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Playscripts, Inc.
325 W. 38th Street, Suite 305
New York, NY 10018

Phone: 1-866-NEW-PLAY (639-7529)
Email: info@playscripts.com
Web: www.playscripts.com

Cast of Characters

(In order of appearance:)

JANE EYRE
HELEN BURNS
MRS. REED
MR. BROCKLEHURST
MRS. FAIRFAX
MR. ROCHESTER
ADELE VARENS
GRACE POOLE
BLANCHE INGRAM
MARY INGRAM
LADY INGRAM
AMY ESHTON
RICHARD MASON
DR. CARTER
REVEREND WOOD
BERTHA ROCHESTER
HANNAH
ST. JOHN RIVERS
DIANA RIVERS
MARY RIVERS
PORTER

Can be double cast, as follows:

JANE EYRE
MRS. REED / MARY INGRAM / DIANA RIVERS
BROCKLEHURST / DR. CARTER / REVEREND WOOD / PORTER
HELEN / ADELE
MRS. FAIRFAX / LADY INGRAM / HANNAH
EDWARD ROCHESTER
GRACE POOLE / AMY ESHTON / MARY RIVERS
BERTHA / BLANCHE
RICHARD MASON / ST. JOHN RIVERS

Setting

Unit set, for fluid transitions. Curtains, to hide and reveal. Mirrors, for reflections.

Production Notes

A note on narration: Jane narrates throughout; this narration should be to the audience and her narrative should be in the moment. She is not looking back on events in the past, but relating impressions of time occurring. Also, with the audience (and often with the spirits), she is open and unreserved...there can be a difference in the free tone of her monologues and the repressed tone of many of her scenes.

Acknowledgments

Jane Eyre was originally produced by Lifeline Theatre in 1991, in Chicago. The play was directed by Meryl Friedman, with set design by Alan Donahue, costume design by Yslan Hicks, light design by Peter Gottlieb, sound design by Joe Cerqua, with the following cast:

JANE EYRE Jenifer Tyler
EDWARD ROCHESTER Paul Dillon
ABBOTT /
MRS. FAIRFAX / LADY ESHTON Cecilie D. Keenan
JOHN REED / TEDO / DR. CARTER /
REV. WOOD / ST. JOHN RIVERS Seth Jacobs
AUNT REED / BERTHA /
MARY INGRAM /
DIANA RIVERS Sandy Snyder Pietz
BLANCHE INGRAM /
ROSAMUND OLIVER Stephanie Shaw
BROCKLEHURST / MASON / BUTLER Page Hearn
HELEN BURNS / AMY ESHTON /
BESSIE / MARY RIVERS Karen Hough
GRACE POOLE /
LADY INGRAM / HANNAH Diedre Waters
YOUNG JANE / ADELE Ida Rose Payne

Acknowledgments (continued)

Jane Eyre was re-mounted in a new production at Lifeline Theatre in 2001. The play was directed by Dorothy Milne, with set design by Alan Donahue, costume design by Kim Fencil Rak, light design by Kevin Gawley, sound design by Albert Carrasco, with the following cast:

JANE EYRE Jenifer Tyler
MR. ROCHESTER Peter Greenberg
BROCKLEHURST / DR. CARTER /
REV. WOOD / PORTER Martin Halacy
MRS. FAIRFAX /
LADY INGRAM / HANNAH Jann Iaco
AUNT REED / MARY INGRAM /
DIANA RIVERS Sandy Snyder Pietz
HELEN / ADELE Tiffany Scott
ST. JOHN RIVERS / MASON Vance Smith
GRACE POOLE /
AMY ESHTON / MARY RIVERS Kendra Thulin
BLANCHE / BERTHA Erika Winters

JANE EYRE

adapted by Christina Calvit

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË

ACT I

(It is night, in the middle of a violent storm. Lights up on JANE, drawing in the Thornfield drawing room. The curtains are drawn, we see a row of windows behind her. The barely perceptible sound of whispers comes up underneath. JANE looks up.)

JANE. *(To audience, referring to her drawing:)* I will tell you what it is. But first I must premise it is nothing wonderful. A portrait of a young girl, merely. *(Lightning. We see a spectral spirit at the window. It is HELEN.)* Her face is pale, her cheek sunken, but her eyes...her eyes have a beauty, I think—of movement, of meaning, of radiance. *(Lightning. All spirits are now at the window—HELEN, MRS. REED, BROCKLEHURST. They are ghastly.)* Her gaze is fixed on the floor, gone down into her heart, she is looking at what she can remember, not at what is really present.

(Another crash of thunder and a gust of wind, which blows the candle out. As JANE relights the candle, HELEN is in the room. Whispering voices, very low.)

HELEN. Have you come to say goodbye to me, Jane? *(Beat.)* Your little feet are bare. You are cold. Let me warm you. *(JANE does not respond.)* I brought you your doll, Jane. I know you cannot sleep without it.

(There is a beat. JANE takes the doll.)

JANE. That doll. *(She takes it.)* How I doted on it, half fancying it alive.

HELEN. I know you cannot sleep without it.

JANE. *(She takes doll.)* Human beings must love something, I suppose, in the absence of worthier objects.

(AUNT REED and BROCKLEHURST emerge. They are not in scene with JANE.)

AUNT REED. Jane Eyre. Until you acquire a more attractive manner, I really must exclude you from privileges intended only for happy children.

BROCKLEHURST. This child is a liar!

HELEN. You think too much of the love of human beings, Jane.

AUNT REED. I really must exclude you from privileges intended only for happy children.

BROCKLEHURST. This child is a liar!

HELEN. You think too much of the love of human beings, Jane.

AUNT REED. I really must exclude you—

JANE. *(Unable to bear it any more:)* Aunt Reed. *(AUNT REED turns, looks at JANE for the first time. JANE shrinks back. AUNT REED takes JANE's arm.)* Let me go!

AUNT REED. Jane Eyre. I had more trouble with that child than anyone could imagine. A tiresome, passionate little girl, always looking as if she were watching everyone and scheming plots.

JANE. Aunt Reed—

AUNT REED. She struck my son John, my very own boy, all because she said he threw a book at her. He never did such a thing. The little liar.

JANE. It was not a lie!

AUNT REED. How dared she! How dared she! I will lock her in the Red Room.

(GHOSTLY VOICEOVER ECHOES: The Red Room. The Red Room. The Red Room.)

JANE. Oh, Aunt! Have mercy! My uncle died there!

AUNT REED. I will lock her in the Red Room.

(Sound Effect: GHOSTLY VOICES: The Red Room, The Red Room.)

JANE. Aunt Reed, have pity! A ghost will come! I shall be killed if—

AUNT REED. (*Fully in scene.*) Silence! These histrionics will not avail you. I abhor deceit, especially children.

JANE. Let me go, let me go, let me go.

AUNT REED. (*Showing JANE her image in the mirror.*) Look at yourself. This passion is repulsive.

HELEN. (*Singing.*) Why did they send me so far and so lonely, up where the moors spread and—

JANE. My uncle Reed is in heaven and can see all you do and so can mama and papa, they know how you locked me in the Red Room and how you wish me dead.

AUNT REED. What?

JANE. I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. And if anyone asks me about you, Mrs. Reed, I shall say the very thought of you makes me sick.

AUNT REED. Jane, it is my duty to correct your faults. You are too passionate. It is not normal, it is not proper—it is deceitful, Jane.

JANE. I do not lie! I have never lied!

(Funereal organ. Enter BROCKLEHURST.)

BROCKLEHURST. This child is a liar!

HELEN. (*Singing.*) Why did they send me so far and so lonely...

AUNT REED. Mr. Brocklehurst.

HELEN. (*Singing.*) Up where the moors spread and gray rocks are piled.

AUNT REED. This is the child I desire to be received at Lowood School.

HELEN. (*Singing.*) Men are hard-hearted and kind angels only/
Watch o'er the steps of a poor orphan child.

BROCKLEHURST. Well, Jane Eyre. And are you a good girl?

AUNT REED. Perhaps the less said on that subject, the better, Mr. Brocklehurst. She is an accomplished little actress, if truth be told. Always making up stories.

BROCKLEHURST. No sight so sad as that of a naughty child, especially a naughty little girl. Jane Eyre, do you know where the wicked go after death?

JANE. They go to hell.

BROCKLEHURST. And what is hell?

JANE. A pit. Full of fire.

BROCKLEHURST. What must you do to avoid it?

JANE. I must keep in good health and not die.

BROCKLEHURST. How can you keep in good health? (*Sound Effect: Thunder.*) Children younger than you die daily.

HELEN. I brought you your doll, Jane. I know you cannot sleep without it.

AUNT REED. I should be glad if the teachers were requested to keep a strict eye on her, Mr. Brocklehurst. To guard against her worst fault, a tendency to deceit.

BROCKLEHURST. She shall be watched, Mrs. Reed. (*He places JANE on a stool.*) She shall be watched. (*Music, light change. BROCKELHURST turns out.*) Teachers and students, do you see this girl? Jane Eyre? You see that she possesses the ordinary form of childhood; but it is my duty to warn you—be on your guard against her! Avoid her company! Shut her out from your converse—for this child—my tongue falters while I tell it—this child is—a liar!

(Light, music change. JANE sinks to the ground, HELEN is revealed.)

HELEN. Have you come to say goodbye to me, Jane? Your little feet are bare. You are cold. Let me warm you. (*She embraces JANE.*) Here is your doll. I know you cannot sleep without it.

JANE. Helen, why are you friends with a girl whom everyone at Lowood School hates?

HELEN. You think too much of the love of human beings, Jane.

JANE. If others don't love me, I would rather die than live.

AUNT REED. This passion is repulsive.

HELEN. If your own conscience approved you, you would not be without friends. Remember, when I leave you.

JANE. Where are you going, Helen? Are you leaving Lowood?

HELEN. You must not grieve. I could never make my way very well in the world. I should have been continually at fault.

JANE. But you are so good.

HELEN. I am careless. I forget rules. I seldom put, and never keep, things in order.

JANE. But where are you going, Helen? Can you see?

HELEN. I am going to God.

JANE. What is God? Where is God? (*Sound Effect: Thunder.*)

HELEN. There is an invisible world and a kingdom of spirits...and that world is round us, and those spirits watch us—

JANE. They think I can do without one bit of love or kindness—

AUNT REED. This passion is repulsive.

HELEN. There will come a time when you throw off these mortal passions—

JANE. They think I have no feelings—

HELEN. Do not despair—for life is soon over—

BROCKLEHURST. This child is a liar!

HELEN. —and death is so certain an entrance to happiness.

JANE. But I cannot live so!

(Music crescendo, arrested by a strange laugh and the sound of a crash. Perhaps we see a silhouette also, reminiscent of the spirits. Beat. Enter MRS. FAIRFAX. Light transition, the spirits sink back.)

MRS. FAIRFAX. (*As she enters:*) Miss Eyre? Miss Eyre?

JANE. Mrs. Fairfax.

MRS. FAIRFAX. Oh, Miss Eyre. Thank goodness. I have been looking for you all over the house. I was afraid some accident had befallen you. Why, my dear, you look pale. What have you been doing in this cold, out-of-the-way room? No one ever comes here, did you not know that? You should have come sit with me by the fire in the kitchen—oh, you have been drawing...gracious, how pretty. But look at this dust. An inch thick I daresay. Leah has not been attending to her duties. My dear, you must be chilled through. Come away from this cold room. The nursery's in an uproar. Adele declares she will not go to bed until she has had a kiss from you goodnight—at least I think that is what she said—*une baiser* she wanted, from her governess, or some such thing. Goodness knows what she is saying when she prattles away in that French fashion of hers.

JANE. I will go at once.

MRS. FAIRFAX. Gracious, I had no idea this room was so disordered. I don't know what Mr. Rochester would say.

JANE. Mr. Rochester? Is he expected? You did not say so earlier.

MRS. FAIRFAX. Oh, no, my dear. Oh, no, no, no. But the truth of it is, he is always unexpected—so I do like to be ready for him at all times. Thornfield is a pretty place, but I fear it will be getting out of order unless he should take it into his head to come and reside here permanently—or, at least, visit it rather oftener. Great houses and fine grounds require the presence of the proprietor.

JANE. Yes.

MRS. FAIRFAX. Not to say that Mr. Rochester isn't a better master than most. But you will meet him one day, Miss Eyre, and I'm sure you will agree with me. Some do call him peculiar, but I've never thought him so. It's true you cannot always tell if he is in jest or earnest, but that's of no consequence. He is a very good master. But dear me, how I am going on...what a rattle I must seem to you, Miss Eyre—you who are always so good and quiet. (*Very kindly:*) And a great comfort to Adele and me, I assure you. Come, my dear,

let us go to your pupil. (*As they move out of the room, they hear the strange laugh again.*) Grace. (*Enter GRACE POOLE.*) Did I not tell you before? Too much noise, Grace. Remember directions.

GRACE. Yes ma'am. (*GRACE exits.*)

JANE. Is it Grace Poole who laughs in that strange way?

MRS. FAIRFAX. Yes. She and Leah are so noisy together. I am sure you have often heard them. Well, pay it no heed. Least said, soonest mended, I always say. I shall leave you to go to Adele, then, Miss Eyre. (*JANE does not respond.*) Miss Eyre? Sleep well.

