

JANE EYRE

Screenplay by

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Adapted from the novel by
Charlotte Bronte

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1

EXT. A MIDSUMMER DAWN. THORNFIELD - THE GROUNDS.

1 *

First light. Jane Eyre is running across a meadow, flushed and breathless; the hem of her plain, black dress soaked with dew. She carries a shawl and has a small bag of belongings over her shoulder.

She trips, falls to her knees; looks back. Expressive eyes, open features. She is desperate. We see the house she is running from; a Jacobean battlemented mansion.

She can't tear her eyes away. But her need to escape is so great that she crawls forward until she is able to raise herself to her feet.

She reaches a stile, lifts herself on to it, lands on the road - and runs.

2

I/E. DAY. A ROADSIDE/COACH.

2 *

The sun is higher in the sky. Jane exhausted, now running down a main road. A coach approaches. She flags it down.

Jane, breathless, harassed, empties her purse into the GUARD'S hand. A teenage boy. He looks at her with impertinent suspicion. A nod indicates she can get in.

Jane sinks into a dark corner. Her fellow passengers look at her, disapproving. Straight-backed Derbyshire gentlefolk, among them a curious LITTLE GIRL. Jane is hot, dishevelled. She undertakes a tremendous effort not to betray her emotional state. She doesn't sob, she doesn't howl - although her breathing threatens to. Unable to bear the day, she closes her eyes.

3

EXT. EVENING. WHITCROSS.

3 *

Sunset. A whitewashed, stone pillar set up where four roads meet on a barren moor. The guard opens the door. With a curt nod he indicates that Jane must get out.

She looks around, dismayed. In each direction there is open moorland for as far as the eye can see. The driver sets off at a good pace. Jane puts her hand to her side for her bag of belongings. It is not there.

She runs as fast as she can after the coach. It is receding towards the horizon. She comes to a halt, objectless, lost, alone. She pulls her knitted shawl around her. She leaves the road and sets off across the moor, into the gathering dark.

4 EXT. NIGHT. THE MOOR.

4 *

Jane is on her knees by a strange overhanging rock. The night sky is awesome; the universe is all around her. She is trying to calm herself with a prayer.

5 EXT. DAY. THE MOOR.

5 *

Jane lies on a great rock, soaking up the heat of the sun, numb with pain. She watches a lizard crawl over the rock, mesmerised.

6 EXT. TWILIGHT. THE MOOR.

6 *

Jane squats in the heather and eats bilberries as the light fades. She hungrily licks the juice from her hand.

7 EXT. DAWN. THE MOOR.

7 *

Jane is asleep in the heather, her shawl wrapped around her. A red-haired child in a white nightgown lies by her side, watching her. It is Helen Burns.

Helen reaches out. She touches Jane's hand. Jane wakes. She sits up. She is alone. The sky is overcast. The first big drops of rain land on the stones. Jane makes no movement.

8 DELETED.

8 *

9 EXT. TWILIGHT. A FARM.

9 *

It is raining hard. Jane sees a small girl come out of the farm with some leftovers. She drops them into a pigpen.

CUT TO:

Jane leaning into the pigpen. She picks a stiffened mould of porridge out of the mud. She lets the rain wash it. She eats it ravenously.

10 EXT. DAY. THE EDGE OF A MOOR.

10 *

It has stopped raining. Jane is huddled under a wall. She is shaking, shuddering. The life has gone out of her eyes. Jane suddenly turns, as if unable to bear her thoughts. She staggers away.

CUT TO:

Jane looks over the moor. It rises away above her up to the horizon. The clouds are red and gold.

She sees the small red-haired girl in a white nightgown walking barefoot on the moors ahead of her. The girl turns, looks back at Jane. Jane follows.

11 DELETED.

11 *

12 EXT. EVENING. THE MOOR.

12 *

Dark clouds are banking up; the rain starts again. Jane is struggling through a marsh. She falls. Her hand disappears into mud; her face pressed against the earth. She doesn't move. She has reached the point of despair.

The girl's bare feet walk close by, as if waiting for her. Jane looks up. Where the child should be, she sees a light shining across the moor. Jane starts crawling.

13 EXT. NIGHT. THE MOOR/MOOR HOUSE.

13 *

Jane is toiling through the lashing rain towards the light. It has become a window. A brief flash of lightning shows her a low stone cottage. Helen Burns is sitting on the gate.

Jane knocks at the door. Hannah, an old servant answers. She is suspicious; Jane looks like a wretch. She cannot find her voice.

HANNAH

I can't take in vagrants. You can move off. And if there are others with you tell them we are not alone. We have a gentleman here, and dogs.

JANE

But -

The door slams shut. Jane lets out a hopeless wail. She turns away, her hope gone, towards the darkness.

JANE (CONT'D)

God help me. I will die.

As she collapses, she finds herself supported by a strong pair of black-clad arms.

ST JOHN

All of God's creatures must die. But not on my doorstep.

Jane is lifted up. She finds herself looking into the face of St John Rivers. He lifts her over the threshold into the warmth of Moor House.

14

INT. NIGHT. MOOR HOUSE - THE KITCHEN.

14 *

A fire is roaring in the stove. Hannah is bent over it.

HANNAH

We've had a beggar woman come, Mr
Rivers. I sent her - For shame...

Hannah falls silent as she sees Jane.

ST JOHN

You did your duty in excluding her.
Let me do mine in admitting her.

He sets Jane down before the hearth. She can barely stand.
Diana and Mary enter.

DIANA

St John?

ST JOHN

I found her at the door.

MARY

She's white as death.

HANNAH

(guiltily)
I thought her one of the gypsies
from the cross.

Jane can hold herself up no longer. Diana and St John help
her into a chair. The rain hammers on the windows.

DIANA

Hannah, some of that hot milk.

MARY

St John, we would have stumbled upon
her corpse in the morning. And she
would have haunted us for turning
her away -

ST JOHN

She's no vagrant; I'm sure of it.

HANNAH

There's milk for you.

Jane tries to mouth her thanks. She sips the milk. Diana
kneels at her side.

ST JOHN

Ask her her name.

JANE

I - I am J -

Jane cannot speak. She's incapable of uttering her own name. She hears John Reed's voice calling from far away.

JOHN REED (O.S.)
Jane Eyre!

ST JOHN
Tell us how we may help you.

DIANA
Your name?...

Jane is deeply troubled. She is losing consciousness. She sees a frightened girl of ten holding a book, running from the cosy kitchen, down the dark corridor into the heart of the house. Jane turns her head to follow her.

JOHN REED (O.S.)
Jane Eyre! Where are you?

Jane looks up at St John Rivers, imploring.

JANE
Must hide...

She passes out.

15 INT. DAY. GATESHEAD HOUSE.

15 *

The small girl - Jane, aged ten - races down a long, dark corridor, clutching the precious book. Heavy footsteps pound closely behind her.

JOHN REED (O.S.)
Where are you, rat?

Jane races on. She enters the gloomy, cold library and springs behind a curtain, drawing it shut. John Reed enters; fourteen years old. He is holding a sword.

JOHN REED (CONT'D)
I know you're here.

Jane watches him pass by her. He practises a lunge.

JOHN REED (CONT'D)
If you crawl out and say 'Forgive
me, Master Reed,' I might consider
it.

We follow him as he enters a large adjoining room in which a fire blazes. We briefly see Mrs Reed and her two daughters, Georgiana and Eliza; girls slightly older than Jane. They are playing 'I love my love'.

John Reed moves to another room. Behind the curtain, Jane breathes a sigh of relief in her private sanctuary.

Jane opens the book. It is full of beautifully drawn birds. She runs her fingers over the lines of the drawing.

DIANA (V.O)
St John, we must get her warm.

ST JOHN (V.O.)
Let us take her upstairs.

MARY (V.O.)
Will she die?

A rook flies up, close to the window, startling Jane. She utters her shock - knowing that the noise has revealed her.

The curtain is pulled back. John Reed stands in front of her. Jane shrinks back, using the book for protection.

JOHN REED
Who gave you permission to read my book?

JANE
It belongs to my Uncle Reed.

JOHN REED
(Grabbing the book)
It belongs to me, rat.

He senses her defiance and belts her with the book. Jane hits her head on the window clasp, drawing blood.

JOHN REED (CONT'D)
That's for the look you had on your face.

Something in Jane snaps. She throws herself upon him, the rage in her released. She is barely coherent.

