rochester: You are going, Jane. (Jane goes to door.)
 Jane (standing): I am going Sir.
 Rochester: You are leaving me.
 Jane: Yes!
 Rochester: Oh Jane, my love, my hope, my life, come back!
 Jane: Farewell, for both, dear Sir, I must go.
 Rochester (starting up): By God, I cannot part with you, and I won't. Duty and honour shrivel up before my love for you! Cling to me, Jane! For you cannot escape me, put your arms round my neck and say you are mine till death part us. (A shriek and laughter heard. They slowly part as under a spell.)
 Jane (in an awestruck voice): Farewell! Master! (Approaches door. Rochester stands dazed.)

End of Act III

Act IV

Porch to a Lodge. Steps to a door. Apple tree in Bloom. – Evening.

Enter Mrs Fairfax. & Servant carrying a table

Mrs Fairfax: Lay it here, James. The sunshine will soon be round here. Now carry round the easy chair – it's in the back garden.

Enter Grace Poole with handkerchiefs just washed. She hangs them on bushes.

Mrs Fairfax: No one calls, Miss Poole, to ask after the poor master. A month after that dreadful event and no cards, no letters.

Grace: As you brew, Mrs Fairfax, so will you bake. Sow the storm and there comes the whirlwind.

Mrs Fairfax: A fine old family mansion burnt to the ground and all the property destroyed.

Grace: Pity, ma'am, that some ugly scandal weren't burnt too with the property.

Enter Jane

Jane: Mrs Fairfax.

Mrs Fairfax (startled): Here is Miss Eyre.

Jane: What has happened?

Mrs Fairfax: Have you heard no news?

Jane: I know nothing except this – that my dear Master is alive and in some dreadful trouble.

Grace: I thought, Miss Eyre, you would take my advice and quit this place.

Mrs Fairfax: I had your letter, dear, and you said in it that your purpose was quite unshaken – never under any circumstances to return again.

Jane: Mrs Fairfax, he has called me – he is in some dreadful extremity – what has happened?

Grace: Called you, Miss Jane! I know to my certain knowledge your late master – couldn't have called you.

Jane (agitated): My late master – he is not, not dead?

Mrs Fairfax: No, Miss Eyre, but he cannot have called you – how long have you been here?

Jane: I have come this moment – I have been travelling all night, and all day – you may call it a dream, Mrs Fairfax, but far away in the Village School – when the children had gone, and I was quite alone – his voice came to me as plainly as I hear yours, and it solemnly bade me come – for God's sake what has happened?

Mrs Fairfax: If you'd been at home now, dear, you'd have had a letter from me giving you an account of the dreadful trouble we've had here. We have all had a marvellous escape, but the old house is in ruins, and all the property destroyed.

Jane: Where is he?

Grace: My dear young lady – you cannot see him – it's a pity you've come all this way.

Mrs Fairfax: He has held to his promise, dear. He has never written to you or attempted to follow you. You should not have come.

Jane: God would not have allowed that heart-broken call to come to me if it were not right – where is he? I must just speak to him – just answer his call and I will go.

Grace (with a sign to Mrs Fairfax): He has gone to London, Miss.

Jane: Good heavens! I've no money, and I'm worn out.

Grace: Why, you can sleep at the Inn, Miss – it's the second time I've given you good advice. The first time his wife was alive, but there's as much danger to your good name now as then. (Exit)

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Jane: Mrs Fairfax, I may have been deceived, but before I return do tell me everything – all that you've told me in your letter – I'm so tired. I'll sit down. His wife is dead?

Mrs Fairfax: It's nearly two months, Miss Eyre, since you left Thornfield.

Jane: Well?

Mrs Fairfax: Mr Rochester had severe losses, and he lived almost entirely alone in his study – no doubt in dreadful depression, after that exposure.

Jane: My poor master.

Mrs Fairfax: But now indeed is a time when everybody should forgive him and pity him.

Jane: You would tell me he is ruined?

Mrs Fairfax: Listen, dear – it's just eight days ago since I was wakened, at the dead of night, by Mr Rochester's voice – warning me to get up – that the house was on fire – I dressed myself instantly and when I got into the corridor it was filled with smoke – I could hardly breathe. He hurried me along till we were at the top of the grand staircase and then, my dear, we heard that awful laugh upstairs, that so startled you.