(She exits. Enter the spirits. Set transition for ROCHESTER entrance.)

AUNT REED. Sleep well.

HELEN. Sleep well.

BROCKLEHURST. Sleep well.

JANE. I do sleep well. October, November, December pass away. I do sleep well. Picture if you will a fine old manor home, a pretty child, a kindly housekeeper, the promise of a smooth career. But though I value Mrs. Fairfax's kindness and Adele's affection—oh, it is vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquility: they must have action!

AUNT REED. This passion is repulsive.

JANE. Women are supposed to be calm, but women feel just as men feel. The restlessness is in my nature—it agitates me to pain sometimes. And so I walk, I leave Thornfield and I walk—

HELEN. I walk.

BROCKLEHURST. I walk.

JANE.—the ground is hard, the air is still, my road is lonely.

AUNT REED. Until you acquire a more attractive manner, I really must exclude you—

JANE. I walk, opening my inward ear to a tale that never ends, a tale my imagination narrates continuously—

BROCKLEHURST. This child is a liar.

JANE. —a tale I quicken with all of the fire and feeling that I desire and have not in my actual existence—

(A strange sound, like horses hooves, disturbs the spirits.)

HELEN. What is that noise?

JANE. I hear a noise.

AUNT REED. What is that sound?

JANE. I remember stories, told to me in my youth, of the Gytrash—a spirit that haunted solitary roads.

BROCKLEHURST. What is that noise?!

JANE. It was very near, but not yet in sight!

(ROCHESTER falls unexpectedly through the curtains, from Down Right platform, dispersing spirits. Sound crescendo.)

ROCHESTER. What the devil!

JANE. Are you injured, sir? Can I do anything?

ROCHESTER. You may stand to one side *(He rises but his ankle is sprained. She moves toward him, he waves her off.)* I shall do, I shall do.

(He tries to walk and falls again.)

JANE. I cannot think of leaving you in this solitary lane until I see you are fit to mount your horse.

ROCHESTER. I should think you ought to be at home yourself. Where do you come from?

JANE. From just below.

ROCHESTER. What? You mean that house with the battlements?

JANE. Yes, sir.

ROCHESTER. Whose house is it?

JANE. Mr. Rochester's.

ROCHESTER. And do you know Mr. Rochester?

JANE. I have never seen him.

ROCHESTER. Hmmph. You are not a servant at the Hall, of course. You are—

JANE. I am the governess, sir.

ROCHESTER. Deuce take me if I had not forgotten. The governess. Come here. *(He puts his hand on her shoulder.)* Excuse me. Necessity compels me to make you useful. Wait. Hand me my whip. There, under the hedge. Now I shall do. I advise you to return home as fast you can.

(He exits. Transition. Music up. Enter MRS. FAIRFAX, out of breath.)

MRS. FAIRFAX. Oh, Miss Eyre! Where have you been? The master—Mr. Rochester—he is just arrived!

JANE. Indeed.

MRS. FAIRFAX. He is in the dining room and I am off to find John. To get the surgeon. A most unlucky thing! Mr. Rochester's horse fell, and his ankle is sprained. Oh, and he wishes to see you for tea! To-night!

JANE. In the Hay Lane?

MRS. FAIRFAX. What?

JANE. Did the horse fall in the Hay Lane?

MRS. FAIRFAX. Yes, it slipped on some ice. *(She exits.)* John, John!!

(Music out. Transition. Enter ROCHESTER and ADELE.)

ADELE. *(Referring to her dress, which is new:)* *Vous aimez ma nouvelle robe, Monsieur Rochester? Je l'adore! Oh ciel! Regardez-moi.* (Do you like my new dress, Mr. Rochester? I love it. Heavens. Look at me.)

ROCHESTER. Yes, you're very pretty, you genuine daughter of Paris. Now let your raptures be conducted in silence. *Tiens-toi tranquille, enfant, comprends-tu.* (Be quiet, child, do you understand?)

(Enter MRS. FAIRFAX and JANE.)

MRS. FAIRFAX. Here is Miss Eyre, sir. (*Pause.*) I hope, Mr. Rochester, that your day has not been too tedious—indeed, with all the business you’ve had to see to and an injury besides—I marvel at your patience in getting through it all and—

ROCHESTER. (*Irritable:*) Madam, I should like some tea.

MRS. FAIRFAX. (*Whispering:*) Miss Eyre, would you hand Mr. Rochester his tea? Adele might perhaps spill it.

ADELE. *N’est-ce pas, monsieur, qu’il y a un cadeau pour Mademoiselle Eyre dans votre petite coffre?* (Is it not so, sir, that there’s a gift for Miss Eyre in your little trunk?)

ROCHESTER. Who talks of cadeau? Did you expect a present, Miss Eyre? Are you fond of presents?

JANE. I have little experience with them. They are generally thought pleasant things.

ROCHESTER. Generally thought? But what do you think?

JANE. A present has many faces to it, has it not? And one should consider all, before pronouncing an opinion as to its nature.

ADELE. *Ou est mon cadeau, Monsieur?* (Where is my gift, sir?)

ROCHESTER. Your cadeau comes by post from Paris. (*To MRS. FAIRFAX:*) Take her off into the corner and let her speak to you. (*To JANE:*) No, Miss Eyre, you come forward; be seated here. No, not over there that’s too far off. Sit down exactly where I told you—if you please, that is. You have been resident in my house for three months?

JANE. Yes sir.

ROCHESTER. And you come from—

JANE. Lowood School, sir.

ROCHESTER. A charitable concern. How long were you there?

JANE. Eight years.

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

JANE. I have none.

ROCHESTER. Nor ever had, I suppose. And your home?

JANE. I have no home.

ROCHESTER. Then who the deuce recommended you to come here?

JANE. I advertised and Mrs. Fairfax answered my advertisement.

MRS. FAIRFAX. Yes, and I am daily thankful for the choice Providence led me to make. Miss Eyre has been an invaluable companion to me and a kind teacher to Adele.

ROCHESTER. Spare me your eulogiums. She began by felling my horse. *(To JANE:)* So, were you waiting for your people when you sat on that stile?

JANE. For whom, sir?

ROCHESTER. For the men in green: it's a proper moonlight evening for them. Did I break through one of your rings, that you spread that damned ice on the causeway?

JANE. The men in green all forsook England a hundred years ago. I don't think either sun or moon will ever shine on their revels more. *(Beat.)*

ROCHESTER. Brocklehurst, who I understand directs Lowood, is a parson, is he not?

JANE. Yes, sir.

ROCHESTER. And you girls probably worshiped him.

JANE. No.

ROCHESTER. What?! A novice not worship her priest? That sounds blasphemous. And if you did not learn devotion, what did you learn at Lowood? Adele showed me some sketches which she said were yours. Though probably a master aided you.

JANE. No indeed!

ROCHESTER. Ah! That pricks pride. Well, fetch me your portfolio—if you can vouch for its contents being original.

JANE. You shall judge for yourself, sir. *(She gets the portfolio.)*

ROCHESTER. *(As she brings the portfolio forward:)* No crowding, please. *(He examines the drawings.)* I perceive these were indeed done by one hand; was that hand yours?

JANE. Yes.

ROCHESTER. And where did you get your copies?

JANE. From out of my head.

ROCHESTER. Humph. *(Indicating drawings:)* And do you feel self-satisfied with these?

JANE. Far from it. In each case I had imagined something which I was quite powerless to realize.

ROCHESTER. Not quite: you have secured the shadow of your thought. But no more, probably. As to the thoughts, they are elfish. These eyes of the Evening Star you must have seen in a dream. How could you make them look so clear, and yet not at all brilliant? And who taught you to paint the wind? Where did you see Latmos? For that is Latmos. There—put the drawings away! It is nine o'clock: what are you about, Miss Eyre, to let Adele sit up so long?
(Exit.)

MRS. FAIRFAX. Oh gracious. Come Adele. To bed, to bed.

(ADELE exits.)

JANE. *(To MRS. FAIRFAX:)* You told me Mr. Rochester was not strikingly peculiar.

MRS. FAIRFAX. And is he?

JANE. I think so.

MRS. FAIRFAX. Oh my dear, I never bother about it. And then, if he has peculiarities of temper, allowances should be made.

JANE. Why?

MRS. FAIRFAX. He has painful thoughts, no doubt, that harass him.

JANE. What about?

MRS. FAIRFAX. Well. Family troubles, for one thing.

JANE. But you told me he has no family.

MRS. FAIRFAX. Not now, but he has had. His elder brother and his father died many years ago, but there were misunderstandings—oh, the precise nature of what was done I never clearly knew, but Mr. Edward broke with them and has lived a very unsettled kind of life. And indeed, it is no wonder he shuns Thornfield—

JANE. Why should he shun it?

MRS. FAIRFAX. *(Beat.)* Perhaps he thinks it's gloomy. *(Exit.)*

JANE. The answer was evasive. I should have liked something clearer.

(Light change. AUNT REED and BROCKLEHURST pound at the windows. JANE exit. The ghosts continue to pound. Light transition. Up on JANE, sketching.)

ADELE. *(Singing off:)* Why did they send me so far and so lonely/
Up where the moors spread and gray rocks are piled. *(She enters.)*
Men are... *(Having trouble with the word.)*

JANE. Hard-hearted.

ADELE. *(Singing:)* hard-hearted and kind angels only/
Watch o'er the steps of a poor orphan child.

(Enter MR. ROCHESTER. ADELE goes up to him.)

ADELE. *Monsieur Rochester! Ecoutez! Ecoutez ma chanson...* *(Listen. Listen to my song.)*

ROCHESTER. Away! Keep a distance—or go into the house!

JANE. Excuse the interruption, sir. Adele—

ROCHESTER. *(Noticing her for the first time:)* No. Wait. *Alors, chantes petite, s'il te plait.* *(Go ahead. Sing, little one. Please.)*

ADELE. *(Singing:)*

Why did they send me so far and so lonely/
Up where the moors spread and gray rocks are piled. Men are hard-
hearted and kind angels only/

Watch o'er the steps of a poor orphan child.

ROCHESTER. *Tu es une vrai commedienne, ma belle.* (You're a real actress, my darling.) Just like your mother. Go into the house, now. I'm sure Mrs. Fairfax has some cake for such an excellent actress. (*To JANE:*) You taught her that.

JANE. It is a lullaby. From my youth.

ROCHESTER. A rather grim dirge with which to entice Morpheus, I should say. (*Beat.*) You examine me, Miss Eyre? Do you think me handsome?

JANE. No.

ROCHESTER. By my word! You sit there, never saying a word, but when one makes a remark to which you are obliged to reply you rap out a round rejoinder. What do you mean by it?

JANE. Sir, I was too plain. I ought to have replied that tastes mostly differ; and that beauty is of little consequence or something of that sort.

ROCHESTER. You ought to have replied no such thing. Beauty of little consequence indeed! Go on: what faults do you find with me, pray? (*He pushes the hair back from his forehead.*) Does my forehead not please you? Am I a fool?

JANE. Far from it, sir. You would, perhaps, think me rude if I inquired in return whether you are a philanthropist?

ROCHESTER. There again! Another stick of the penknife! Is it because I sent that little French flowerlet away so abruptly? Well know, Miss Eyre, when I was as old as you, I was a feeling fellow enough—but fate has knocked me about since, and now I flatter myself I'm as hard and tough as an India rubber ball. Pervious though, through a chink or two still. Yes: does that leave hope for me?

JANE. Hope of what, sir?

ROCHESTER. You look puzzled, Miss Eyre: and though you are not pretty any more than I am handsome, a puzzled air becomes you. It would please me to know more of you. Speak.

JANE. Of what, sir?

ROCHESTER. Whatever you like. (*Beat.*) You are silent, Miss Eyre. Stubborn? And annoyed! Ah! It is consistent. I put my request in an absurd form. Miss Eyre, I beg your pardon. I desire you to have the goodness to talk to me a little now, and divert my thoughts, which are galled with dwelling on one point, cankering as a rusty nail.

JANE. How do I know what will interest you? Ask me questions and I will do my best to answer them.

ROCHESTER. Very well, here is one. Do you agree with me that I have a right to be a little masterful, on the grounds that I am older than you, with ten years' difference in age and a century's in experience?

JANE. I don't think you have the right to command me, merely because you are older. Your claim to superiority depends on the use you have made of your time.

ROCHESTER. Humph. Promptly spoken. But I won't allow that, seeing as it would never suit my case, as I have made an indifferent, not to say bad, use of both advantages. Leaving superiority out of the question, then, do you agree to receive my orders occasionally, without being hurt by the tone of command? (*JANE smiles.*) That smile is very well, but speak too.

JANE. I was thinking, sir, that very few masters would care whether their servants were hurt by their orders.

ROCHESTER. Servant? Oh, yes, I had forgotten the salary! Well, on that mercenary ground, will you agree to let me hector a little?

JANE. No sir. But on the grounds that you did forget it, I agree heartily.

ROCHESTER. And will you consent to dispense with a great many conventional phrases, without thinking me insolent?

JANE. I am sure, sir, I should never mistake informality for insolence: one I rather like, the other nothing free-born would submit to, even for a salary.