JANE
Wicked and cruel - you are a slaver -
a murderer - I hate you John Reed. I
hate you -

John is flabbergasted. Like all bullies, he is terrified.

JOHN
Mamma! Mamma!

Jane bites him, literally pulls on the skin of his cheek with her teeth. She virtually draws blood. He screams. Others arrive on the scene.

MISS ABBOT
For shame! She bites!

We see Mrs Reed's shocked face - her daughters at her side. She's a woman not yet forty in a bright, elaborate dress - once a great beauty and still proud of it.

Her feminine attire belies her strength. She pulls Jane off John by her hair and holds her.

MRS REED

You wretched imp, you ingrate, you fury.

(To Bessie and Miss Abbot)

Take her to the red room and lock her there.

We see a look of shock in Bessie's eyes. Jane resists with all her strength.

16

INT. DUSK. GATESHEAD - CORRIDOR / THE RED ROOM.

16 *

Jane is carried struggling down the corridor by Miss Abbot and Bessie - one at each side of her. Her shouts of resistance shatter the quiet.

They open the door of a large cold room, the sudden drop in temperature making their breath vapourise. Jane resists even more furiously when she realises where she is.

JANE

No! NO!

MISS ABBOT

If you don't sit still you must be tied down!

The fight goes out of Jane. She sits, defeated. Bessie, young and bonny, quickly wipes her bleeding forehead. She has some compassion. Miss Abbot has none.

BESSIE

What we do is for your own good. If you are passionate and rude like this, your Aunt Reed will send you away.

MISS ABBOT

Pray for forgiveness Miss Eyre or something bad will come down that chimney and fetch you away.

The door slams. They are gone. Jane slowly grips the edge of the stool. The room is chill, silent. Red walls and curtains, murky in the fading light.

In front of Jane, a stone fireplace gapes like a mouth. Beside it, a full length looking-glass in which her pale reflection stares out. Jane looks away. Behind her, a bed supported on pillars of mahogany, hung with red. The piled up pillows and mattresses glare in cold white. Jane's breathing is the only sound in the room.

A sudden gust sends rain pelting against the windows like fingernails.

A distant moan of wind seems to breathe out of the black hearth. Jane reverts her nervous gaze to the pitted mirror. Her eyes lock on the small figure trapped there; her white, bleeding face; eyes glittering with fear.

It is a phantom. The eyes are black, the skin a deathly grey. A drop of blood falls from her own forehead and on to the floor.

Jane can't bear the sight of herself. She looks away. But her image keeps still. She locks her eyes on it once again, her breathing choked with terror. We hear blood rushing through her ears. It sounds like the beating of great wings.

Jane opens her mouth to scream but the figure in the mirror does not. It stares out at her pleading for help with its eyes - as if it is trapped in some hellish place. Jane sees shadows surround her reflection. She feels their presence in the room.

At last Jane tears herself away. The scream, held in so long, finally rips from her throat. She pulls at the door, screaming to be released.

She is hysterical with terror. At last the door opens. Bessie is there. Jane flies into her arms.

BESSIE

Miss Jane what is it?

JANE

Bessie!

BESSIE

What happened? What did you see?

Jane cannot articulate her terror. We see Bessie's own fear as she glances into the dark room. Mrs Reed is storming towards them, furious.

MRS REED

Bessie, I gave orders that she was to be left in the red room.

BESSIE

But she screamed so loud ma'am.

MRS REED

It is play-acting. Let her go!

Mrs Reed prises Jane away from Bessie as she speaks.

MRS REED (CONT'D)

Loose Bessie's hands, child. You'll stay here until you are perfectly submissive.

JANE

Please - I cannot bear it -

MRS REED

Silence. This violence is repulsive.

JANE

Have mercy, Aunt Reed -

MRS REED

Get back!

JANE

Have Mercy, Please, Please -

Mrs Reed throws her back into the room, slams the door and turns the key. We hear Jane's unspeakable howls of terror, her anguished bangs upon the door.

Bessie is looking at Mrs Reed aghast. Mrs Reed withers her with a frozen glare.

17 INT. DUSK. GATESHEAD - THE RED ROOM.

17 *

We see Jane banging the door in her panic and distress, hysterically glancing at the looking glass. There is no reflection in it at all. The terrified child has been fetched away.

There's a fall of soot in the chimney, a cloud of black from the gaping mouth. Something is coming for her. Jane hurls herself against the door, hitting her head. She falls back. Her arms and legs move beyond her control. She is having a fit. When it is over, we see Jane unconscious. She is lying in a pool of ghostly light.

18 DELETED.

18 *

19 INT. DAY. GATESHEAD - THE MORNING ROOM.

19 *

A bright morning. A clergyman dressed in black is staring down at Jane. Brockelhurst, pious hypocrite, ambassador of self-denial, epitome of grim.

BROCKLEHURST

Do you know, Jane Eyre, where the wicked go after death?

JANE

They go to hell.

BROCKLEHURST

And what is hell?

JANE

A pit full of fire.

BROCKLEHURST

Should you like to fall into that
pit and burn there forever?

JANE

No sir.

BROCKLEHURST

What must you do to avoid it?

JANE

I must keep in good health and
not die.

Mrs Reed is by the fireside in an ultra-feminine dress. She puts down her tea cup in irritation.

BROCKLEHURST

What's her parentage?

MRS REED

She's an orphan. Her mother was my husband's sister. On his deathbed he exhorted me to care for her. I have always treated her as one of my own...

Jane silently revolts against this lie.

MRS REED (CONT'D)

If you accept her at Lowood school Mr Brocklehurst, keep a strict eye on her. She has a heart of spite and I'm sorry to tell you that her worst fault is that of deceit. Jane Eyre is a liar.

Jane's eyes flash with outrage.

BROCKLEHURST

You can rest assured dear lady that we mortify our girls in the sentiments of vanity and pride. They are taught to be plain and modest.

A passion of resentment is forming in Jane.

BROCKLEHURST (CONT'D)

We shall root out the wickedness in this small, ungrateful plant.

Mrs Reed smiles sweetly.

MRS REED

And as for its vacations, it must spend them all at Lowood.

Mrs Reed rings for a servant.

BROCKLEHURST

Child of wrath, I shall leave you
with this:

He thrusts a pamphlet into Jane's hand.

BROCKLEHURST (CONT'D)

Read it with prayer, especially the
sudden death of the girl addicted to
falsehood. Jane Eyre, be ready to
meet your judge.

A manservant enters with Brockelhurst's hat and coat.
Brockelhurst bows to Mrs Reed and takes his leave. The
manservant closes the door.

MRS REED

Go out of the room. Return to the
nursery.

JANE

You said I was a liar. I am not a
liar. If I were I should say that I
loved you and I don't. I dislike you
worst of anybody in the world except
your son, John Reed.

She thrust the leaflet at Mrs Reed.

JANE (CONT'D)

It is he who should read this, for
he is the liar; not I.

MRS REED

How dare you!

JANE

I'll never call you Aunt again as
long as I live and if anyone asks how
I liked you, I'll say you treated me
with miserable cruelty.

MRS REED

I have cared for you since infancy -

JANE

I'll remember how you thrust me back
into the Red Room to my dying day!
Even when you knew it was haunted
and I begged to be let out. People
think you are good but you're bad
and hard-hearted. I'll let everyone
know what you have done!

MRS REED

Children must be corrected for their
faults.

JANE
Deceit is not my fault!

MRS REED
But you are passionate.

JANE
You think I can do with out one bit of love or kindness - but I cannot live so. My Uncle Reed is in heaven and can see all that you do and think; so can my mother and father. They know how you hate me and wish me dead. They can see. They see everything you do and they will judge you, Mrs Reed.

Mrs Reed has turned quite pale. Jane blazes.

20 INT. NIGHT. GATESHEAD - THE NURSERY.

20 *

Jane is lying awake, holding an old rag doll. A light falls over her face as Mrs Reed enters the room in night attire. She carries a candle.

Mrs Reed sits on the bed. Jane stiffens.

Mrs Reed lies down. Jane doesn't move, frozen, as Mrs Reed invades her space.

MRS REED
Jane... I have always been your friend.

*
*

Mrs Reed seems to want to touch the child in some gesture of affection. She can not.

MRS REED (CONT'D)
You must speak kindly of me.

*

Jane tenses. Mrs Reed silently withdraws. The antipathy between them is sealed.

21 EXT. DAWN. GATESHEAD - THE GATE HOUSE.

21 *

Jane is clinging to Bessie while her belongings are loaded onto a public coach, its top laden with passengers.