Jane: His wife!

Mrs Fairfax: He stopped and bade me go down and escape – 'I must save her', he cried – the upper staircase seemed all aflame, but he seemed to me to rush through it and disappear.

Jane: I could have sworn he'd do it.

Mrs Fairfax: Yes, it was a noble attempt, for she was a terrible burden, dear. I was forced to run down and escape into the air – and there were the two women servants – all that remained – standing on the grass terrified – we all thought Mr Rochester was lost – as we looked up we saw a dreadful sight – the Madwoman was standing on the roof *alone*, with the glare of the fire on her, and with an awful cry she seemed to leap and disappear – Mrs Poole then came out, very much overcome with the smoke – and told us that her patient, who was very fierce and cunning, had found an opportunity of setting fire to one of the rooms and the dry beams caught like tinder –

Jane: But Mr Rochester?

Mrs Fairfax: I am sorry to say he was very badly injured. He staggered through the smoke and sparks to us, and seemed not to find his way.

Jane: Not blind –

Mrs Fairfax: Well, we have great hopes the sight is not entirely gone.

Jane: And that's what has taken him to London. Thank you, dear Mrs Fairfax. Farewell.

Mrs Fairfax: I know your motive for coming was kind and good, dear, but you've laid too much weight on a dream.

Jane (sadly): It was no dream. It was no dream.

(Exit lingeringly leaving bag behind)

Mrs Fairfax: I pity her from my heart, but nothing would come of it, if they came together – he a poor afflicted gentleman, and she a village schoolmistress.

(Exit through little gate)

Slow melancholy music

Enter Rochester from porch

Rochester: It was about sunset yesterday – I heard her voice – Jane's voice – I think the sun is shining and there is a spring breeze. *(He gropes his way down steps with stick.)* They set my chair somewhere about here. *(Sits)* I heard Jane's voice yesterday when I was in my despair, as if it came from fifty miles away, and I called out in an agony – Jane – Jane and I heard her voice – Master, I'm coming! She hasn't come.

Enter Mrs Fairfax

Mrs Fairfax: Well, Sir. You've found your way out?

Rochester: Is the last post in?

Mrs Fairfax: Yes, Sir.

Rochester: No letter?

Mrs Fairfax: Some business letters about the sale, Sir. It's very heartless of the neighbours, Sir, making no enquiries.

Rochester: Two high crimes against society, madam. Poverty and scandal. The first is unpardonable! *(Aside):* No letter – no letter.

Mrs Fairfax: Mr Rochester, I was going to tell you this morning – my eldest daughter has written to me, to offer me a home. I should be very sorry –

Rochester: Quite right – quite right – leave the sinking ship. I'm not so poor, Mrs Fairfax, but that I shall continue your salary always.

Mrs Fairfax: I thank you with all my heart! – Of course you know –.

Rochester: There – there – have you heard anything about Miss Eyre?

Mrs Fairfax: I believe, Sir, she's to be married to Mr Prior.

Rochester (aside): Married – I did not think there was a pang left for me. *(Aloud):* Why not, Mrs Fairfax. Who can blame her? Least of all, I.

Mrs Fairfax (aside): In tears. *(Aloud):* Can I do anything for you?

Rochester: Would you kindly bring me a glass of water?

Mrs Fairfax: You are not in pain?

Rochester: Pain – no.

(Exit Mrs F. into house)

Rochester: The light of my eyes has gone indeed – Jane has left me.

Jane enters

Jane (comes down till behind porch – takes up bag): As I leave this place I feel something like a lengthening chain drawing me back – I must go – just – just a last look! *(Sees Rochester.)* My master. They've been deceiving me. But I felt he was near – ruined – blind – alone.

Enter Mrs Fairfax

Mrs Fairfax: If trouble comes of this do not blame me. *(Retires)*

Jane brings water & touches Rochester on the arm.

Rochester: Thank you – give it to me. So you tell me she is to be married? I loved her, Mrs Fairfax – I could never make you understand how I loved her

– I must tell you, Mrs Fairfax, a strange thing that happened to me last evening – a strange thing – I had an impatient fit on me and I thought I couldn't bear my trouble any longer, and in the folly of great trouble – I stretched out my hands, and I cried out – Jane – Jane. Come to me –

Jane: My beloved master, and I am come!