ROCHESTER. Humbug! Most things free-born will submit to anything for a salary; therefore don't venture on generalities of which you are intensely ignorant. However, I mentally shake hands with you for your answer, despite its inaccuracy. Not three in three thousand country governesses would have spoken as you did. I don't mean to flatter you, though. If you are cast in a different mold than the majority, it is no merit of yours. Nature did it. And you may have intolerable defects to counterbalance your few good points. Yes, yes Miss Eyre. I have plenty of faults of my own. I know it. But nature intended me to be a good man. I might have been as good as you—wiser—almost as stainless. Little girl, a memory without blot or contamination must be an exquisite treasure...an inexhaustible source of pure refreshment—is it not?

JANE. How was your memory when you were eighteen, sir?

ROCHESTER. All right then; no gush of bilge water had turned it to a fetid puddle. I was quite your equal. But then fate wronged me, and I degenerated. I wish I had stood firm. God knows I do! Dread remorse when you are tempted to err. Remorse is the poison of life.

JANE. Repentance is said to be the cure.

ROCHESTER. It is not the cure. Reformation is the cure, but what is the use of thinking of that, cursed as I am? Besides, since happiness is irrevocably denied me, I have a right to get pleasure out of life. Sweet, fresh pleasure.

JANE. It will taste bitter, sir.

ROCHESTER. How do you know? You never tried it. By what instinct do you pretend to distinguish between a fallen seraph and a messenger from the eternal throne—between a guide and a seducer?

JANE. To speak the truth, sir, I don't understand you at all: I cannot keep up the conversation because it has got out of my depth. Only one thing I know: you said you were not as good as you would like to be...and it seems to me that if you tried hard, you would in time find it possible to become what you yourself would approve, and in a few years, you would have laid up a new and stainless store of memories.

ROCHESTER. Miss Eyre, do you know what I was thinking when I came upon you and Adele just now? I was arranging a point with my destiny. (*Lights up on BERTHA, in the background, ghostlike.*) She stood there, by that beech trunk, like one of Macbeth's hags on the heath. "You like Thornfield," she said, lifting her finger—then she wrote in the air a momento—like it if you can. Like it if you dare. (*Lights out on BERTHA. Beat.*) I will like it. I dare like it. I know what my aim is, what my motives are, and at this moment I pass a law that both are right.

JANE. They cannot be, sir, if they require a new law to legalize them. You take on a power with which the divine alone can be trusted.

ROCHESTER. What power?

JANE. Of saying 'let it be right.'

ROCHESTER. The very words, you have pronounced them. Let it be right.

JANE. *May it be right then. (JANE moves to leave.)*

ROCHESTER. Where are you going?

JANE. It is time for Adele's class, sir.

ROCHESTER. You are afraid of me, because I talk like a Sphinx.

JANE. I am bewildered, but I am certainly not afraid.

ROCHESTER. You *are* afraid—your self-love dreads a blunder.

JANE. I have no wish to talk nonsense.

ROCHESTER. If you did, it would be in such a grave, quiet manner, I should mistake it for sense. Do you never laugh, Miss Eyre? Don't trouble yourself to answer—I see you laugh rarely; but when you do, it is a merry sound. (*Beat.*) Well, I must go in now: and you too; it darkens.

(Exit ROCHESTER. Light, music transition. Enter the spirits.)

BROCKLEHURST. You must be on your guard against him. If necessary, avoid his company, shut him out from your converse, (*Exit*

JANE.) watch him, weigh well his words, scrutinize his actions, for—my tongue falters while I tell it—this man is—

(Strange laugh. Exit BROCKLEHURST. Enter BERTHA, dimly seen. She is carrying a candle. She laughs, talks incomprehensibly at first.)

BERTHA. I am, you are, he is, she is, they is...*non, ce n'est pas* correct! *(Singing:)* Men are hard-hearted, kind angels only, watch o'er the steps of the poor orphan child. *(Speaking:)* I will burn it out. I will burn it out. I will burn it out. *(She laughs as she sets the fire.)* Like it if you can...like it if you dare.

(Suddenly, lights up on the spirits. They are afraid.)

AUNT REED. I heard a voice!

BROCKLEHURST. I heard a voice!

AUNT REED. Who is there!

(Exit BERTHA.)

HELEN. —there is an invisible world and a kingdom of spirits and that world is round us.

BROCKLEHURST. Who is there?

HELEN. —and those spirits watch us, for they are commissioned to guard us!

AUNT REED. Who is there?

(Enter JANE in nightdress. The spirits disappear.)

JANE. Who is there! *(Sees smoke.)* My god! Mr. Rochester, wake! Wake! Mr. Rochester, please wake! *(She throws water on the bed.)*

ROCHESTER. What the devil—are you trying to drown me?

JANE. There is a fire, get up, do! *(They smother the flames.)*

ROCHESTER. Is that Jane Eyre?

JANE. Sir, I was asleep and something woke me. A laugh. Then, when I rose to see what sounded so, I smelled smoke and—

ROCHESTER. Gently, gently.

JANE. Shall I call Mrs. Fairfax?

ROCHESTER. What the deuce would you call her for? Just be still. Did you see anything when you opened your chamber-door?

JANE. No, sir.

ROCHESTER. But you heard an odd laugh?

JANE. Yes sir. There is a woman who sews here, called Grace Poole—she laughs in that way. She is a singular person.

ROCHESTER. Just so. Grace Poole. She is, as you say, singular. Very. Well, I shall reflect on the subject. Meantime, I am glad you are the only person acquainted with the precise details of tonight's incident. You are no talking fool, say nothing about it. I will account for this state of affairs. And now return to your own room. I shall do very well on the sofa in the library for the rest of the night.

JANE. Goodnight, then, sir. *(She begins to exit.)*

ROCHESTER. What! Are you quitting me already, and in that way?

JANE. You said I might go, sir.

ROCHESTER. But not without taking leave; not without a word or two of acknowledgement. At least shake hands. *(She gives him her hand, he takes it in one hand, then in both.)* You have saved my life. I have a pleasure in owing you so immense a debt.

JANE. Goodnight again, sir. There is no debt—

ROCHESTER. I knew you would do me good in some way. I saw it in your eyes when I first beheld you: their expression did not—strike delight to my innermost heart so for nothing. My cherished preserver, good night.

JANE. I am glad I happened to be awake. *(She begins to exit again.)*

ROCHESTER. What? You will go?

JANE. I am cold sir.

ROCHESTER. Cold? Yes. Well. Go, then, Jane; go! *(He still holds her hands.)*

JANE. I think I hear Mrs. Fairfax sir.

ROCHESTER. *(Releasing her:)* Well, leave me.

(Exit JANE, then ROCHESTER. Light/music transition. Enter GRACE POOLE, gathering bedclothes. Enter JANE, in robe.)

GRACE. Good morning miss.

JANE. *(Beat.)* Good morning Grace. What is all that water?

GRACE. Master had been reading in his bed last night, he fell asleep with his candle lit and there was a fire.

JANE. Indeed.

GRACE. Fortunately, he awoke and contrived to quench the flames.

JANE. A strange affair. I wonder no one heard him.

GRACE. The servants sleep so far off, miss, they would not be likely to hear. Mrs. Fairfax's room and yours are the nearest to the master's; but Mrs. Fairfax said she heard nothing. When people get elderly they often sleep heavy. *(Beat.)* But you are young, miss, and I should say a light sleeper. Perhaps you may have heard a noise?

JANE. I did. I am certain I heard a laugh. And a strange one.

GRACE. It is hardly likely master would laugh, I should think, miss, when he was in such danger. You must have been dreaming.

JANE. I was not dreaming.

GRACE. Have you told the master you heard a laugh?

JANE. I have not had the opportunity of speaking to him this morning.

GRACE. You did not think of opening your door and looking out into the gallery?

JANE. On the contrary. I bolted the door.

GRACE. That's a wise thing to do. I always think it best to err on the safe side, and door is soon fastened.

(Enter MRS. FAIRFAX, with Jane's dress.)

MRS. FAIRFAX. Grace, you are wanted downstairs.

GRACE. Yes ma'am. (*She exits.*)

MRS. FAIRFAX. Well, Miss Eyre—it is a mercy Mr. Rochester was not burnt alive in his bed last night, that's all I have to say. Here, I've brought you your gown. Leah just finished pressing it. My dear, you look flushed. Are you not well today?

JANE. (*She puts on dress.*) Oh, quite well. I never felt better.

MRS. FAIRFAX. Here, let me help you. It is a beautiful morning. I believe it will be a favorable day for Mr. Rochester's journey.

JANE. What?

MRS. FAIRFAX. Oh, he set off quite early, the moment he breakfasted. He is gone to the Leas, Mrs. Eshton's place. I believe there is quite a party assembled there.

JANE. Do you expect him back tonight?

MRS. FAIRFAX. Not tonight, nor tomorrow either. He left word he shall return in a week or two, with some guests. So we shall have much to do in the meantime, making Thornfield presentable.

JANE. How long will they stay?

MRS. FAIRFAX. Oh, my dear. I couldn't say. Mr. Rochester is very popular in society.

JANE. Indeed.

MRS. FAIRFAX. Certainly, the ladies are very fond of him.

JANE. I see. Then there will be ladies coming to Thornfield, I suppose?

MRS. FAIRFAX. To be sure. There will be Miss Eshton, of course—a very pretty girl. And Lady Ingram's two daughters, Mary and the Honorable Blanche—both very charming women. Indeed, I saw Blanche, in this very house seven or six years since. It was a Christmas ball. I should think there were fifty or sixty ladies and gentlemen present—but Miss Ingram was considered the belle of the evening.

JANE. And what was she like?

MRS. FAIRFAX. A fine figure, sloping shoulders—and such a long, graceful neck. Beautiful eyes—large and black, and as brilliant as her jewels. And then she had such a fine head of hair, raven black and so becomingly arranged. She was dressed in a pure white, I remember, and it became her admirably.

JANE. I wonder no wealthy gentleman has taken a fancy to her. Mr. Rochester, for instance.

MRS. FAIRFAX. There was talk once that they should make a match of it—and I, for one, should not be surprised if it still came to pass. Now, my dear, I'll see about breakfast. Mind you, don't be late.

(Exit MRS. FAIRFAX. Light, music transition. HELEN enters.)

JANE. A greater fool than Jane Eyre never breathed the breath of life.

HELEN. I am careless.

JANE. You—a favorite of Mr. Rochester!

HELEN. I forget rules.

JANE. You—gifted with the power of pleasing him!

HELEN. I seldom put and never keep things in order.

JANE. Listen, Jane Eyre to your sentence. Tomorrow you will draw in chalk your own picture, faithfully, without softening one defect. And then you will write under it Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor and plain. Afterwards take a piece of smooth ivory and in your most delicate pencils draw the loveliest face you can imagine, *(Enter BLANCHE, beautifully attired. Under this next, she circles JANE mockingly.)* according to the description given by Mrs. Fairfax. Remember the raven ringlets, the fine figure, the dark and brilliant eyes, the—no sentiment! No regret! I will endure only sense and resolution. And whenever in the future you should chance to fancy Mr. Rochester thinks well of you, take out these two pictures and compare them.

(Final light, music transition. Enter ROCHESTER and LADY INGRAM, to a burst of laughter and applause. Exit HELEN.)

BLANCHE. A fig for Rizzio, that insipid fellow! I like Black Bothwell better. To my mind a man is nothing without a spice of the devil in him, and I have a notion he was just the sort of wild, fierce, bandit hero whom I could have consented to gift with my hand! *(Appreciative laughter from the company.)*

JANE. *(To audience:)* I was not introduced, but later, Mrs. Fairfax told me their names—

BLANCHE. I am so sick of the young men of the present day. Poor puny things, not fit to stir a step beyond Papa's park gates—

AMY. Oh, you are wicked! *(She giggles.)*

JANE. There was Amy Eshton—

BLANCHE. These modern men are so absorbed in care about their pretty faces—as if a man had anything to do with beauty. *(To MARY:)* I grant an ugly woman is a blot on the fair face of creation—

JANE. And Mary Ingram—

MARY. *(Murmurs unintelligibly.)*

JANE. —who had little to say.

BLANCHE. —but as to the gentlemen, let them be solicitous to possess only strength and valor; let their motto be “hunt, shoot, and fight.” The rest is not worth a fillip! Such should be my device, were I a man. Do you not agree, my lady mother?

LADY INGRAM. Of course, my lily-flower—

(BLANCHE and LADY INGRAM embrace.)

JANE. Lady Ingram. Very intolerable.

BLANCHE. And when I marry, I am resolved that my husband shall not be a rival, but a foil to me. I will suffer no competitor near the throne; I shall exact an undivided homage; his devotion shall not be shared between me and the shape he sees in the mirror.

JANE. And finally, the honorable Blanche Ingram. (*All applaud.*) But what of Mr. Rochester?

BLANCHE. And now, I move the introduction of a new topic. Mr. Rochester, do you second my motion?

ROCHESTER. Madam, I support you on this point, as on every other.

BLANCHE. Than on me be the onus of bringing it forward. Signior Eduardo, will you play for me tonight?

ROCHESTER. Donna Bianca, if you command it, I will

BLANCHE. Then, signior, I lay on you my sovereign behest to limber up your fingers, as they will be wanted on my royal service.

ROCHESTER. I am all obedience.

BLANCHE. Take care. If you don't please me, I will shame you by showing you how such things should be done.

ROCHESTER. That is offering a premium on incapacity. I shall now endeavor to fail.