BESSIE
If only you could make yourself more appealing. Perhaps if you tried smiling from time to time, people would find you more pleasant. You're such a queer, solitary little thing.

JANE
Don't scold me Bessie.

BESSIE

Why would I? I'm fonder of you than
of anyone.

Jane embraces Bessie with even greater force. Bessie
returns the embrace, surprised, moved.

BESSIE (CONT'D)

Come now...

Bessie has to prise Jane away. Jane will not let go.

CUT TO:

As the coach picks up speed, Jane peers out of the window
at Bessie. Gateshead is behind her.

22 DELETED. 22 *

23 EXT. DAY. A ROAD THROUGH FARMLAND. 23 *

From Jane's P.O.V. we see fields passing in gentler
countryside. Jane is watching workers plough and plant. A
little girl her own age works alongside them.

23A EXT. DAY. A HUMPBACKED BRIDGE. 23A *

The coach crosses a humpbacked bridge over a canal. A dog
on the top of a narrow boat barks at her. A woman, smoking
a pipe, hushes it. Jane is transfixed.

24 DELETED. 24 *

25 INT/EXT. NIGHT. LOWOOD - THE GATES. 25 *

Jane, barely awake, is lifted out of a coach and into a
thick fog. A stone inscription looms at her: 'Lowood
Institution'. Great gates close behind her.

A woman with a bitter look approaches; Miss Scatcherd.

MISS SCATCHERD

What's your name, child?

25A INT. NIGHT. LOWOOD - DORMITORY. 25A *

Jane is standing in the dormitory of the school in her
travelling clothes. A long room in which each bed sleeps
two girls. By the inadequate, smoky rushlight (for candles
are too expensive) Jane can see that it is full of pale,
brown-clad girls. Their clothes are patched and worn. They
huddle round the fire. They look cold, submissive and half-
starved. None of them looks friendly. This is a dumping
ground for the unwanted. The poverty appalls her.

The girls stare at Jane in her warm clothes and fine boots, as if she comes from a different world.

CUT TO:

Miss Scatcherd helps Jane off with her clothes. They drop to her feet; her old life being discarded.

25B INT. NIGHT. LOWOOD - THE DORMITORY.

25B *

A bitter wind, which howls around the roof. Jane is in a bed which is already occupied by a much larger girl. The other girl makes no attempt to give her room. She pulls the blanket away from Jane. Jane is shivering from shock as well as cold. She is beyond tears.

ST JOHN (V.O.)

What is your name?

26 INT. DAY. MOOR HOUSE - A BEDROOM.

26 *

Jane is lying back against clean white pillows.

JANE

My name is Jane Elliott...

Diana and Mary are full of kindness but St John's face is merely curious.

ST JOHN

Who can we send for to help you?

JANE

No one.

ST JOHN

Do you mean to say that you are absolutely without home and without friends?

JANE

Yes sir.

ST JOHN

How did you come to be roaming the moors, Miss Elliott?

JANE

I will tell you all I can. I was brought up a dependent in a fine house.

ST JOHN

Where?

DIANA

Don't interrogate her, St John.

JANE

Then I spent eight years at school,
the last two as a teacher. I left to
be a private governess -

MARY

Diana, didn't I say she was a
governess?

DIANA

We did wonder. We mean no offence
but you have a certain look. Mary
and I are governesses too.

JANE

Are you?

St John has no patience with the change of subject.

ST JOHN

Why did you leave your place of
employment?

Jane sinks back in the pillows. St John is exasperated.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)

Miss Elliott -

The name sounds strange to Jane.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)

Why did you start?

JANE

Because that is not my name.

DIANA

You haven't given us your real name?

Jane shakes her head.

ST JOHN

Why not?

JANE

I mustn't ever be found.

Diana and Mary glance at each other, fascinated.

Jane is dressing herself. She stops, weakly holding the back of a chair for support, looking out of the window at the sun setting over the hills.

ST JOHN (V.O.)

Merciful Jesus, enlighten thou me
with the brightness of thine inward
light and take away all darkness
from the habitation of my heart...

28 DELETED.

28 *

29 INT. EVENING. MOOR HOUSE - THE PARLOUR

29 *

St John is praying ardently over Jane, Diana and Mary. They
kneel at his feet.

ST JOHN

Join me to thyself with an
inseparable band of love. For thou,
even thou alone, dost satisfy him
that loveth thee...

Jane finds herself staring at St John.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)

And without thee all things are vain
and empty. Amen.

St John opens his eyes. Jane immediately looks down.

JANE, MARY, DIANA

Amen.

30 INT. NIGHT. MOOR HOUSE. PARLOUR - 10 MINUTES LATER.

30 *

They are eating.

MARY

It's wonderful to see you up, Miss
Elliott. Last week we thought we'd
be escorting your remains to an
unmarked grave.

DIANA

She read 'The Bride of Lindorf' and
suddenly all is woebegone maidens
and dramatic deaths.

JANE

I'm sorry to have -

DIANA

Nonsense.

MARY

You're the most exhilarating thing
that's happened here since St John's
sermon on the Fall of Babylon.

Jane is amused. She turns her attention to St John.

JANE

I trust I'll not be eating long at
your expense, Mr Rivers.

*

ST JOHN

Then tell me where to place you.

JANE
Show me where to seek work; that's
all I ask.

MARY
You're not fit enough to work. Is
she, Di?

DIANA
Stay with us.

*

ST JOHN
You return to your posts at the end
of the month. What must Miss Elliott
do then?

(To Jane)
I'll endeavour to help you, if
that's what you wish.

JANE
With all my heart, sir.

DIANA
It's a shame her help comes in the
shape of a curmudgeonly old man.

ST JOHN
Who?

MARY
She means you, St John.
(To Jane)
The moorland damp has rusted all the
muscles of his smile.

St John manages not to smile.

ST JOHN
(ignoring her)
This school you were at, Miss
Elliott, this charitable institution;
what did it prepare you for?

CUT TO:

We see a bundle of sharp twigs come down on a girl's bare
neck, like a whip.

CUT TO:

Jane flinches at the memory.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)
Was it a thorough education?

JANE
Most thorough.

Once more, the twigs come down on the bare neck. We now see that the neck belongs to Helen Burns, the red-haired Northumbrian girl of thirteen who we saw at the beginning of the film. Jane, along with the rest of the school, is watching the punishment, aghast.

MISS SCATCHERD
Helen Burns.

Miss Scatcherd's bitter life is in her face and voice.

MISS SCATCHERD (CONT'D)
You're a slattern and a disgrace.

The punishment is continued; slow, stinging whacks with the birch twigs, three, four, five. Jane is appalled. But Helen doesn't cry; she seems like one in a trance.

The door bursts open and Miss Temple, a kind and intelligent woman, leads in Brocklehurst.

MISS TEMPLE
All rise.

The girls rise. Brocklehurst peruses the punishment. Miss Scatcherd looks ashamed.

BROCKLEHURST
I see you are mortifying this girl's flesh.

MISS SCATCHERD
She failed in her repetitions, sir.

BROCKLEHURST
It is your mission to render her contrite and self-denying. Continue.

Miss Scatcherd prepares to oblige. Helen's eye drops a tear; subtle, but visible to Jane. As the twigs are raised, Jane lets fall her slate. It breaks on the floor.

Brocklehurst's eyes land on her.

BROCKLEHURST (CONT'D)
The new girl. Step forward, Jane Eyre.

Jane steps forward. Helen's last stroke is forgotten.

BROCKLEHURST (CONT'D)
Bring forth that stool. Place the child upon it.

Jane is lifted on to the stool. She finds herself suddenly the tallest in the room, looking down even on Brocklehurst. He is in deadly earnest.

BROCKLEHURST (CONT'D)

It is my duty to warn you about this girl. Who would have thought that the evil one had already found a servant and an agent in her?

We see the look of frustration on Miss Temple's face.

BROCKLEHURST (CONT'D)

You must be on guard against her. For this girl... is a liar!

Jane burns with injustice. A terrible shame overcomes her.

BROCKLEHURST (CONT'D)

This is the pedestal of infamy - and you must remain upon it all day long. You'll have no food or drink, for you must learn how barren is the life of the sinner. Children, I exhort you to shun her, exclude her, shut her out from this day forth. Withhold the hand of friendship and deny your love to Jane Eyre, the liar.

32

INT. DAY. LOWOOD - THE HALL - LATER.