Rochester: That voice! am I dreaming! Who is this? Who is this?

Jane: Will you have a little? –

Rochester: Who is it – what is it – who speaks?

Jane: The dog at the gate knew me, Sir – and Mrs Fairfax knew me – I came just now.

Rochester: Great God – what delusion has come over me? What sweet madness has seized me? Who are you –

Jane: I'm Jane Eyre.

Rochester: Where is the speaker? Is it only a voice? Oh, I cannot see, give me your hand or my heart will stop, and my brain burst. (*Jane takes his hand in both hers.*) 'Tis her hand! Is it Jane?

Jane: Don't you know my voice – God bless you, Sir – I'm glad to be so near you again.

Rochester: Jane Eyre!

Jane: My dear Master, I am Jane Eyre – you called me and I am come.

Rochester: My living dearest – this is certainly her soft hair – this her cheek – but I cannot be so blest after all my misery – it is a dream – such dreams as I have had when I have clasped her once more to my heart, as I do now, and kissed her as thus – and felt that she loved me and trusted that she would not leave me.

Jane: Which I never will, Sir, from this day.

Rochester: Never will! says the vision – but I always woke and found it an empty mockery, and I was desolate, and abandoned – my life dark – lonely – hopeless – my soul athirst and forbidden to drink – my heart famished and never to be fed – gentle soft dream nestling in my arms now – you will fly too as your sisters have all fled before you – but kiss me before you go – embrace me, Jane.

Jane: There sir, and there!

Rochester: But you must leave me again?

Jane: Mrs Fairfax has told me everything, and I will not leave you unless you drive me away.

Rochester: Yes – you understand one thing – by staying with me – I understand another – you pity me. I want more than that – you came to be my [nur]se?

Jane: Yes, Sir.

Rochester: But you must marry some day.

Jane: I don't care about being married. Sir.

Rochester: You should care. If I were what I once was I would try to make you care – but a sightless block –

Jane: It's [time], Sir, somebody tried to humanize you, you are grown into a sort of shaggy lion – you've a look of Nebuchadnezzar in the fields about you. Your lunch shall not be grass or nettles.

Rochester: I thought you'd be revolted, Jane at my poor blind mask.

Jane: There's the danger of loving you too well for it.

Rochester: Am I hideous, Jane?

Jane: Very Sir. You always were, you know.

Rochester: Humph! I don't know what you've been, but the wickedness isn't taken out of you.

Jane: I have been with good people – far better than you.

Rochester: Who the deuce have you been with?

Jane: Can you see where the sun sets, sir?

Rochester: I see a dim light.

Jane: Can you see my hand pass between you and the sun?

Rochester: I see it.

Jane: Then you are not blind, Sir.

Rochester: So you are going to be married?

Jane: Not that I know, Sir.

Rochester: What about this Mr Prior?

Jane: He's a good man, Sir, and a handsome man.

Rochester: Damn him. Did you love him, Jane?

Jane: Of course – he was the Clergyman of the Parish.

Rochester: He wanted you to marry him.

Jane: He asked me to marry him more than once.

Rochester: Don't you think you'd better take your hand off my shoulder.

Jane: I like it there – you'd better push it off.

Rochester: Ha. Jane. I don't want a nurse – I wanted a wife.

Jane: Do you Sir?

Rochester: Yes – is it news to you?

Jane: Of course. You said nothing about it before.

Rochester: Is it unwelcome news?

Jane: That depends on circumstances – on your choice.

Rochester: Which you shall make for me, Jane.

Jane: Choose Sir, then – her who loves you best.

Rochester: I will choose her I love best. Jane – will you marry me?

Jane: Yes, Sir.

Rochester: A poor blind man – whom you must lead about by the hand?

Jane: Yes, Sir.

Rochester: A crippled man twenty years older than you whom you'll have to wait on?

Jane: Yes, Sir.

Rochester: In faith. Jane?

Jane: In good faith. Sir.

Rochester: Oh, my love – God bless you and reward you! (*Embrace*)