BLANCHE. Ah! But if you err willfully, I shall devise a proportionate punishment.

ROCHESTER. Miss Ingram ought to be clement, for she has it in her power to inflict a chastisement beyond mortal endurance.

BLANCHE. Ha! Explain!

ROCHESTER. Your own fine sense must inform you that one of your frowns would be a sufficient substitute for capital punishment.

BLANCHE. Your words please your sovereign, my Lord—

(Enter ADELE, interrupting.)

ADELE. (*Presenting herself.*) *Bon jour, mesdames.* (Hello, ladies.)

AMY. Oh, what a love of a child!

LADY INGRAM. It is Mr. Rochester's ward, I suppose—the little French girl you were speaking of.

MARY. *Viens ici, ma chere.* (Come here, my dear.)

BLANCHE. She is quite the little puppet. Mr. Rochester, I thought you were not fond of children.

ROCHESTER. Nor am I.

BLANCHE. Then what induced you to take charge of such a little doll as that? Where did you pick her up?

ROCHESTER. I did not pick her up; she was left on my hands.

BLANCHE. You should have sent her to school.

ROCHESTER. I could not afford it.

BLANCHE. Why, I suppose you have a governess for her. I saw a person with her just now—is she gone? Oh, no. There she is behind the window-curtain. You pay her, of course. I should think it quite as expensive.

ROCHESTER. I have not considered the subject.

BLANCHE. No, you men never do consider economy and common sense. You should hear Mamma on the chapter of governesses. I have had, I should think, a dozen at least in my day; half of them detestable and the rest ridiculous, were they not Mamma?

LADY INGRAM. Did you speak, my love?

BLANCHE. My governesses, Mamma.

LADY INGRAM. My dearest, don't mention the word. I have suffered a martyrdom from their incompetency and caprice. (*AMY whispers something to LADY INGRAM.*) *Tant pis!* I hope it may do her good. I noticed her; I am a judge of physiognomy, and in hers I see all the faults of her class.

ROCHESTER. What are they, madam?

LADY INGRAM. I will tell you privately.

ROCHESTER. But my curiosity craves food now.

LADY INGRAM. Ask Blanche. She is nearer you than I.

BLANCHE. Oh, don't refer him to me, Mamma. I have just one word to say of the whole tribe; they are a nuisance. Not that I ever suffered much from them. Oh, what tricks we used to play on our Miss Wilsons and Miss Greys and Madame Jouberts. Do you remember, Mary? (*MARY begins to speak.*) Madame Joubert was the best... "oh, you villians childs" she would wail as we tossed our books round the schoolroom.

AMY. We used to quiz our governess too; but she was such a good creature, she would bear anything.

BLANCHE. I suppose now we shall have an abstract of the memoirs of all governesses extant. In order to avert such a visitation, I move that we adjourn to the drawing room for a game of billiards. Mr. Rochester?

ROCHESTER. Madam, your pleasure is mine.

(The party moves off, ROCHESTER stops JANE from exiting.)

ROCHESTER. How do you do?

JANE. I am very well, sir.

ROCHESTER. Why did you not come and speak to me in the room?

JANE. I did not wish to disturb you, as you seemed engaged.

ROCHESTER. What have you been doing during my absence?

JANE. Nothing particular. Teaching Adele as usual.

ROCHESTER. And getting a good deal paler than you were. What is the matter?

JANE. Nothing at all, sir.

ROCHESTER. Did you take any cold that night in my room?

JANE. Not in the least.

ROCHESTER. Come to the drawing room, you are deserting too early.

JANE. I am tired, sir.

ROCHESTER. And a little depressed. What about? Tell me.

JANE. Nothing. I am not depressed.

ROCHESTER. But I affirm that you are; so much depressed that a few more words would bring tears to your eyes. Indeed, they are there now. If I had time, I would know what all this means. Well, tonight I excuse you; but understand that so long as my visitors stay, I expect you to appear in the drawing room every evening. It is my wish, don't neglect it. Now go, and send Mrs. Fairfax for Adele. Goodnight my—

(He exits. Partygoers act out the following with stylized movements. JANE watches in the foreground. As she speaks, lights down on the stylized party to small light on JANE.)

JANE. I see them smile, laugh. It is nothing: the light of the candles has as much soul as their smiles. I see Mr. Rochester smile, and I look for their eyes to fall, their color to rise. But there is nothing. They were in no sense moved. He is not to them what he is to me. He is not their kind, as he is of mine. I am sure he is. I know I must conceal my sentiments, I know I must smother hope, I must remember that he cannot care much for me, but while I live and breathe, I must love him.

(Sound Effect: Thunder, rain. Light transition, up on AMY, MARY and BLANCHE, languid and bored.)

AMY. Does it always rain at Thornfield?

MARY. I believe it's been wet the last three days we've been here.

BLANCHE. This weather is insupportable. I wanted to see that gypsy camp.

AMY. It is a great shame that Mr. Rochester is gone today, or he might have taken us. In spite of the dirt.

MARY. There is always tomorrow.

BLANCHE. Tomorrow may do for some—but not for me!

AMY. Perhaps Mr. Mason can escort us.

BLANCHE. Mr. Mason? I should think not. Very odd of him, coming and planting himself here, with Mr. Rochester away.

AMY. But he is so amiable. And a very old friend of Mr. Rochester's—

BLANCHE. So he says!

AMY. (*To MARY:*) A beautiful man, don't you think. Such a pretty little mouth. And a nice nose. That is my idea of charming.

MARY. And he is so well-bred and interesting. I've never met anyone from Jamaica.

AMY. Do you think he owns many plantations? (*Another clap of thunder.*)

BLANCHE. I believe I am developing a megrim.

(Enter MR. MASON with LADY INGRAM.)

AMY. Mr. Mason! Why, we were just speaking of you—

MASON. Forgive me, Miss Eshton—

LADY INGRAM. A most extraordinary circumstance—

MASON. I had just met Lady Ingram on the stair, when we were stopped by the housekeeper—

LADY INGRAM. You girls are not to leave this room!

MASON. Apparently, there's an old woman in the front parlor who's being quite troublesome.

MARY. An old woman?

AMY. What does she want?

MASON. To tell the gentry their fortunes—and she swears she will do it!

AMY. Did you see her, Mr. Mason? What did she look like?

MASON. That I couldn't say, Miss Eshton. She says she won't have any gentlemen in to see her—only the ladies. The young and single ones.

BLANCHE. Why, she's a real sorceress. Let's have her in.

LADY INGRAM. My dearest Blanche—

AMY. Yes! It would be a thousand pities to throw away such a chance of fun!

LADY INGRAM. I cannot possibly countenance such an inconsistent proceeding.

BLANCHE. Indeed Mamma, you can and you will. I have a curiosity to have my fortune told.

MASON. Well, in that case—I believe the gypsy has been taken into the library. Apparently, she told the housekeeper it is not her mission to appear before the vulgar herd, so you all must see her one by one.

LADY INGRAM. You see now, my queenly Blanche—she encroaches. Be advised, my angel girl and—

BLANCHE. It is not my mission to listen to her before the vulgar herd either.

LADY INGRAM. Oh my best—my dearest! Pause! Reflect!! (*Exit BLANCHE.*) I shall stand by the door. (*She exits.*)

AMY. I believe, Mr. Mason, you mentioned that your plantation—home, rather—is in Spanish Town?

MASON. That is correct, Miss Eshton.

MARY. And how did you come to know Mr. Rochester?

MASON. He was...that is, did you not know that Mr. Rochester used to live in Jamaica? But he didn't care for the climate. The hurricanes and rainy season, you know.

(Enter BLANCHE, very angry, followed by LADY INGRAM.)

LADY INGRAM. My lily-flower—

MARY. What did she say?

AMY. Is she a real fortuneteller?

BLANCHE. I have seen a gypsy vagabond, she told me what such people usually tell. My whim is gratified; and now I think the magistrate ought to be called to put the old hag in stocks.

AMY. I still want to go.

MARY. And I as well.

AMY. Mr. Mason, you must stand by the door and if you should hear a scream—you must promise to come to our rescue.

(They exit, giggling, with MASON.)

BLANCHE. Really, mamma. Amy Eshton is becoming quite impossible. And Mary is little better. What will people think, you allowing them to see such a creature? *(Exiting.)*

LADY INGRAM. *(Exiting:)* Blanche! My angel! My dove!

(Re-enter MASON.)

MASON. I say.

JANE. Yes.

MASON. The thing is—well, it's very odd...but that old fortune-teller has sent word that there is another unmarried lady in the room who has not been to her yet, and she swears she will not go until she has seen all. I'm afraid it must be you.

JANE. Indeed.

MASON. So will you see her? Or must I send her away?

JANE. I will see her. By all means.

(MASON exits. Sound Effect: Thunder, rain. Light, music transition, JANE is with the GYPSY.)

GYPSY. Well, and you want your fortune told?

JANE. You may please yourself, mother. But I ought to warn you, I have no faith.

GYPSY. It's like your impudence to say so. Why don't you tremble?

JANE. I'm not cold.

GYPSY. Why don't you turn pale?

JANE. I'm not sick.

GYPSY. Why don't you consult my art?

JANE. I'm not silly.

GYPSY. (*Laughs.*) You are cold. You are sick. You are silly.

JANE. Prove it.

GYPSY. You are cold, because you are alone. You are sick, because the best of feelings, the highest and sweetest given to man, keep far away from you. You are silly because, suffer as you may, you will not stir one step to meet it where it waits for you.

JANE. (*Beat.*) You might say that to almost anyone.

GYPSY. I wonder what you think of, as you sit amongst those fine people? Is there a figure whose movements you follow with curiosity?

JANE. I like to observe all the figures.

GYPSY. But do you never single one from the rest? The master of the house, for instance. Of late, many smiles have been shed upon Mr. Rochester.

JANE. He has a right to enjoy the society of his guests.

GYPSY. Yes, Mr. Rochester has sat by the hour, listening to a certain pair of fascinating lips. And looked so grateful for the pastime given him, don't you think?

JANE. I cannot remember detecting gratitude in his face.

GYPSY. Ha! You have analyzed then! And what did you see? (*Beat.*) You have seen love, have you not?

JANE. Not exactly.

GYPSY. What the devil have you seen then?

JANE. Is it known that Mr. Rochester is to be married?

GYPSY. Yes, and to the beautiful Miss Ingram. Although just now I told her something regarding her beloved's fortune, which made her look wondrous grave.

JANE. But I did not come to hear Mr. Rochester's fortune. I came to hear my own.

GYPSY. True. Kneel here before me. Let me see your face. (*Sound Effect: Thunder.*) Yes. The eye shines like dew, it looks soft and full of feeling—it turns from me now—but its pride and reserve only confirm me in my opinion. The eye is favorable. As to the mouth, it delights in laughter; that feature too is propitious. In fact, I see no enemy to a fortunate issue but in the brow; it says, "I can live alone, if self-respect requires me to do so. I need not sell my soul to buy bliss." Well said, forehead, your declaration shall be respected. I have formed my own plans, right plans I deem them. I know if the cup of bliss were offered one dreg of shame would poison it, such is not my taste. I wish to foster, not blight. That will do, I am raving, almost. I have governed myself tonight; but further might try me beyond my strength. (*Revealing himself as ROCHESTER.*) Rise, Miss Eyre. The play is played out.

JANE. Now, sir. What a strange idea.

ROCHESTER. But well acted, eh?

JANE. You have been talking nonsense to make me talk nonsense. It is scarcely fair.

ROCHESTER. Do you forgive me Jane?

JANE. I cannot tell 'til I have thought it over. If, on reflection, I find I have fallen into no great absurdity—

ROCHESTER. Oh, you have been very correct—very careful.

JANE. I have your permission to retire now, I suppose?

ROCHESTER. No, stay a moment. Tell me what the people in the drawing room are doing.

JANE. Discussing the gypsy, I suppose. Oh! Are you aware, Mr. Rochester, that a stranger arrived this morning?

ROCHESTER. I expected no one. Is he gone?

JANE. He said he had known you long and that he could take the liberty of installing himself here 'til you returned.

ROCHESTER. The devil he did. Did he give his name?

JANE. Mason, sir.

ROCHESTER. (*Beat.*) Mason.

JANE. Do you feel ill, sir?

ROCHESTER. Jane, I've got a blow.

JANE. Here—lean on me, sir.

ROCHESTER. Jane, if all those people in the drawing room came and spat at me, what would you do?

JANE. I'd turn them out of the room, sir, if I could.

ROCHESTER. You would dare censure for my sake?

JANE. I would dare it for the sake of any friend who deserved my adherence; as you, I am sure, do.

ROCHESTER. Go back now into the room, and tell Mason quietly that Mr. Rochester is back and will see him. Tell him I await upstairs. (*He exits.*)

(Music, light transition.)

JANE. I did what he asked. I sought Mr. Mason. I delivered the message. The company stared. At a late hour, I heard the visitors go to their chambers.

ROCHESTER. (*Offstage:*) This way, Mason. This is your room.

JANE. His tone set my heart at ease.

(Exit JANE. Music, light transition. Offstage, there is a struggle, the sound of snarls.)

MASON. (*Offstage:*) Help! Help! Rochester for God's sake come!

(Enter company, in nightclothes, holding candles.)