32

*

The sun is setting. The hall is empty but for the small figure of Jane, high on her stool, feeling her isolation like pain. She is holding back her tears with all the force of her being. Across the room is Helen, shoulders hunched, the skin on her neck blistering. A hollow cough racks her.

The two girls look at each other. Helen smiles weakly at Jane, trying to give the younger girl fortitude. This tiny act of kindness brings the tears welling up in Jane's eyes.

33

EXT. DAY. LOWOOD - THE GROUNDS.

33

*

The girls are outside in the freezing cold. Snow lies in patches. Their shoes are soaked and grey frieze cloaks are completely inadequate. A few girls huddle by the building, trying to stay out of the biting wind. Jane stands alone for no one will speak to her. Icy water seeps on her feet.

She sees Helen seated, her cloak wrapped tightly around her, her head deep in a book. She approaches.

JANE

What are you reading?

Helen looks up; thinks about how to sum up what she's read.

HELEN

It's about an Abyssinian prince...
in search of happiness.

*

JANE
Does he find it?

Helen coughs, low and raw.

HELEN
Don't know, yet.

Jane can't articulate what she wants to say. Helen returns to her book.

JANE
How do you bear being struck?

HELEN
Miss Scatcherd hits me to improve me.

JANE
If she hit me I'd get that birch and break it under her nose.

HELEN
She'd find another soon enough.
You can't beat cruelty with anger,
nor violence with hate. Life is too short to spend in nursing animosity.

JANE
And what of those who are cruel or unjust - like Mr Brocklehurst?

HELEN
We must endeavour to forgive them.

JANE
But he has no heart, his soul is made of iron and whalebone. He told the whole world I'm a liar and I'm not.

HELEN
The whole world? But eighty girls.
And half of them do not believe it.

JANE
I hate to be so solitary and despised. If others don't love me I would rather die than live.

Helen beckons Jane to sit next to her.

JANE (CONT'D)
I would rather have my arms broke or stand behind a kicking horse and let it dash my heart -

*
*
*

HELEN

But you are loved! There is an
invisible world all around you, a
kingdom of spirits commissioned to
guard you, Jane. They see your pain.
They know your innocence...

*

Jane is moved.

34 INT. DAY. LOWOOD SCHOOL - THE HALL.

34 *

The afternoon's lessons are in progress. The girls are divided into groups. Madame Pierrot is teaching French verbs. The younger girls repeat Etre in a motley chant.

Miss Scatcherd is overseeing the older girls doing arithmetic. She yawns with boredom, half asleep.

Jane is putting out new pieces of chalk. She and Helen are playing a game. Helen nods towards a particular teacher or student; Jane stands behind them and does a surreptitious impersonation. Helen is amused, despite herself.

We drift to the window. It transitions from winter snow to spring greenery.

34A DELETED.

34A *

34B DELETED.

34B *

35 INT. DAY. LOWOOD - THE DORMITORY. SPRING.

35 *

A group of unruly girls are jumping on the beds. All discipline has gone. A fight breaks out between two girls and no adult intervenes. Shouts and screams go unheeded. Jane watches. She moves away from the riot to the window. She clears a blur of condensation with a finger.

A pall of fog hangs over the grounds. A little line of graves is being dug. Small coffins await burial. A group of teachers led by Miss Temple, stand numb and blank-faced with grief. Miss Pierrot is crying. Brocklehurst affects sorrow, holding a menthol-soaked cloth over his nose.

The wild girls start singing a rhyme:

GIRLS

My daddy's in the teapot
My mammy's in the cup
They're both dead of the typhus
Now we all jump up.

Helen is separated from everyone else, in another section of Lowood that Jane can just see at the edge of the window's view, on a verandah wrapped in blankets. She looks very pale. Jane longs to be with her.

36 INT. NIGHT. LOWOOD - THE DORMITORY.

36 *

Jane is creeping down a corridor in her night dress. She peers in through the dormitory door. It has been turned into a sanitarium. Jane peers at the sick, feverish girls.

Miss Temple is tending to them.

37 INT. NIGHT. LOWOOD - MISS TEMPLE'S ROOM.

37 *

Jane opens the door. A small bed has been set up at the foot of Miss Temple's. In it lies Helen Burns. A candle is set on a table at her side.

JANE

Helen.

HELEN

Is it you, Jane?

Jane takes Helen's hand.

HELEN (CONT'D)

You're freezing. Your little feet are bare. Come into bed and cover yourself.

Jane climbs into bed next to Helen. For a moment they just hold each other.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I am happy, Jane. I'm going home.

JANE

Back to your father?

HELEN

My father has a new wife, a new family. He'll not miss me much.

JANE

Then where?

HELEN

To my next home, my last home, where all is light. I am going to God.

Jane is devastated.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Do not grieve... God is relieving me of great sufferings.

(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)

You are so passionate Jane, but I have no such qualities. I'd always be... continually at fault...

Jane cannot articulate her distress at Helen's words.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I could sleep now. Don't leave me. I like to have you near.

JANE

I will not leave you, Helen.

Helen kisses Jane.

JANE (CONT'D)

No one shall take me from you.

38 INT. DAY. LOWOOD - MISS TEMPLE'S ROOM.

38 *

Jane, still asleep, has her small arms around Helen, as if fiercely protecting her. Helen is dead, her eyes open staring at Jane. Miss Temple lifts Jane away. As she does so, Jane wakes.

MISS TEMPLE

Jane...

We see the shock of realisation begin to form on her face. The waking horror that Helen is gone.

MARY (V.O.)

Jane?

39 INT. DAY. MOOR HOUSE - THE PARLOUR.

39 *

Jane is staring out at the Autumn rain. She surreptitiously wipes her tears away and smiles up at Mary.

JANE

Have you something for me to do?

MARY

You're doing something already. May I see?

Jane hands her the book. She has sketched Helen; her tentative smile.

Mary turns the page; Bessie.

MARY (CONT'D)

These are wonderful...

The next page shows a sketch of St John Rivers. Mary gasps in delight. She takes the book straight to St John, who is diligently working at his desk.

MARY (CONT'D)

St John -

JANE

No, Mary, please -

MARY

See how skilled Jane is. Better than any drawing master.

St John looks at the sketch of himself. He is quite taken aback. He looks over at Jane, who is quite embarrassed.

ST JOHN

Is this how you perceive me, Miss Elliott?

Jane doesn't know how to reply. For a moment, St John seems to be weighing up whether to be insulted.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)

Well. How fierce I am.

40 DELETED.

40 *

41 EXT. DAY. MOOR HOUSE.

41 *

St John and Jane are seeing Diana and Mary on to a trap. Diana goes to hug Jane. Jane, unused to such affection, takes it gratefully.

Mary has burst into tears. She is clinging to St John. He finds it painful and it aggravates him.

DIANA

(confidentially)

We may not see him again for many years. Our brother looks quiet but he hides a fever of ambition. He will never make his way here; our poverty prevents him. And if he cannot be great in the eyes of men, he will sacrifice his all to God. He means to go to India and be a missionary.

Jane takes this in, looking at St John anew. St John helps Mary into the trap.

ST JOHN

Come, Mary. This passion will do no good.

DIANA

Our brother sets himself above all human love.

Diana looks at Jane.

DIANA (CONT'D)

I fear he doesn't care for himself at all.

Jane understands; Diana is asking her to look after him.

CUT TO:

The trap receding. St John watches it disappear.

JANE

Mr Rivers? I wondered if you had yet heard of any work that I could do...

ST JOHN

(still watching the coach)
I found you a situation some time ago but I've delayed telling you because the work is lowly and I fear you'll scorn it.

JANE

I shan't mind what I do.

St John starts walking.

ST JOHN

When I took over the parish two years ago it had no school. I opened one for boys; I now intend to open one for girls. The school mistress will have a cottage paid for by benefactors and she'll receive fifteen pounds a year. You can see how humble, how ignoble it is.

On the contrary, Jane is deeply gratified.

JANE

Mr Rivers, thank you. I accept.

ST JOHN

But you comprehend me? It's a village school - cottagers daughters. What will you do with all your fine accomplishments?

JANE

I'll save them until they're wanted.
They will keep.

St John watches as Jane walks on. He is impressed.

Jane is sweeping with a broom through her tiny cottage, from the whitewashed bedroom with its single bed, into the parlour with its tiny fireplace. St John is laying a fire.

She considers him as he works, intent on his task. He feels her gaze. Their eyes briefly meet.

Jane immediately opens the door and goes outside. St John watches her exit. There is an interest in his gaze, as if she is a mystery he must solve.