AMY. Oh, what is it?!

MARY. (*Offstage:*) Someone has been hurt!

LADY INGRAM. Is it robbers?

BLANCHE. Where is Mr. Rochester!

(Enter ROCHESTER.)

ROCHESTER. Here, here! Be composed, all of you.

LADY INGRAM. What awful event has taken place? Speak!

ROCHESTER. Well, don't strangle me. All's right. A servant has had a nightmare, that is all. Now, back into your rooms, all of you.

(Enter JANE.)

ROCHESTER. Miss Ingram, I am sure you will evince superiority to idle terrors. Set the example, if you please. Ladies, please—to bed.

(All exit, except ROCHESTER and JANE.)

ROCHESTER. Jane. Good, you are dressed.

JANE. I thought I might be needed.

ROCHESTER. Come this way. Wait! You don't turn sick at the sight of blood.

JANE. I think I shall not.

ROCHESTER. Give me your hand, it will not do to risk a fainting fit. Warm and steady. Good.

(Light, sound transition. They move to another part of the stage to reveal MASON, bleeding from the shoulder.)

ROCHESTER. *(Giving JANE a basin:)* Hold that. *(He sponges the blood off MASON, who revives.)*

MASON. Is there danger?

ROCHESTER. No, a mere scratch. I'll fetch a surgeon for you now. You'll be able to leave by morning, I hope. Jane?

JANE. Sir?

ROCHESTER. I shall have to leave you in this room with this gentleman, for an hour, or perhaps two. You will sponge the blood as I

do when it returns. You will not speak to him on any pretext—and Richard, it will be at the peril of your life if you speak to her
(*ROCHESTER begins to exit.*)

MASON. Edward?

ROCHESTER. Remember—no conversation.

(Exit ROCHESTER. Light, music transition. Sound Effect: Whispering voices. Enter AUNT REED, HELEN, and BROCKLEHURST.)

JANE. I dip my hand again and again in the basin of blood and water—

HELEN. Have you come to say goodbye to me, Jane? Your little feet are bare. You are cold. *(She puts her arms around JANE.)*

JANE. I watch the candle wane.

HELEN. Let me warm you—

JANE. I fear this man is dying, yet I must not speak to him.

BROCKLEHURST. I buried a child of five years old only a day ago—a good little child, whose soul is now in heaven. It is to be feared the same could not be said of you, were you to be called thence.

(Snarls from BERTHA, offstage.)

JANE. I must keep my post!

ALL. Keep my post.

JANE. I must keep my post. I must keep my post. I must keep my post.

BERTHA. *(Offstage:)* I will drain your heart. *(She laughs.)*

HELEN. There is a kingdom of spirits that is round us, and they watch us, for they are commissioned to guard us; and recognize our innocence.

BERTHA. *(Offstage:)* I will suck your blood. I will drain your heart dry!

(JANE stands.)

AUNT REED. (To JANE:) You will stay in the Red Room!

(GHOSTLY VOICEOVER ECHOES: “*The Red Room. The Red Room.*”)

JANE. (Over voices:) Oh, when will he come! When will he come!

(Enter ROCHESTER with DOCTOR. The spirits subside.)

ROCHESTER. Carter, I give you but half an hour for dressing the wound and getting him downstairs. (To MASON:) Now, my good fellow, how are you?

MASON. She’s done me, I fear.

ROCHESTER. Not a whit. Carter, assure him there’s no danger.

CARTER. I can do that conscientiously—but how is this? The flesh on the shoulder is torn as well as cut. There have been teeth here!

MASON. She bit me. She worried me like a tigress when Rochester got the knife from her.

ROCHESTER. You should have grappled with her at once.

MASON. She looked so quiet at first. I thought I might do some good—

ROCHESTER. You thought! You thought! Come Carter, hurry—the sun is almost up and I must have him off.

CARTER. It’s done. (ROCHESTER and CARTER help MASON stand.)

MASON. She sucked my blood. She said she’d drain my heart.

ROCHESTER. Be silent, Richard—and never mind her gibberish.

MASON. I wish I could forget it.

ROCHSETER. You will, once you’re back in Spanish Town. Take him to the carriage, Carter. Goodbye Dick.

MASON. Edward—

ROCHESTER. Well, what is it?

MASON. Let her be taken care of, let her be treated as tenderly as may be; let her—

ROCHESTER. I do my best and have done it. And will do it.

(Exit CARTER and MASON.)

ROCHESTER. *(Regarding JANE:)* Yet would to God there were an end to all this.

(Light, music transition. Sound Effect: Wailing child, laughing child. etc. Lights up on HELEN, vigorously rocking doll.)

JANE. Presentiments are strange things. When I was just a little girl, I once heard someone say that to dream of children was a sure sign of trouble. That night at Thornfield, I dreamt of an infant—and the next night, and the next. It was a wailing child one night, a laughing child the next. That afternoon, I was summoned downstairs by a message—

(Small spot up on MRS. REED. She is no longer ghostly, just an old woman. BROCKLEHURST peers in from behind.)

AUNT REED. Jane.

JANE. It was from Gateshead. It was from Mrs. Reed.

AUNT REED. Bring me Jane Eyre.

JANE. The letter was full of troubles, hinted at a fortune lost in gambling. Her son, John Reed, was dead. Perhaps it was suicide.

AUNT REED. Bring me Jane Eyre.

JANE. And she wished to see me. Would not rest until she saw me.

(As JANE moves towards MRS. REED, the two spirits watch.)

AUNT REED. Is that Jane Eyre?

JANE. Yes. How are you—Aunt Reed. *(She bends to kiss her, MRS. REED turns her face away.)*

AUNT REED. Stand away! Don't annoy me by holding the bed-clothes fast. Are you Jane Eyre?

JANE. I am.

AUNT REED. I had more trouble with that child than any one would believe. Her incomprehensible disposition, her fits of temper—her unnatural watchings of one's movements!

JANE. Aunt Reed—

AUNT REED. Who is it calls me Aunt!! She would not call me Aunt!! (*Beat. More quietly:*) I know you. You are Jane Eyre. Is there no one in the room with you?

JANE. No one.

AUNT REED. (*Bringing out a letter:*) What we think little of in life, burdens us in our final hour. Read this.

JANE. (*Reading the envelope:*) But who is William Eyre, Aunt? Aunt? (*She reads the letter under this next.*)

AUNT REED. Jane Eyre. How my husband loved it, poor puling thing.

JANE. (*Reading:*) Will you have the goodness to send me the address of my niece, Jane Eyre. I wish her to come to me in Jamaica.

AUNT REED. I shall never forget that day when she turned on me.

JANE. I intend to adopt her—

AUNT REED. Declared I had treated her with miserable cruelty!

JANE. —to make her my heir.

MRS. REED. It was as if an animal I had struck looked up with human eyes and cursed me in a man's voice.

JANE. Think no more of it, aunt. I was a child then—

MRS. REED. I tell you I cannot forget it! I took my revenge. I wrote to her uncle. I told him she had died of typhus at Lowood—

JANE. If you could be persuaded to regard me with kindness—

MRS. REED. She had a very bad disposition.

JANE. Many times as a child, I would have been glad to love you—

MRS. REED. Impossible to understand.

JANE. You have my forgiveness.

MRS. REED. She was born to be my torment!

JANE. Love me, then, or hate me, as you will. You have my full and free forgiveness. Be at peace.

(AUNT REED dies. GHOSTLY VOICEOVER: Jane. Jane. Jane. Jane. JANE exits, followed by MR. BROCKLEHURST and HELEN. HELEN looks back. MRS. REED's eyes open. She stands, but is left behind. We will not see her again. Light, sound transition, we are at Thornfield. Enter JANE.)

ROCHESTER. *(Offstage:)* Jane Eyre! *(Entering:)* By my life, it's Jane Eyre. Come here, if you please. Are you coming from town—and on foot! You look guilty, as you should. Truant! You said you'd be gone a week. what the deuce have you done with yourself this last month?

JANE. I have been with my aunt, sir, who is dead.

ROCHESTER. A true Janian reply. She comes from the other world, from the abode of people who are dead.

JANE. I am glad to be returned sir. *(She begins to exit.)*

ROCHESTER. Where are you going?

JANE. To the house.

ROCHESTER. No. Stay a bit. I have long wished to talk to you on a certain subject. Come closer, Jane. Thornfield is a pleasant place in the summer, is it not?

JANE. Yes, sir.

ROCHESTER. I perceive you have an affection for it, and though I don't comprehend how it can be, I also perceive you have acquired a degree of regard for that foolish little child Adele, too. Even simple Dame Fairfax. Is this not so?

JANE. Yes, sir. I have affection for both.

ROCHESTER. And would be sorry to part with them.

JANE. Yes.

ROCHESTER. Pity. Because very soon, Miss Eyre, it is my intention to take Miss Ingram to my bosom. She's an extensive armful—but that's not to the point. One can't have too much of such a very excellent thing as my beautiful Blanche. Listen to me Jane! Why do you turn your head?

JANE. I suppose sir, Adele ought to go to school. I am sure you perceive the necessity for it.

ROCHESTER. To get her out of my bride's way, who might otherwise walk over her rather too emphatically. There's sense in the suggestion, not a doubt of it. And you—

JANE. I should hope sir, that Adele and I would both be safe out of the house before your bride enters it. I will advertise immediately and—

ROCHESTER. Advertise! Not at all! I myself have found a place for you. Now, now—don't speak of it. When a dependent does her duty as well as you have done yours, she has a sort of claim upon her employer for any little assistance he can conveniently render her. I have heard of a place I think will suit, with Mrs. Dionysius O'Gall of Bitternut Lodge. In Ireland.

JANE. It is a long way off, sir.

ROCHESTER. No matter, a girl of your sense will not object to a long sea voyage.

JANE. But the distance—

ROCHESTER. From what, Jane?

JANE. From England and from Thornfield and—

ROCHESTER. (*Beat.*) Well?

JANE. From you sir.

ROCHESTER. It is a long way to Ireland, but if I can't do better, how is it to be helped? Are you anything akin to me, do you think, Jane? Because I sometimes have the queer feeling with regard to you. As if I'd a string, here (*He indicates his heart.*) inextricably knotted to one there (*Indicates her heart.*) And I'm afraid if that boisterous Channel came between us, the cord of communication would

be snapped and I should take to bleeding inwardly. As for you—you'd forget me.

JANE. That I never should, sir; you know. (*Beat.*) I wish I'd never been born, nor never come to Thornfield!

ROCHESTER. Because you are sorry to leave it?

JANE. I am sorry. I love Thornfield: because in it I have lived a full and delightful life. I have known you, Mr. Rochester; and it strikes me with anguish to feel that I absolutely must be torn from you forever. I see the necessity of departure; and it is like looking on the necessity of death.

ROCHESTER. Where do you see the necessity?

JANE. In the shape of Miss Ingram, your bride.

ROCHESTER. I have no bride.

JANE. But you will have.

ROCHESTER. Yes, I will. I will.

JANE. Then I must go.

ROCHESTER. No, you will stay. I swear it!

JANE. (*Passionately.*) I tell you I must go! Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think because I am poor, obscure and plain—that I am soulless and heartless as well? You think wrong! I have as much soul as you, and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of conventionalities—it is my spirit that addresses your spirit, just as if both had passed through the grave and we stood at God's feet, equal—as we are!

ROCHESTER. (*Taking her into his arms.*) As we are. So, Jane.

JANE. Let me go! You are a married man, as good as one, and wed to one who you do not truly love! I would scorn such a union, I am better than you—let me go!

ROCHESTER. Jane, be still, don't struggle so. Like a bird in a net—

JANE. I am no bird, no net ensnares me! I am a free human being!

ROCHESTER. True. So you shall decide your destiny. Jane, I offer you my heart, my hand and a share of all my possessions.

(Sound Effect: Thunder, rising wind. Music up.)

JANE. You play a farce and I laugh at it.

ROCHESTER. I am asking you to pass through life at my side—

JANE. Your bride stands between us.

ROCHESTER. My bride is here, because my equal is here, and my likeness. Jane, will you marry me? *(Beat.)* Do you still doubt me?

JANE. Entirely.

ROCHESTER. What love have I for Miss Ingram? None! What love has she for me? None! I would not—I could not marry Miss Ingram. Why do you look at me like that, Jane? You torture me.

JANE. I am trying to read your face!

ROCHESTER. God, you torture me! Jane, accept me quickly! Say Edward—give me my name—Edward, I will marry you!

JANE. Are you in earnest? Do you truly love me?

ROCHESTER. I swear it! Say the words! Say them!!

JANE. Edward, I will marry you. *(They kiss, thunder crashes.)*

ROCHESTER. It will atone. It will atone. Have I not found her friendless and cold and comfortless? Is there not love in my heart? I know my maker sanctions what I do! As for man's opinion—I defy it!

(Great crash of thunder. Lights out. Music out.)

End of Act I

ACT II

(Music, lights. Sound Effect: Child crying. Lights up on HELEN, furiously rocking the doll. BROCKLEHURST watches. JANE is revealed, in her wedding gown, in isolated light.)

HELEN. Shhh, shhhh. I am slatternly. I seldom put, and never keep, things in order. I am careless, I forget rules, I read when I should learn my lessons, shhhhh—

JANE. I have drawn a picture. It came to me in a dream. *(Enter BERTHA, wearing JANE's veil.)* Thornfield was in ruins, I was carrying a child, it was strangling me, but I could not put it down for anything. Mr. Rochester had ridden away...but there was someone else there. A woman. A woman dressed in white, like a shroud... she wears my wedding veil.

(BERTHA tears veil and exits. Pool of light up on ROCHESTER.)

ROCHESTER. Hush Janet. It was a dream.

JANE. He said it was a dream. But when I awoke, my veil was on the floor, torn into pieces.

ROCHESTER. Jane, is Thornfield Hall a ruin? Am I leaving you without a word? It was a dream.

(Pool of light up on MRS. FAIRFAX.)

MRS. FAIRFAX. Am I dreaming, Miss Eyre—or did Mr. Rochester truly say he wishes to marry you? I feel so astonished, I hardly know what to say!

JANE. I told her simply to wish me happy.

ROCHESTER. Jane, this morning I wrote to my banker in London to send me certain jewels.

JANE. I told him not to speak as if I were a beauty.

ROCHESTER. You are a beauty in my eyes.

MRS. FAIRFAX. There's an old saying "all is not gold that glitters."

ROCHESTER. I will attire you in satin and lace.

JANE. I want no satin! Or jewels! I won't be kept by him!

ROCHESTER. Isn't she original!

JANE. I shall continue to act as Adele's governess. I shall earn my own board. I want nothing from him but—

ROCHESTER. But what?

JANE. His regard. And I will give him mine in return.

ROCHESTER. (*Indulgently:*) Impudence.

MRS. FAIRFAX. Miss Eyre, I fear there is something to be found here that neither you nor I expect.

(Lights out on MRS. FAIRFAX and ROCHESTER. Focus on JANE. Organ music, reminiscent of wedding music, up and under.)

JANE. I won't be kept by him!

BROCKLEHURST. Be on your guard against him; avoid his company—

JANE. If I could one day bring Mr. Rochester a fortune, however small, I could endure him supporting me now.

HELEN. The lord God has provided you with resources other than yourself—

JANE. A month ago, I wrote to my Uncle William to tell him I am to be married—

HELEN. Or than creatures as feeble as yourself.

JANE. (*Looking at herself in the mirrors:*) Today, I look in the mirror and see a figure so unlike myself that it seems almost the image of a stranger.

(Light transition, it is morning. Enter ROCHESTER.)

ROCHESTER. Jane, are you ready? Ah, the pride of my life, the desire of my eyes. (*He kisses her.*) Do you love me, Jane? Repeat it.

JANE. I do, sir. I do with all my heart.

ROCHESTER. Strange. Those words cause me pain, here. You speak with such earnest, religious energy, it is too much as if some spirit were near me. But enough. It is time.

(Shift in organ music, they are in church. Enter REV. WOOD.)

REV. WOOD. I require and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful Day of Judgment, that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not lawfully be joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it. *(Enter MASON, unseen.)* Wilt thou have this woman for thy wedded wife?

MASON. The marriage cannot go on. I declare the existence of an impediment.

REV. WOOD. Sir?

ROCHESTER. *(To WOOD:)* Proceed.

REV. WOOD. I cannot sir, until—

ROCHESTER. Proceed!

MASON. This marriage cannot go on!

ROCHESTER. Proceed!

REV. WOOD. What is the nature of the impediment? Perhaps it can be got over, perhaps—

MASON. Mr. Rochester has a wife now living!

ROCHESTER. Prove it.

MASON. *(Taking out a document:)* I have this. A license that states that on the 20th of October, 1830, Edward Fairfax Rochester married Bertha Antoinette Mason in Spanish Town, Jamaica—

REV. WOOD. This proves Mr. Rochester once had a wife. It does not prove she is still alive.

MASON. She was three months ago. I saw her here, in this house. I am her brother.

ROCHESTER. Enough! All shall bolt out at once, like a bullet from a barrel. Wood, close your book. Shut up the church. There will be no wedding today! No, no—let us go up into the house instead, and visit Mrs. Poole's patient—my wife!

(Music, light transition. As actors transition to attic, enter BERTHA, followed by GRACE.)

GRACE. (*Comforting her:*) There. There now.

BERTHA. *Ne me regardez pas!* (Don't look at me.)

GRACE. (*She holds BERTHA, comforting:*) No, there now, I won't. I won't.

(They enter the attic.)

BERTHA. (*Alarmed:*) Don't look at me. You creature. You! Don't!

ROCHESTER. You know this place, Mason. She bit and stabbed you here. Good morning, Mrs. Poole! And how is your charge today?

GRACE. We're tolerable, sir, I thank you. Rather snappish, but not 'rageous. (*BERTHA cries out fiercely:*) Oh sir! She sees you. You'd better not stay.

ROCHESTER. She has no knife today, I suppose.

GRACE. One never knows. She's very cunning, sir.

(BERTHA flies at ROCHESTER. They struggle. He holds her.)

ROCHESTER. This is my wife. Sister to that resolute personage, there—cheer up, Dick—I'd sooner strike a woman than you. Comes from a mad family. Her mother was insane and a drunkard. My wife, like the dutiful child she is, copied her parent in both points. (*BERTHA struggles.*) Such is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know. (*BERTHA screams.*) Such are the endearments which are to solace me. And this (*Pointing to JANE:*) is what I wished to have. Compare, gentlemen! That face, with this mask. That form, with this bulk. Then judge me, if you will—but remember, so shall you be judged. This girl knew no more than you, Wood, of this disgusting secret. She thought all was fair and legal (*BERTHA screams.*) Off with you now, I must shut up my prize.

(ROCHESTER takes BERTHA off, assisted by GRACE. All exit, but JANE, MASON. Enter HELEN.)

MASON. Your uncle will be glad to hear you had no part in this, Miss Eyre. If he is still living when I return to Jamaica.

JANE. (*Dazed:*) My uncle?

MASON. William Eyre. Do you not remember—

JANE. My letter. Yes.

MASON. I was with William when he received it. Your uncle is very ill, Miss Eyre, and so sent me in his place. I would desire you to accompany me back, were I not half certain he would be dead ere we reached him. But I do believe it best you stay in England, until I can send you word. Goodbye, Miss Eyre. You will hear from me soon.

(Exit MASON and JANE. Lights up on HELEN, singing. During her song, ROCHESTER enters, sits outside Jane's room.)

HELEN. *(Singing as many verses as are necessary for JANE's change:)*

Why did they send me so far and so lonely/
Up where the moors spread and grey rocks are piled?/
Men are hard-hearted, and kind angels only/
Watch o'er the steps of a poor orphan child— My feet they are sore,
and my limbs they are weary/
Long is the way, and the mountains are wild/
Soon will the twilight close moonless and dreary/
Over the path of the poor orphan child—

Men are hard-hearted, and kind angels only/
Watch o'er the steps of a poor orphan child— My feet they are sore,
and my limbs they are weary/
Long is the way, and the mountains are wild/
Soon will the twilight close moonless and dreary/
Over the path of the poor orphan child—

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Soon will the twilight close moonless and dreary/
Over the path of the poor orphan child—

Soon will the twilight close moonless and dreary/
Over the path of the poor orphan child—

Over the path of the poor orphan child—

(Enter JANE. She has changed into her regular clothes.)

ROCHESTER. You come out at last. Well, I have been waiting for you long and listening. Yet not one movement have I heard—five minutes more of that deathlike hush and I should have forced the lock. So you shun me? You shut yourself up and grieve alone. You are passionate. I expected a scene of some kind. I was prepared for the hot rain of tears. Not a word of reproach? Nothing bitter? Jane, will you ever forgive me? *(Beat.)* You know I am a scoundrel, Jane.

JANE. Yes, sir.

ROCHESTER. Than tell me so roundly. Don't spare me. Oh, I know you. You are thinking how to act. Talking, you consider, is of no use.

JANE. I do not wish to act against you.

ROCHESTER. Not in your sense of the word—but in mine you are scheming to destroy me. You intend to make yourself a complete

stranger to me. To live under this roof only as Adele's governess and if ever I say a friendly word to you, you will say "that man nearly made me his mistress: I must be ice and rock to him," and ice and rock you will become.

JANE. Adele must have a new governess, sir.

ROCHESTER. Oh, Adele will go to school. That is all settled. Jane, you shall not stay here, nor will I. All is prepared for prompt departure, tomorrow you shall go. I have a place, a secure sanctuary— (*She shakes her head.*) Jane, will you hear reason! Because if you don't, I'll try violence!

JANE. Sit down. I'll talk to you as long as you like (*She weeps.*)

ROCHESTER. Oh, Jane. I cannot endure it. Hush, now. (*He takes her in his arms.*) It is because I love you too well. (*He kisses her, she pulls away.*) You don't love me, then? It was only my rank you valued?

JANE. I do love you! More than ever! But this is the last time I must express it.

ROCHESTER. The last time! Do you think you can live with me and always be cold and distant?

JANE. No, sir. I am certain I could not. And therefore I must leave you.

ROCHESTER. For how long, Jane? For a few minutes, while you smooth your—

JANE. I must part with you for my whole life. I must begin a new existence.

ROCHESTER. Of course. I told you you should. You shall go to a place I have in the south of France— (*She shakes her head and moves away.*) Jane, I am not long-enduring! I am not cool and dispassionate! You forget that!! (*He takes her in his arms. They kiss. JANE pulls away.*)

JANE. Oh, God help me!

ROCHESTER. I am a fool! She must see that I am not married, but I do not tell her why! Jane, listen. Did you ever know I was a younger

son? That my father and elder brother were avaricious men who could not—would not—give me my fair share of the estate?

JANE. No.

ROCHESTER. But they were proud, too, the devil take them. So I was to make a wealthy marriage. My father had an old acquaintance, a Mr. Mason, a rich Jamaican merchant, who had a daughter who was the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty. I was married before I knew where I was. Oh, I have no respect for myself when I think of that act! I never loved, I never esteemed, I did not even know her! I was told her mother was dead. After the marriage, I learned my mistake. She was only mad, as my father and brother both well knew. Jane, I lived with that woman upstairs for four years, endured all the agonies of being bound to a wife both intemperate and unchaste...and in those four years, both my father and brother died. Think on it! I was rich enough now, but poor, so poor. Because the doctors had discovered that my wife was mad, and I therefore could not rid myself of her by any legal proceedings. You don't like my narrative?

JANE. I pity you—I do pity you.

ROCHESTER. One night, I was awakened by her yells. She had, of course, been shut up. It was a fiery West Indian night, the air was like sulfur. "This life," I thought, "is hell." I took a revolver up in my hand—then suddenly, the weather broke. The air grew pure. And I fixed a resolution. I would take the madwoman with me to England. I would place her in safety and comfort and leave her. I would travel the world and form what tie I wished.

JANE. But you could not marry, sir.

ROCHESTER. I had determined I could and I should! It was not my original intention to deceive. I meant to tell my tale plainly. But now you see how the case stands, don't you? After a life of unutterable misery, I have for the first time found what I can truly love—I have found you! You are my sympathy. My better self! Jane, Jane, just give me your promise. Say "Mr. Rochester, I will be yours."

JANE. (*Beat.*) Mr. Rochester, I will not be yours.

ROCHESTER. Jane. Do you mean to go one way in the world and to let me go another?

JANE. I do.

ROCHESTER. *(He kisses her.)* And now?

JANE. I do.

ROCHESTER. Oh, Jane—this—this is wicked! It would not be wicked to love me!

JANE. It would be to obey you.

ROCHESTER. But you would injure no one! You have neither relatives nor friends to offend—

JANE. The more solitary—the more friendless I am—the more I will respect myself! I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad, as I am now. Laws and principles are not for times when there is no temptation, they are for now! If at my individual convenience I might break them, what would be their worth? They have a worth, so I have always believed; and if I cannot believe it now, it is because I am insane, quite insane! They are all I have at this hour to stand by!

ROCHESTER. *(Taking her in his arms angrily.)* Never was anything at once so frail and so indomitable! I could break her in two, but what good would it do me? Whatever I do with the cage, I cannot get at the spirit! *(He releases her. Gentler.)* Oh, Jane. Come with me.

(JANE begins to exit.)

JANE. I am going sir.

ROCHESTER. You will not stay? My deep love, my frantic prayer are nothing to you?

JANE. I am going.

ROCHESTER. Withdraw then. I consent. Go back to your room, think over all I have said. And Jane—cast a glance on my sufferings. Think of me.

JANE. God bless you, my dear master. God keep you from harm and wrong, and reward you well for your past kindness to me.

(Light transition, JANE is alone in small spot. She is joined by BROCKLEHURST and HELEN.)

JANE. I know what I have to do. I seek the key of the side-door in the kitchen. I oil the key and the lock. I get some water, some bread, for perhaps I shall have to walk far. All this I do without one sound. A mile off lies a road which I have never traveled, thither I bend my steps. He will send for me in the morning, I will be gone. He will have me sought for. It will be in vain. *(Storm sounds up and under.)* May you never feel what I feel. May you never appeal to Heaven in prayers so hopeless. May you never be the instrument of evil to what you wholly love!

(A howling wind up and under, the storm is in full force. JANE and the spirits transition through the storm. They reach a doorway and JANE stops and knocks. Sound Effect: Amplified, ghostly knocking. Pinspot up on townsman.)