43 I/E. NIGHT. MORTON - JANE'S COTTAGE.

43 *

Jane tips out the dust and watches it fly on the wind. She stares up at the darkening night and the stark winter trees.

43A DELETED.

43A *

43B INT. NIGHT. MORTON - JANE'S COTTAGE.

43B *

Jane enters. St John is putting his coat on.

ST JOHN
You'll be quite alone here.

JANE
I'm not afraid of solitude.

St John's look is questioning her bravado.

JANE (CONT'D)
This is my first home - where I am
neither dependent on nor subordinate
to anyone. Thank you, Mr St John.

He notices her use of his Christian name.

ST JOHN
It is small and plain, as I told
you.

JANE
Then it'll suit me very well.

St John nods, almost - but not quite - able to return her smile. Jane watches him walk away. With him goes all companionship.

Jane turns around in the small space, alone.

44 INT. NIGHT. MORTON - JANE'S COTTAGE.

44 *

Jane splashes cold water on her face.

CUT TO:

Jane is in bed, huddled against the cold. She blows out her candle. The whole cottage is plunged into darkness.

As her eyes adjust to the moonlight, the wind blows the branches, scratching at her windows. Her mind drifts...

45 EXT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE GROUNDS.

45 *

Winter trees all around. Jane is passenger on a cart, being driven over a bridge. A great house silhouetted on the horizon, the battlemented roof we have seen in scene one.

Jane looks at the driver, John, a black Caribbean man of fifty five, dressed against the cold in a cap and scarf. She peers at him, fascinated at his taciturn incongruity.

CUT TO:

The cart approaches the dark bulk of the house. A church bell starts tolling the hour. John slows to a halt.

JOHN
Thornfield.

Only two small windows are lit. Jane looks at them, full of misgivings. Holding the lantern, he helps her down and opens a large wooden door, the side entrance to the house.

46 INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

46 *

We are immersed in darkness, a small point of light appears, a candle, held by a black clad figure, Mrs Fairfax. She smiles at Jane.

MRS FAIRFAX
How do you do, my dear?

JANE
Are you Mrs Fairfax?

MRS FAIRFAX
Indeed I am.

46A INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - MRS FAIRFAX'S PARLOUR.

46A *

Mrs Fairfax is leading Jane in.

MRS FAIRFAX
What a tedious journey you must have had. John is quite the slowest driver in the county. Your poor hands must be numb; here.

Mrs Fairfax undoes the ribbon on Jane's bonnet. Jane is taken aback, unused to motherliness of any kind.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)
My goodness... How young you are.

JANE

I'm eighteen. I've been teaching at Lowood for two years.

MRS FAIRFAX

Of course you have... I was most impressed with your references. I'm sure we're very lucky to have you. Leah, would you ask Martha to make a little hot port and cut a sandwich or two.

Leah eyes Jane with great curiosity. She hurries away.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

Draw nearer the fire. John is taking your trunk up to your room.

She moves her abandoned knitting aside and gestures for Jane to sit.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

I've put you at the back of the house; I hope you don't mind. The rooms at the front have much finer furniture but they're so gloomy and solitary I think.

Jane can't help noticing that every surface is covered in lace, embroidery, or fine crochet. The whole room is an advertisement for Mrs Fairfax's skill at handicrafts - and testament to the hours she has spent alone.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

I'm so glad you are come. To be sure this is a grand old house but I must confess that in winter one can feel a little dreary and alone. Leah is a very nice girl and John and Martha good people too, but they are servants - and one cannot talk to them on terms of equality.

46B

INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE GREAT HALL.

46B

*

Mrs Fairfax leads Jane through the great hall, lit only by a candle. Jane can perceive grandeur looming out of the darkness; a richly carved Jacobean fireplace, heavy drapes, ancient tapestries, the head of a stag. Very gloomy, eerie. Her breath is vapourising in the cold.

JANE

Am I to have the pleasure of meeting Miss Fairfax tonight?

MRS FAIRFAX

Who?

JANE
Miss Fairfax - my pupil?

MRS FAIRFAX
You mean Miss Varens; Mr Rochester's ward. She is to be your pupil.

JANE
Who's Mr Rochester?

MRS FAIRFAX
Why, the owner of Thornfield.

JANE
I thought Thornfield Hall belonged to you.

MRS FAIRFAX
(bursting into laughter)
Oh bless you child, what an idea. To me? I am only the housekeeper.

JANE
Forgive me -

MRS FAIRFAX
There is a distant connection between Mr Rochester and I - his mother was a Fairfax - but I'd never presume on it. Heavens, me, owner of Thornfield?

Her laughter fills the darkness. A bashful smile is playing on Jane's lips. Mrs Fairfax is beginning to thaw her. They move on.

47

INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - STAIRCASE / CORRIDOR.

47 *

Mrs Fairfax turns up a wooden staircase. Leaded windows reflect the candlelight.

MRS FAIRFAX
We shall have a cheerful house this winter...

Light is thrown on portraits of long dead ancestors. Mrs Fairfax is as warm as the house is cold.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)
With Miss Varens here - and with you - we'll have quite a merry time of it.

48

INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - A GALLERY / JANE'S BEDROOM.

48

*

Dark heavy drapes, another striking portrait. A dark, voluptuous woman in an 18th Century gown, ruby lipped, one full breast exposed. Jane glances away, taken aback by the woman's bold expression and her nakedness.

MRS FAIRFAX

I'm sure that last winter - and what a severe one - if it didn't rain it snowed and if it didn't snow it blew - last winter I declare that not a soul came to the house from November to February.

Mrs Fairfax leads Jane through the wood-panelled darkness.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

I got quite melancholy night after night alone. When spring finally came I thought it a great relief that I hadn't gone distracted.

She bursts into peals of laughter.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

Here. I've had Martha lay a fire.

She opens the door to a small but delightful room. Jane looks in: a fire burning, a soft quilt, pale chintz curtains - and a bright lamp. She is utterly speechless.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

I hope you will be comfortable.

Jane smiles her thanks. Mrs Fairfax can see how affected she is - and how hard she is trying to button it down.

49

INT. NEXT MORNING. THORNFIELD - JANE'S BEDROOM.

49

*

Jane, hair loose, opens the curtains. Her fire has been lit. She draws her breath in at the sight of the grounds. Her rag doll is on her bed, shabby and worn as a miniature scarecrow.

Jane pins her hair into its close, neat style. She straightens her belongings on the dresser: a brush, a comb, a brooch. She looks at herself in the glass, wondering what she'll become.

50

INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GREAT HALL.

50

*

Jane enters a magnificent room; moulded ceilings, panelled walls, crimson couches and ottomans, Turkish carpets; a general blending of snow and fire. The room is cold, her breath makes vapour. Mrs Fairfax is dusting ornaments of ruby red Bohemian glass on the windowsill. Leah helps her.

JANE

I've never seen anything half as imposing. What order you keep.

This pleases Mrs Fairfax. Jane shivers. Mrs Fairfax notices how cold she is.

MRS FAIRFAX

Mr Rochester's visits are always unexpected. He doesn't like to arrive and find everything all swathed up, so I keep it in constant readiness. Now, come and meet Miss Varens. Did I mention she was French?

51 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE LIBRARY.

51 *

Adele Varens, an exquisitely dressed child of eight, is chatting animatedly to Jane and Mrs Fairfax. At her side is Sophie, her nurse - a desperately shy and lonely girl.

ADELE

(In French)

Sophie has been crying because no one understands. Nobody can speak to us except for Mr Rochester and he has gone away.

SOPHIE

(Shushing her)

Adele...

Jane looks more closely at Sophie; pretty, but desperately lonely and unhappy. She cannot meet Jane's eye.

MRS FAIRFAX

Would you ask her about her parents? Mr Rochester's neglected to tell me anything about her.

JANE

(In French)

Where did you live Adele, before you came to Thornfield?

ADELE

(In French)

With Maman - but she is gone to the Holy Virgin now.

JANE

Her mother has passed away.

ADELE

(In French)

Maman used to teach me to dance and say verses.

(MORE)

ADELE (CONT'D)

When gentlemen came to see her I used
sit on their knees and sing. May I
sing for you now?

JANE

(In French)

Well - that would be lovely.

(To Mrs Fairfax)

Adele is going to show us her
accomplishments.

Adele adopts a lovelorn pose. She sings an operetta song; a forsaken lady plotting vengeance on her lover. Her high voice warbles with pretended emotion. The effect is rather weird. Jane and Mrs Fairfax watch, open-mouthed.

MRS FAIRFAX

How very French...

52

INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - MRS FAIRFAX'S PARLOUR.

52

*

Jane has laid out a large atlas, it nearly covers the table. Adele kneeling on it, head leaning on her hands. She is tracing round the continents with her finger. She is trying to name countries in English, and humming a strange tune.

Mrs Fairfax is finishing a shawl, deep in a reverie.

MRS FAIRFAX

Sometimes, when I am sitting alone
it's seemed to me more than once
that my dear husband, who died years
since, has come in and sat down
beside me. I have even heard him
call me by my name, just as he used
to - Alice.

A dainty clock starts to chime. Mrs Fairfax is recalled to the present, embarrassed to have revealed herself. Jane is looking at her with compassion.

Mrs Fairfax shakes out the finished shawl and puts it round Jane's shoulders, departing before Jane can protest.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

Here. For you.

Jane is delighted at the kindness of the gift.

53

INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE LIBRARY.

53

*

Adele is playing with a doll's house; a model of Thornfield. Jane has made tiny labels in English that Adele is putting on the furniture. The dolls house is very old, as if children a century ago once played with it.

Jane is playing with one of the little figures; a maid. In her other hand, is a girl.

JANE

'Oh do not go,' begged her maid, 'For the gytrash roams these hills...'

ADELE

(In French)

What's that?

JANE

A spirit of the North that lies in wait for travellers. It tenants the carcasses of beasts; possesses horses, wolves, and great dogs. You know it only by its eyes, which burn as red as coals and if one should chance upon you -

ADELE

(in French)

What? What will it do?

Jane sees that she has scared Adele.

JANE

Nothing. A mere story.

Sophie enters with drinks and biscuits for Jane and Adele. Adele speaks confidentially to Jane.

ADELE

Sophie told me of a lady who wanders here at night. Sometimes you can hear her. She comes to suck your blood.

Jane blinks, taken aback. She looks disapprovingly at Sophie.

JANE

What nonsense.

Jane holds a candle, the shawl around her; the moaning sound of a gale outside. Her breath vapourises. She holds her candle up to the portrait of the voluptuous woman, curious both as a girl and as an artist. She brings the candle close, to see how the brushwork has achieved the effect of flesh. She hears a sound in the darkness behind her. 'Shhhh...' She is startled.

JANE

Who's there?

Jane's own huge shadow is the only thing that moves. Her candle seems to catch the vapour of another person's breath. Then she hears a whisper further away. She follows it through the darkness, alert with fear.

To her relief Jane sees Mrs Fairfax approach with a lamp.

JANE (CONT'D)
Who sleeps up here, Mrs Fairfax?

MRS FAIRFAX
No one. This part of the house is
quite empty, except for you and me.

Mrs Fairfax smiles at Jane's consternation. The smile doesn't quite reach her eyes.

55 EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD.

55 *

Snow has fallen, covering the building and the grounds. Thick, white, eerie. Adele is trying to catch snowflakes on her tongue. Jane calls her in.

*
*

56 DELETED.

56 *

57 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - A CORRIDOR.

57 *

Adele is running, shrieking, laughing. Jane is chasing her, half amused. Sophie watches as if she would love to join in. Adele slams a door shut. Jane opens it. An empty panelled room. She enters, puzzled.

JANE
Adele?

She goes back out into the corridor. Sophie has vanished.

JANE (CONT'D)
Adele?

Jane listens for a response. She is about to move on when over her head, comes a great thump. It startles her. She waits for more. Nothing. And then very faintly, the eerie tune Adele was humming. Jane hurries in pursuit.

At the end of the corridor a door lies slightly ajar. Jane pulls it open. A narrow staircase leading up. Jane climbs. She finds herself on a neglected corridor. She hears the strange tune. It puzzles Jane. The voice doesn't sound like Adele's.

JANE (CONT'D)
Adele? Come out!

Silence. Jane peers into one of the rooms. An ancient bed with mottled hangings, everything coated in thick dust.

A moth-eaten chair. A pitted mirror in which a figure moves. Jane startles. It is herself.

She walks on. Flies on the windowsills, evidence of mice. A low moan. Jane stops in her tracks.

There is a tapestry hanging over the door at the end. Jane approaches it. There are little moths visibly crawling on it. She moves it aside. Behind, is a door.

Jane puts out her hand to try it. At that moment the tapestryed door is pulled open. Grace Poole, a portly woman in her late thirties comes out with a basket of linen.

GRACE

Sorry Miss did I startle you?

Jane shakes her head. Grace looks domestic and mundane.

Jane backs away feeling foolish. She hears a triumphant giggle at the other end of the corridor. Adele is there, with Sophie - as if they have just arrived at the top of the stairs.

JANE

Adele, you imp!

Jane is annoyed with Sophie for this foolish game - and also annoyed with herself for being scared.

JANE (CONT'D)

(to Sophie in French)

Will you take her for her tea?

Sophie meekly takes Adele away.

58

EXT. DUSK. THORNFIELD - THE TOP GARDEN.

58 *

Jane is watching the sun set over the snow. She looks up at the cawing rooks - and down at the view; a darkening land of ice. Mrs Fairfax approaches her.

MRS FAIRFAX

Whatever brings you out here? I've been waiting to pour our tea.

JANE

I'm not in need of tea, thank you.

Mrs Fairfax approaches, concerned.

MRS FAIRFAX

It's a quiet life, isn't it? This isolated house; a still doom for a young woman...

Jane looks out at the view once more.

JANE

I wish a woman could have action in her life, like a man. It agitates me to pain that the sky-line over there is ever our limit. I long sometimes for a power of vision that would overpass it. If I could behold all I imagine... I've never seen a city, never spoken with men. And I fear my whole life will pass...

Jane brushes her ideas away. Mrs Fairfax puts on a practical face, the moment of intimacy has gone.

MRS FAIRFAX

Now, exercise is a great cure for anything, they say. I have some letters to post; will you take them?

59 EXT. DUSK. A FROZEN MEADOW.

59 *

Jane is walking with purpose, carrying a bundle of letters. The moon is rising, giving the frost a ghostly light.

60 EXT. DUSK. A FROZEN WOOD.

60 *

A brook runs close to the path; half frozen. It's slow trickle is the only sound to be heard. Jane moves slowly, acutely aware of everything around her.

A pheasant suddenly files up from undergrowth right by her feet. The noise and the fluster of its wings startle her. She laughs at herself - and enters the darkening wood.

She peers into the shadows beneath the trees.

Further on, the brook has frozen right across the path. Jane slips on it as she passes. The noise of her feet echoes. She steadies herself on a nearby stile.

She hears a sound like the beating of wings. The blood is rushing through her ears. She sees the figure of a great dog - which glides past her so close it almost knocks her off her feet. The beating is loud; not wings she realises, but the rush of an approaching horse. It is almost on top of her before she can move. Her shocked, pale face, her black garments startle both horse and rider.

The rider gets the horse under control and continues, only to have his horse slip on the ice. Both man and horse fall with a crash. The dog begins to bark, until the hills echo with the sound. The horse is on one side; the man is lying, trapped beneath it on the ice; Edward Fairfax Rochester.

ROCHESTER

Hellfire.

Jane is confounded.

Rochester stares at her; a tiny black figure, the low moon behind her.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
Stand back.

With much stamping and clattering, the horse clammers to its feet. Rochester tries to stand himself. His ankle will bear no weight. He lets out an involuntary cry. It echoes.

JANE
Are you injured, sir? May I be of some help?

Rochester looks at her once more. He takes himself to the stile. Jane now has the moon on her face. She begins to look less like a phantom and more like a girl.

ROCHESTER
Where do you come from?

JANE
Just below.

He continues to stare, uncertain what she means.

ROCHESTER
Below?

JANE
At Thornfield Hall. I'm on my way to post a letter. Can I fetch someone to help?

Rochester is staring at her puzzled.

JANE (CONT'D)
I am the governess.

ROCHESTER
(A slow smile)
The governess... You may help me yourself. Get hold of his bridle and lead him to me.

Jane looks at the horse; huge, trampling, nervous. Rochester is amused.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
If you would be so kind...

Jane tries to catch the bridle but the horse rears up. She falls on the ice. Rochester laughs. She picks herself up.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
It would be easier to bring me to the horse. Come here.

Jane resists the imperious tone.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
I must beg of you to please come
here, Miss Governess.