JANE. Do you know of any place in the neighborhood where a servant is wanted? I left my bag on the coach and now I must—

TOWNSPERSON. Nae. There's no need o' such i' this town.

JANE. But what do people do for work here?

TOWNSPERSON. Most serve at the needle factory, up the ways. But it's men's work.

JANE. Then what do the women do?

TOWNSPERSON. Some does one thing. Some does another. Poor folk mun get on as they can.

(Sound Effect: Door slams shut. JANE continues to walk, the spirits are weak and cling to her for support. They reach another door. JANE stops. Amplified knocking. Pinspot up on townsman.)

JANE. Will you give me a roll for this handkerchief?

TOWNSPERSON. Nae, I never sell stuff i' that way.

JANE. Will you take my gloves?

TOWNSPERSON. How would I know where you'd got 'em from?

(Sound Effect: The door is slams shut.)

JANE. Oh please. Please. God help me!

HELEN. Jane, your little feet are bare. You are cold. Let me warm you.

(HELEN embraces JANE, then collapses. JANE lifts HELEN and carries her, followed by BROCKLEHURST, crawling behind. amplified knocking. Enter HANNAH.)

HANNAH. Who is that? *(Seeing JANE, she draws back.)* What do you want?

JANE. I want a night's shelter, and a morsel of bread to eat.

HANNAH. I'll give you a piece of bread. But we can't take in a vagrant.

JANE. I left my bag on the coach—a mistake, you see. I have been walking for days, there is no work. If you turn me away, what shall I do?

HANNAH. Here's a penny. Now go.

JANE. Don't shut the door—for God's sake!

HANNAH. The rain is driving in.

JANE. But I must die if I am turned away.

HANNAH. Not you. I'm feared you have some ill plans, that bring you about folks' houses at this time o' night. If you've any followers—housebreakers and such—anywhere near, tell them we have a gentleman, and dogs and guns!

(HANNAH closes the door. JANE collapses on the doorstep.)

BROCKLEHURST. *(Weakly:)* You must be on your guard against her; avoid her company, shut her out from your converse—for this child, this girl is—

JANE. The more solitary, the more friendless I am, the more I will respect myself.

BROCKLEHURST. This child is—

JANE. *(With strength:)* The more I will respect myself.

(BROCKLEHURST sinks back, JANE moves away from him, then collapses. Enter ST. JOHN.)

JANE. I can but die.

ST. JOHN. All men must die. But all are not condemned to die of cold and want.

(He carries JANE, HELEN following to another part of the stage. BROCKLEHURST cannot follow them. We will not see him again. Final light down on BROCKLEHURST. Light, sound transition. JANE, in bed. ST. JOHN, DIANA, MARY, and HANNAH watch her anxiously.)

DIANA. *(In dark if necessary to cover:)* Hannah over here. Please help me. Put that there...hurry, hurry. Bring her in, St. John. She looks so pale.

MARY. As pale as death.

ST. JOHN. She is famished, I think. Hannah, get some bread. And some milk, if you please.

HANNAH. *(Exiting:)* All this fuss for a beggar woman and I don't know what all.

DIANA. It is very well you took her in, St. John.

MARY. Yes, she would certainly have been found dead at the door in the morning.

ST. JOHN. She has gone through strange hardships, no doubt.

DIANA. She is not an uneducated person, I think. Her clothes are muddy, but very fine.

MARY. Look. She is waking.

DIANA. Can you speak? *(Enter HANNAH, with food:)* Hannah, bring me the plate. *(To JANE:)* Here. Try to drink.

ST. JOHN. Not too much at first. Try if she can speak now. Ask her her name.

JANE. My name is Jane Elliott.

MARY. And where do you live? Where are your friends?

DIANA. Can we send for anyone you know? (*JANE shakes her head.*) What has happened to you, my dear?

JANE. I can tell you nothing.

ST. JOHN. But what then do you expect us to do for you?

JANE. Nothing.

DIANA. Do you mean that we have now given you what aid you require? That we may dismiss you back into the night?

JANE. Do with me and for me as you like—but excuse me from talking—my breath is short.

ST. JOHN. Enough. Hannah, let her lay here at present. In ten minutes more, give her the rest of the milk and the bread.

(Focus on ST. JOHN, DIANA, and MARY.)

DIANA. To speak the truth, St. John, my heart rather warms to her. I wish we may be able to benefit her permanently.

ST. JOHN. That is hardly likely. You will find she is some young lady who has had a misunderstanding with her friends. (*Beat.*) She looks sensible, but not at all handsome.

MARY. She is so ill, St. John...and as to her face, I rather like it.

(They exit. Music, light transition. As HANNAH speaks, the Rivers gather, reading a letter in silence.)

JANE. On the third day, I was better. I could speak and move. On the fourth, I ventured downstairs to thank my benefactors. From Hannah, I had found out much about them.

HANNAH. They're brother and sisters, to be sure. Their mother's been restin' in her grave, oh, these last ten years—

JANE. Their father had died as well.

HANNAH. Of a stroke, just three weeks ago. He left 'em destitute, poor lambs, on account of his lendin' a deal of money to a man that later turned bankrupt.

JANE. So the house was to be sold.

HANNAH. Miss Mary and Miss Diana are going off to become governesses and Mr. St. John—oh, it hurts my heart sore to have him be goin' so far away from us. He's leavin' soon for India, to do the Lord's work. A missionary, he's to be.

MARY. (*Folding the letter:*) Well, that's that then.

(*JANE enters into the Rivers grouping, they hastily put away the letter.*)

DIANA. Why, you've come downstairs! You should have waited for my leave.

JANE. I am sorry—have I disturbed you? I will go.

DIANA. No, it is nothing—only a letter. Of no consequence. Are you sure you are well enough to be out of bed?

MARY. You still look so pale. How do you feel?

JANE. Very well.

DIANA. Hannah tells us you have been recovering and have a good appetite.

JANE. I trust I shall not eat long at your expense.

ST. JOHN. No. When you have indicated to us the residence of your friends, we can write to them, and you may be restored to home.

JANE. The name of the place where, and of the person with whom I lived, is my secret, Sir.

DIANA. Which you have, in my opinion, a right to keep both from St. John and every other questioner.

ST. JOHN. Yet if I know nothing of you, or your history, I cannot help you.

MARY. Don't make her talk any more now, St. John. Miss Elliott, come sit by me. (*Beat. JANE does not respond.*) Miss Elliott?

ST. JOHN. Is your name really Jane Elliott?

JANE. No.

ST. JOHN. You won't tell us your real name.

JANE. I fear discovery above all things. Show me how to work, that is all I ask—but 'til then, allow me to stay here. I dread—

DIANA. Indeed you shall stay here.

MARY. You shall.

ST. JOHN. My sisters, I see, have a pleasure in keeping you.

(Enter HANNAH.)

HANNAH. Beggin' your pardon, but Miss Diana, the kitchen's in an uproar and the girl is nowhere to be found.

MARY. Oh dear. She has a toothache and I sent her to the surgeon.

DIANA. Never mind, Hannah. We're coming.

(Exit HANNAH, DIANA, and MARY.)

JANE. You will excuse me, Mr. Rivers. I feel I disturbed you earlier. I should—

ST. JOHN. It was nothing. A letter from a lawyer, merely. My uncle is recently dead, this missive informs us he has left his property to another. It is of no consequence, he had a right to do as he pleased.

JANE. I am sorry. *(Beat.)* I should go and help your sisters. I am stronger now, and must be doing something to earn my keep.

ST. JOHN. Miss Elliott.

JANE. Yes.

ST. JOHN. When you spoke earlier, I thought of something—a situation that...but perhaps it would not do.

JANE. If you have some employment for me, speak.

ST. JOHN. I can see your society has been amongst the educated. You may think that the work I offer is degrading, but I consider that no service degrades which can better our race.

JANE. Well, proceed.

ST. JOHN. This town, when I came to it two years ago, had no school. The children of the poor were excluded from every hope of progress. I established a school for boys. I mean now to open one for girls. Its mistress will have a salary of thirty pounds a year.

JANE. Mr. Rivers, I accept your proposal with all my heart.

ST. JOHN. You comprehend me? Your scholars will be poor girls—what will you do with your accomplishments?

JANE. They will keep. *(She extends her hand to him.)* Mr. Rivers, I do truly thank you.

ST. JOHN. *(He takes her hand.)* You will not stay here long.

JANE. Indeed. I cannot think what makes you say so.

ST. JOHN. I read it in your eyes. In your nature is an alloy as detrimental to repose as that in mine.

JANE. I am not ambitious.

ST. JOHN. What makes you speak of ambition? I know I am ambitious—but how did you find it out?

JANE. I was speaking of myself.

ST. JOHN. Well, if you have no ambition, you are instead—

JANE. What?

ST. JOHN. I was going to say impassioned, but you might have misunderstood and been displeased. I meant human affections have a most powerful hold upon you. *(Enter HELEN.)* You cannot long be content to pass your leisure in solitude—any more than I can be content to live here pent in with mountains, waiting for the destiny my Master has called me to.

JANE. Which is?

ST. JOHN. The greatest to which man can aspire—the advancement of God's kingdom on earth.

(Light, sound transition. Down on ST. JOHN, focus on JANE.)

JANE. Diana teaches me German. I like to learn from her. Mary is gentle and good. As to Mr. St. John... *(Beat.)* I hear him preach. The

heart is thrilled, the mind astonished, yet throughout there is a strange bitterness. And when he is done, instead of feeling enlightened by his discourse, I experience an inexpressible sadness. St. John Rivers has not yet found that peace of God which passeth all understanding: he has no more found it than have I with my concealed and racking regrets—

HELEN. You think too much of the love of human beings, Jane.

JANE. I rush into strange dreams at night, I still again and again meet Mr. Rochester—

HELEN. You are too impulsive, too vehement.

JANE. He did love me—no one will ever love me so again. I will never again know the sweet homage given to beauty, youth and grace, for to no one else will I ever seem to possess those charms...but where am I wandering? Is it better to be a slave in a fool's paradise, fevered with delusive bliss one hour—suffocating with the bitterest shame the next? Or to be a village schoolmistress, free and honest. I was right. God directed me to the right choice.

(Sound Effect: Storm. JANE exits, followed by HELEN. Light transition. Enter ST. JOHN. He knocks, trying to be heard above the storm.)

ST. JOHN. *(Knocking:)* Miss Elliott? Are you there? Miss Elliott?

(Enter JANE, who admits ST. JOHN.)

ST. JOHN. The storm is terrible. I have had hard work to get here, I assure you.

JANE. But why are you come?

ST. JOHN. Rather an inhospitable question to put to a visitor, but since you ask it, I answer simply to have a little talk with you. May I be seated?

JANE. Of course. *(Beat.)*

ST. JOHN. Your school is satisfactory?

JANE. Yes.

ST. JOHN. And I have observed that my sisters have grown quite fond of you.

JANE. Yes. It is a great sadness to me that they must so soon leave...has there been a change in your own arrangements? Is that why you are come? Are you summoned to India sooner than you expected?

ST. JOHN. No. Such chance is too good to befall me. (*Beat.*) I have come, Miss Elliott, to tell you a story, though I must warn you that it may sound somewhat hackneyed to your ears. Twenty years ago, a poor curate married a rich man's daughter. Her family disowned her, and before two years had passed, the rash pair were both dead, leaving behind a little daughter, who was reared by an aunt called (I come to names now) Mrs. Reed of Gateshead. Did you hear a noise? To proceed, Mrs. Reed kept the orphan ten years, and at the end of that time transferred it to Lowood School, which was then under the direction of a Mr. Brocklehurst. The pupils were not well treated, a contagion took over the school, many students died, Brocklehurst was disgraced. It was thought that the heroine of my tale died too...but this was not the case. She survived, became a teacher, then graduated to the post of governess in the house of a certain Mr. Rochester—

JANE. Mr. Rivers!

ST. JOHN. —who, it seemed, wished to marry the young woman, but at the very altar it was discovered that he had a wife yet alive. As for the governess, she vanished. No one knows when, where or how. I myself have received a letter from a Mr. Briggs, a solicitor who is eager to find this young woman. Is it not an odd tale?

JANE. Did he write of Mr. Rochester?

ST. JOHN. I know nothing of Mr. Rochester. Briggs wrote of a Jane Eyre. Do you own this name? (*JANE nods. He hands her a letter.*) Then, perhaps, you will wish to know why he wrote of you.

JANE. Why did he then?

ST. JOHN. He wrote to tell you that your uncle, William Eyre of Jamaica, is dead—and that he has left you all his property and that you are now rich. Merely that.

JANE. I? Rich?

ST. JOHN. Twenty thousand pounds, I think they say. But what is that?

JANE. Twenty thousand pounds?!

ST. JOHN. (*Laughs.*) If you had committed a murder, and I told you your crime was discovered, you could scarcely look more aghast. Well, that is what I came to say, Miss Eyre. Now I must leave you. Goodnight. (*He moves to exit.*)

JANE. Wait! It puzzles me why Mr. Briggs wrote to you about me.

ST. JOHN. Oh, I am a clergyman and the clergy are often appealed to about odd matters.

JANE. That does not satisfy me—

ST. JOHN. Another time.

JANE. No, tonight!

ST. JOHN. Well, you must know someday. Your name is Jane Eyre.