Jane approaches. Rochester instantly leans all his weight on her. She almost crumples under it; the first time she has ever touched and been touched by a man. She holds him up. And walks him closer to his horse.

Rochester calms it. He springs into the saddle, grimacing as he wrenches his sprain.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
Make haste with your letter.
(He bows.)
For who knows what might lurk in
these dark woods...

Rochester grins widely, then spurs his horse. Jane steps back. The horse bounds away, the dog rushing in its traces. She watches until they have gone, her face energised with the intensity of the encounter.

61 I/E. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE FRONT ENTRANCE/ GREAT HALL. 61 *

Jane runs up to the front door. She pushes it open. To her amazement, there is a fire burning in the stone fireplace. The whole hall is lit. Mrs Fairfax is approaching, followed by Leah.

MRS FAIRFAX
Mr Rochester is here.

JANE
Oh?

MRS FAIRFAX
Go and change your frock; he wishes
to meet you. Leah, take her cloak.

JANE
I have to change?

MRS FAIRFAX
Oh yes - I always dress for the
evening when Mr Rochester is here.

JANE
But all my dresses are the same.

MRS FAIRFAX
(Desperately)
You must have one that is better?
He's in a terrible humour;
(MORE)

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

his horse fell in Hay lane and his
ankle is sprained. He's had the
doctor this half hour. Where have
you been??

Mrs Fairfax and Leah anxiously hurry away. Jane finds
herself staring at the great black dog. She smooths her
dress.

62

INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - ROCHESTER'S STUDY.

62 *

Jane enters. Rochester is in front of a superb fire - one
foot bandaged and supported on a stool. Pilot goes to his
feet - and joins Adele, who is gazing adoringly at him.

ADELE

(In French)

Here is mademoiselle, sir.

ROCHESTER

(Without looking up)

Let her sit.

He is looking through Jane's portfolio of sketches and
watercolours. She approaches feeling utterly exposed - as
if her diary is being read. She sits.

Mrs Fairfax and Leah return with tea. Mrs Fairfax quietly
fusses. Rochester continues to study Jane's work.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

I've examined Adele and I find you've
taken great pains with her. She's not
bright, she has no talents - yet in a
short time she's improved.

Adele is gazing at him uncomprehending.

JANE

Thank you, Mr Rochester.

ROCHESTER

You've been resident here three
months?

JANE

Yes, sir.

ROCHESTER

(finally looking up)

And from whence do you hail; what's
your tale of woe?

JANE

Pardon?

ROCHESTER

All governesses have a tale of woe;
what's yours?

JANE

(Slightly insulted)

I was brought up by my Aunt, Mrs Reed of Gateshead, in a house even finer than this. I then attended Lowood school where I received as good an education as I could hope for. I have no tale of woe, sir.

ROCHESTER

Where are your parents?

JANE

Dead.

ROCHESTER

Do you remember them?

JANE

No.

ROCHESTER

And why are you not with Mrs Reed of Gateshead now?

JANE

She cast me off, sir.

ROCHESTER

Why?

JANE

Because I was burdensome and she disliked me.

ROCHESTER

Lowood; that's a charity school, isn't it?

JANE

Yes.

ROCHESTER

How long did you survive there?

JANE

Eight years.

ROCHESTER

No tale of woe...

MRS FAIRFAX

(placing his tea)

I daily thank providence for sending us Miss Eyre. She's an invaluable -

ROCHESTER

Don't trouble yourself to give her a character. I'll judge for myself. I have her to thank for this sprain.

MRS FAIRFAX

Sir?

ROCHESTER

You bewitched my horse.

For a second Mrs Fairfax thinks Rochester might be addressing her. But he is giving Jane a piercing stare. Mrs Fairfax looks at Jane, bewildered.

JANE

I did not.

ROCHESTER

Were you waiting for your people at that stile?

JANE

I have no people, sir.

ROCHESTER

I mean for the imps and elves and the little green men.

JANE

The sad truth is they are gone. The elves have all left England for some wilder country where the woods are still savage and the population scant.

ROCHESTER

You lie. I broke through one of your rings and you spread that causeway with your ice.

Mrs Fairfax puts her tea down, supremely perplexed by this line of conversation. Rochester lifts one of Jane's watercolours.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Adele brought me these; are they yours?

JANE

Yes sir.

A swollen sea. A cormorant, a golden bracelet held in its beak. A girl's arm coming out of the water, white and deathly, her drowned figure underneath.

ROCHESTER

Where did you get your copies?

JANE
Out of my head.

ROCHESTER
That head I now see on your
shoulders?

JANE
Yes sir.

He turns to the next. The top of a hill. An expanse of twilight sky. Rising up, a girl's shape, her forehead crowned with a star, red hair flowing; Helen Burns.

ROCHESTER
Who's this?

JANE
The evening star.

Rochester gives her a direct gaze. He looks at the next. A dark turbanned figure with a wreath of white flame above its head. Mrs Fairfax is cutting a dark cake.

ROCHESTER
Where you happy when you painted
these?

Mrs Fairfax sets the cake out, glancing at Jane's gloomy water colours. She doesn't like them.

JANE
Yes. To paint is one of the keenest
pleasures I have ever known.

ROCHESTER
Then your pleasures have been few...
Are you satisfied with them?

JANE
Far from it. I imagine things I'm
powerless to execute.

ROCHESTER
Not quite. You've secured the shadow
of your thoughts. Yet the drawings
are, for a schoolgirl... peculiar.

Jane has no reply. Rochester looks at her for longer than is comfortable. Then he abruptly dismisses her.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
Goodnight.

ADELE

Tonight I will have my cadeaux. He always bring me a cadeaux. Perhaps he bring you one too.

JANE

A present Adele and no, he will not.

Mrs Fairfax breathlessly enters.

MRS FAIRFAX

Sorry to disturb. He wants to show your art to his company.

Jane looks at her in disbelief.

JANE

He cannot!

MRS FAIRFAX

Is this it here? Thank you.

Jane watches helplessly as Mrs Fairfax takes her portfolio.

64

INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GREAT HALL - STAIRS.

64 *

Jane is crossing the landing with Adele. The library doors swing open. The sound of male laughter; gentlemen walk into the hall. Rochester follows, walking with a stick.

ADELE

Monsieur!

All eyes turn upon the landing. Jane tries to find a shadow to back into but there are none. Adele curtsies.

ROCHESTER

Ah, there she is...

It is unclear whether he is referring to Adele or Jane. He makes a bow. Adele curtsies. The men are staring at Jane with great curiosity. It makes her uncomfortable. She tugs Adele away.

65

INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - ROCHESTER'S STUDY.

65 *

Rochester sits at the piano. He keeps playing the same augmented fourth over and over. A dismal sound. He sighs deeply. Jane finds herself staring at him. Mrs Fairfax hands him tea, with some trepidation.

ROCHESTER

Keep it.

He goes to pour himself a drink. He stands at the mantelpiece, staring into the fire.

Jane looks questioningly at Mrs Fairfax. Mrs Fairfax looks back, warning her to remain silent.

Rochester knocks the drink back. At that moment Adele enters with Sophie. A ribboned box sits on the table.

ADELE
Ma boite, ma boite!

Her excitement grates on Rochester's nerves.

ROCHESTER
Take it away and disembowel it.

ADELE
Oh Ciel! Que c'est beau!

Adele is already pulling a pink satin dress out of the box.

ROCHESTER
Miss Eyre.

He gestures to a chair by the fire, no warmth in his expression. Jane sits.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
I'm not fond of children.
(BEAT).
Nor do I particularly enjoy simple-minded old ladies.

This is loud enough for Mrs Fairfax to hear.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
But you might suit me - if you would.

JANE
How, sir?

ROCHESTER
By distracting me from the mire of my thoughts.

Adele, irrepressible, runs across the room embracing the dress. She drops on one knee at Rochester's feet.

ADELE
Monsieur, je vous remercie mille fois de votre bonte...

She looks up, seeking his approval.

ADELE (CONT'D)
That is how Maman used to say...

ROCHESTER

Precisely. And that's how she
charmed my English gold out of my
English pocket.

MRS FAIRFAX

Let's try it on, shall we?

Adele skips off with a mortified Mrs Fairfax and Sophie. Rochester notices how keenly Jane is observing him. He waits a beat before asking...

ROCHESTER

Your gaze is very direct, Miss Eyre?
D'you think me handsome?

JANE

No sir.

Rochester laughs.