JANE. Yes, yes! We have settled that already.

ST. JOHN. My mother's name was Eyre.

JANE. But—

ST. JOHN. She had two brothers; one a clergyman, who married your mother—the other a Mr. William Eyre, a merchant in Jamaica, who died but a month ago. You were there when we received word of Uncle William's will. Do you remember that day? We learned that he had left his property to his orphan niece, overlooking us, in consequence of a quarrel between him and my father. Briggs wrote me again in a few weeks ago, to say that the heiress was lost and asking if I knew anything of her. You know the rest. (*He moves to exit again.*)

JANE. But wait! You three, then, are my cousins?

ST. JOHN. We are cousins, yes.

JANE. Oh, I am glad. Glad!

ST. JOHN. You were serious when I told you you had got a fortune; and now, for a matter of no moment, you are excited.

JANE. What can you mean? It may be of no moment to you; you have sisters and don't care for a cousin; but I had nobody and now have three relations—or two if you don't want to be counted. I will tell Diana and Mary tomorrow. With five thousand pounds each they should do very well.

ST. JOHN. You are confused. I have been too abrupt—

JANE. And what effect would five thousand pounds have on you? Would it induce you to stay in England, and settle like an ordinary mortal?

ST. JOHN. Miss Eyre—

JANE. Twenty thousand pounds, divided equally between us four, will give us five thousand pounds each! I tell you it would oppress me to have twenty thousand pounds—which, moreover, could never be mine in justice.

ST. JOHN. Your future husband would not agree.

JANE. Nonsense. I shall never marry. (*Beat.*) I never had a home. I never had brothers and sisters; I must and will have them now. (*She holds out her hand.*) Say you will be my brother, St. John.

(As he takes her hand, light, music transition. Enter DIANA and MARY, giddy with happiness.)

MARY. (*Embracing her:*) Oh, Jane. My dear sister.

DIANA. And the house—Jane, you have spent far too much money fixing it up.

MARY. Carpet, draperies—new furniture! Really, there was no need—

DIANA. And the piano!

MARY. A piano! Shocking! I wonder you have any inheritance left. You have gone to too much trouble.

JANE. Indeed I have not.

DIANA. And what do you think, St. John?

ST. JOHN. I trust that when the first flush of vivacity is over, she will look a little higher than domestic endearments and household joys.

MARY. *(Laughing:)* Shame on you.

JANE. I think you are almost wicked to talk so! I am disposed to be content as a queen, and you try to stir me up to restlessness.

ST. JOHN. So that you will turn to profit the talents which God has committed to your keeping. You should not cling so tenaciously to ties of the flesh, Jane. Save your constancy and ardor for an adequate cause.

JANE. I feel I have adequate cause to be happy—and I will be happy.

ST. JOHN. Indeed, I hope you shall. Now, I must be at my books. Goodnight.

(He kisses both his sisters.)

DIANA. St. John, Jane is your sister, too, but you don't treat her as such. You should give her a kiss as well.

(He kisses JANE, gravely. Then exits.)

JANE. He does not like our revels.

MARY. It is not in his character, Jane.

JANE. His plans have not changed?

DIANA. Oh, Jane. There is nothing you or I could do to turn St. John from his purpose. Indeed, he cannot understand why we would not wish to make that sacrifice as well.

(Transition, exit DIANA and MARY. Light on ST. JOHN, though he is not in scene with JANE, who stands with HELEN, also in isolated light.)

ST. JOHN. Jane.

JANE. Yes, St. John.

ST. JOHN. There is sickness in the village. Come with me on my visit.

JANE. It is a bitter night—

ST. JOHN. You can bear a mountain blast or a few flakes of snow as well as any of us.

JANE. And so I go.

ST. JOHN. Jane, I want you to give up German and learn Hindustani.

JANE. You are not in earnest?"

ST. JOHN. It will help me in my own studies to have a pupil.

JANE. And so I learn.

ST. JOHN. Jane, what are you doing, sitting there by the fire?

JANE. Diana says I do not look well and that I should—

ST. JOHN. Nonsense. What you want is employment. A purpose, some meaningful labor.

JANE. And so I work. I do not think of resisting him. I cannot resist him.

(Light transition. ST. JOHN and JANE are in the present.)

ST. JOHN. Jane, I wish to speak with you for a moment. You know I sail to India on the twentieth of June.

JANE. God will protect you; you have undertaken his work.

ST. JOHN. Yes, there is my glory and joy. I am the servant of an infallible Master. It seems strange to me that all round me do not burn to enlist under that same banner.

JANE. They are few in number and difficult to discover.

ST. JOHN. You say truly, but when found, is it not right to stir them up? To show them what their gifts are, and why they were given? To offer them, direct from God, a place in the ranks of His chosen?

JANE. If they are right for the task, will not their own hearts say so?

ST. JOHN. And what does your heart say?

JANE. What? (*Beat.*) My heart is mute.

ST. JOHN. Then I must speak for it. Jane, come with me to India, come as my fellow laborer and wife.

JANE. Oh, St. John—

ST. JOHN. I have watched you ever since we first met. I have proved you in that time by many tests. In the village school I found you could perform well labor uncongenial to your inclinations. When you learned of your inheritance, I saw money had no power over you. In the unflagging energy and unshaken temper with which you have done all I asked, I see in you a soul that revels in the flame of sacrifice. Jane, you are faithful, constant and courageous—very gentle, very heroic—

JANE. I am not fit.

ST. JOHN. Who that was ever truly called believed himself worthy of the summons? Don't mistrust yourself. I trust you unreservedly.

JANE. I do not have your powers. It is folly for the weak to march with the strong.

ST. JOHN. Your assistance will be to me invaluable. You will be my true companion, my helpmate. (*Building in passion:.*) Jane, God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife—it is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you, you are formed for labor, not for love. I claim you, not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service. (*Beat.*)

JANE. I know I must seek another interest in life to replace the one I have lost. There is nothing so absurd, so weak, as to drag on from day to day, as if I were waiting for some impossible change in circumstances, but—St. John, I am ready to go to India. If I can go free.

ST. JOHN. Your answer is not clear.

JANE. I will not marry you.

ST. JOHN. Impossible. Either our union must be consecrated by marriage, or it cannot exist.

JANE. I regard you as a brother, you regard me as a sister. So let us continue.

ST. JOHN. I want a wife. A helpmate I can influence efficiently in life, and retain absolutely till death.

JANE. Then seek one elsewhere than me, St. John. Seek one fitted to your purpose.

ST. JOHN. Fitted to God's purpose, you mean. Give your heart to God, Jane, He demands it of you.

JANE. Oh! I will give my heart to God. You do not want it. I repeat I freely consent to go with you as your fellow missionary—but not as your wife.

ST. JOHN. How can I take with me to India a young woman, unless she be married to me? How can we be forever together—sometimes in solitude—and be unwed? You have a man's vigorous brain, but a woman's heart. It would not do. And undoubtedly enough of love would follow upon marriage to render the union right even in your eyes.

JANE. I scorn your idea of love! And I scorn you when you offer it!

(ST. JOHN turns to exit.)

ST. JOHN. It is not me you deny, Jane, but God.

(Music, light transition. Separate light on JANE.)

JANE. I can do what he wants. I am forced to see it. If I go to India, I will make the sacrifice absolutely. I can work as hard as he can, with as little grudging. I can work to the death—

HELEN. God waits only for death to crown us with a full reward.

JANE. He will never love me, but he shall approve of me. In leaving England, I leave nothing. Mr. Rochester is not here, and if he were—what can that ever be to me?

HELEN. There will come a time when you throw off these mortal passions—

JANE. My business is to live without him now.

HELEN. Do not despair—life is soon over and death is so certain an entrance to happiness.

JANE. Is not the occupation St. John offers me truly the most glorious God can assign?

(Light on ST. JOHN, ringed with followers. It is as if he is at the pulpit.)

ST. JOHN. He that overcometh shall inherit all things. I will be his God and he shall be my son—

JANE. I watch him standing there—

ST. JOHN. I am the resurrection and the life—

JANE. And I fancy myself his wife—

ST. JOHN. I will lift you up into the city of the Lord, which is lit by neither sun nor moon—

JANE. All was changing in a sudden sweep!

ST. JOHN. For in that place, the glory of God shines forever—

JANE. The dim room was filled with visions!

HELEN. I live in calm, looking to the end.

JANE. *(To ST. JOHN:)* Were I but convinced that it is God's will I should marry you, I could vow to marry you here and now—come afterwards what would!

ST. JOHN. My prayers are answered!

(We hear ROCHESTER's voice.)

ROCHESTER. *(Voiceover:)* Jane!

JANE. Oh, my God.

ROCHESTER. *(Voiceover:)* Jane, Jane,

ST. JOHN. What! What do you see?

JANE. Can you not hear it?

ST. JOHN. There is nothing there!

HELEN. You think too much of the love of human beings, Jane!

JANE. *(To HELEN:)* No! No!

ROCHESTER. *(Voiceover:)* Jane, Jane, Jane.

HELEN. Jane.

JANE. *(To the voice:)* I am coming, Mr. Rochester! Wait for me! Oh, God—where are you!

(JANE breaks free from HELEN, music crescendo and out, as HELEN stands, left behind. We will not see her again.)

(Small spotlight on JANE, which grows more general.)

JANE. Hear an illustration. A lover finds his mistress asleep. Wishing to catch a glimpse of her fair face without waking her, he steals softly over the grass, careful to make no sound. He bends over her, bends lower—now his eyes anticipate the vision of beauty. But look! He starts! He takes her in his arms, calls aloud a name—gazes at her wildly. He thought his love slept sweetly; he finds that she is stone dead. I had expected to see Thornfield Hall.

(Here portions of the stage disintegrate, perhaps curtains and beams crash down. It is the ruin of Thornfield.)

JANE. I found instead a blackened ruin. The grounds were trodden and waste. The portal was void. The front was, as I had once seen it in a dream, a shell-like wall. No roof. No battlements. No chimneys. All had crashed in.

(Enter PORTER.)

JANE. Who is there?

PORTER. I'm sorry, ma'am. I just came to look about the place. I'm sorry.

JANE. Forgive me. I just—I did not expect to see anyone. Who are you?

PORTER. I just came to look about the place. I was the late Mr. Rochester's porter.

JANE. The late! Is he dead!

PORTER. I mean the present gentleman—Mr. Edward's—father.

JANE. But what happened here?

PORTER. There was a terrible fire. Broke out in the middle of the night. It was a horrible thing. I saw it myself.

JANE. But how—

PORTER. There was a lady, ma'am, a lunatic, kept in the house. Cunning as a witch, she was—and that night she set fire to Thornfield. Climbed up to the roof, she did...I'll never forget the sight. A tall woman, with her hair streaming out against the flames. Mr. Rochester went after her. I heard him call her name, then she yelled and gave a spring and the next minute she lay smashed on the pavement.

JANE. Good God.

PORTER. Yes. And poor Mr. Edward.

JANE. But you said he was alive!

PORTER. It was all his own courage in a way, ma'am. He wouldn't leave the house 'til every one else was out before him. As he finally came down the staircase, there was a great crash. Everything fell. He was taken out from under the ruins, alive, but sadly hurt:...one eye was knocked out, miss, and one hand so crushed that the surgeon had to amputate it directly. He is now helpless, indeed. Blind and a cripple.

JANE. Where is he? Where does he live?

PORTER. At Ferndean, a manor-house 'bout thirty miles off. Almost deserted. Won't have anyone else but Old John and Mary to attend him.

JANE. You must show me the way—and if the post-boys can drive me to Ferndean before dark this day, I'll pay you all handsomely.

(Music, light transition. Lights up on ROCHESTER, seated. Enter JANE, with glass.)

ROCHESTER. Give me the water, Mary. This is you, Mary is it not?

JANE. Mary is in the kitchen.

ROCHESTER. Who is that? Answer me!

JANE. Will you have a little more water, sir? I spilt half of what was in the glass.

ROCHESTER. Good God—what delusion has come over me?

JANE. No delusion, sir. I am come back.

ROCHESTER. And is it only a voice? Oh! I *cannot* see, but I must feel, or my heart will stop— (*He takes her hand.*) Her fingers! Her small, slight fingers—if so, there must be more of her. This is her shape—her size—

JANE. And this is her voice. God bless you, sir! I am glad to be so near you again.

ROCHESTER. Jane Eyre. It is a dream; such dreams as I have had at night when I kissed her (*He kisses her.*) as thus—and felt that she loved me and would never leave. You will fly, too—but kiss me before you go. Embrace me, Jane.

JANE. (*Kissing him.*) There, sir. And there. You see, I am no dream.

ROCHESTER. You are altogether a human being? You are certain of that?

JANE. I conscientiously believe so, Mr. Rochester. In fact, I am an independent woman now.

ROCHESTER. Independent? What do you mean?

JANE. My uncle in Jamaica is dead, and he left me five thousand pounds.

ROCHESTER. Ah! This is real. I should never dream that. What, Janet! You are rich?

JANE. Quite rich, sir. If you won't let me live with you, I can build a house of my own...I will be your neighbor, your nurse—I will read to you, walk with you, wait on you, be eyes and hands to you.

ROCHESTER. But you cannot always be my nurse, Janet: you are young. You must marry one day.

JANE. I don't care about being married.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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