ROCHESTER

What fault do you find with me? I
have all my limbs and features -

JANE

I beg your pardon. I ought to have
replied that beauty is of little
consequence -

ROCHESTER

You're blushing Miss Eyre. And though
you're not pretty any more than I am
handsome, I must say it becomes
you...
And now I see you're fascinated by
the flowers on the rug.

Jane senses his mockery.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Come, speak to me.
The fact is, Miss Eyre, I'd like to
draw you out. You have rather the
look of another world and I don't
wish to treat you as inferior.

JANE

Yet you'd command me to speak?

ROCHESTER

I have a right to be abrupt and
exacting - on the grounds of my
superiority in age and experience.

JANE

Your claim to superiority depends on
the use you've made of your age and
experience.

ROCHESTER

Which is indifferent. And this is
why I sit, galled by my own thoughts
- and order you to divert me. Are
you very hurt by my tone of command?

Jane smiles.

JANE

There are few masters who'd trouble
to enquire whether their paid
subordinates were hurt by their
commands.

ROCHESTER

Paid subordinate... I'd forgotten
the salary. Well on that mercenary
ground, will you consent to speak as
my equal - without thinking that the
request arises from insolence?

JANE

I'd never mistake informality for
insolence, sir. One, I rather like.
The other, nothing free born should
ever submit to - even for a salary.

ROCHESTER

Humbug. Most free-born things would
submit to anything for a salary. But
I mentally shake hands with you for
your answer. Not three in three
thousand schoolgirl governesses
would have answered me as you've
just done.

JANE

Then you've not spent much time in
the company of schoolgirl
governesses, sir. I'm the same plain
kind of bird as all the rest, with
my common tale of woe.

ROCHESTER

I envy you.

JANE

How?

ROCHESTER

Your openness, your unpolluted
mind. If I were eighteen I think we
truly would be equals. Nature meant
me to be a good man but as you see,
I am not so.

JANE

Are you a villain then, sir?

ROCHESTER

I'm a trite commonplace sinner,
hackneyed in all the dissipations
that the rich and worthless try to
put on life.

(He sighs.)

When I was your age, fate dealt me
a blow. Dread remorse, Miss Eyre.
It is the poison of life.

Rochester takes in her open, puzzled face.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

And since happiness is denied me,
I've a right to get pleasure in its
stead. And I will get it, cost what
it may.

JANE

Then you'll degenerate still more.

ROCHESTER

But, Miss Eyre, if the pleasure I
was seeking was sweet and fresh; if
it was an inspiration; if it wore
the robes of an angel of light...
what then?

JANE

To speak truth, I don't understand
you at all. I fear the conversation
has got out of my depth.

Rochester laughs.

ROCHESTER

You're afraid of me because I talk
like a sphynx.

JANE

I'm not afraid. I've simply no wish
to talk nonsense.

ROCHESTER

Do you never laugh, Miss Eyre?

This question cuts Jane to the quick.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Only rarely, perhaps. But you're not
naturally austere, any more than I'm
naturally vicious. I can see in you
the glance of a curious sort of bird
through the close set bars of a cage:
a vivid, restless captive. Were it
but free, it would soar. Cloud high.

Jane opens her mouth to speak - but she cannot. Mrs Fairfax and Adele enter the room anew, Adele wearing her new dress.

Mrs Fairfax notes the awkward silence between Jane and Rochester, concerned.

66

EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GROUNDS. SPRING.

66 *

Jane is playing battledore and shuttlecock with Adele under a great horse chestnut tree. A rustic bench wraps around it. Her playing is full of energy, very free. Her cheeks look almost rosy. It is spring. The gardener and his boy are hard at work.

JANE

Just as it turns to come down -
that's when you hit it.

Adele serves. The game continues apace. Jane notices Rochester. He is looking up at the battlements, his features clouded with shame and detestation. Jane misses her shot.

JANE (CONT'D)

Mademoiselle has got to rest. Play
with Pilot for a while.

She approaches Rochester.

JANE (CONT'D)

Is our game disturbing you, sir?

He looks round. A hard and cynical expression has mastered his countenance, something resolute. Jane is taken aback.

ROCHESTER

On the contrary. I like your game.
I like this cold, hard day. I like
Thornfield.

Rochester starts to walk across the grounds at a fast pace. Jane follows.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

I've been arranging a point with my
destiny, Miss Eyre. My destiny stood
up there by that chimney, like one of
the hags who appeared to Macbeth.
'You like Thornfield?' She said.
'Like it if you dare'. Well, I dare.
It's felt like a plague house for
years -

He turns, the whole house now in his sights. He shouts:

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

But Thornfield is my home and I
shall like it!

Adele is running after them.

ADELE

Mademoiselle - Il faut jouer -

Rochester snaps at her, taking out all his anger on the hapless child.

ROCHESTER

(in French)

Can't you see she is speaking with me?

(in English)

Keep your distance child, or go in!

Adele's face crumples into fear. Rochester walks away. He expects Jane to accompany him. She does not. Instead she turns and watches Adele run back to their game. Sophie is sitting nearby, sewing. Adele seeks her comfort. Jane is about to follow when she suddenly finds Rochester back at her side. He seems contrite.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

She's the daughter of an opera dancer, Celine Varens. A beauty. She professed to love me with great ardour. So I installed in her in a hotel, gave her gowns, cashmeres, diamonds - in short, I was an idiot.

JANE

To fall in love, sir?

ROCHESTER

You've never felt love, have you Miss Eyre? Your soul still sleeps. You're floating gently in the stream of life, unaware of the rocks ahead waiting to dash you to pieces.

JANE

Were you dashed to pieces, Mr Rochester?

ROCHESTER

By my own stupidity. It ended when I visited one night and caught her with her handsome, charmless lover. The whole intoxication fell away like a dream. I left her money to support the little French floweret, whom she swore blind was mine.

Adele has left Sophie and is stroking Pilot, the dog.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

I see no proof of my grim paternity in her features; I think Pilot is more like me than she.

(MORE)

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Some years later, I heard that Celine
had abandoned the brat, disappeared
to Italy and left it destitute.

Jane involuntarily takes a step towards Adele.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

So I lifted it from the mud and slime
of Paris and brought it here, to grow
up in the wholesome soil of an
English country garden... expiating
all my sins with one good work.

Jane looks up at Rochester trying to fathom his tone.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

You listen, Miss Eyre, as if it was
the most usual thing in the world for
a man like me to tell stories of his
opera-mistresses to an inexperienced
girl like you.

Sophie is watching Jane and Rochester with more interest
than seems polite. Jane runs back to Adele. Rallies her.
Rochester watches. The effect his story has had is apparent
in Jane's kindness.

67

INT. DUSK. THORNFIELD - GALLERY / THE RED ROOM.

67

*

Jane is in the long gallery looking at the portrait of the
half-naked lady. She hears a noise. She turns. Rochester is
striding past her. He disappears through the latched door
at the end of the corridor. Jane follows. She opens the
door and finds herself in the Red Room.

It is cold and empty, just as it was at Gateshead. Jane
walks to the mirror. Her ten year old reflection comes to
meet her. She searches the face of her child-self. The
child looks as if she is trying to tell her something. A
murmur seems to come down the gaping chimney; a woman's
deep sigh. The reflection is terrified.

Something moves in the shadows behind Jane. She hears a low
thump. It seems to be right next to her. She tries to
scream -

68

INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - JANE'S BEDROOM / CORRIDOR.

68

*

Jane wakes. Her curtains are open; moonlight spilling in.
She hears it again; the thud from her dream. It's a knock
against her door.

JANE

Who's there?

Jane gets out of bed and gingerly pulls the door open.

There is a single candle burning in its holder on the rush matting, flickering in the draft. A fly is buzzing next to it, dying.

Jane picks up the candle. She walks up the corridor. Behind a pillar we see a shadowed figure watching. Jane is silent, her breath making vapour. The buzz of the dying fly.

Jane senses something on the air. A smell. She sees a curling wreath of grey smoke. She follows its trail through the pitch darkness. It is coming thickly from a half-open door - Rochester's chamber.

Jane rushes in. Rochester's bed is on fire; the hangings, the curtains, are alight. The room is full of smoke. She pulls the huge window open.

JANE (CONT'D)
Wake up! Wake up! Sir!

Rochester is asleep. She shakes him. He stirs, stupefied by the acrid smoke. Jane takes his basin and douses him.

JANE (CONT'D)
Wake up!!

Rochester wakes, coughing.

JANE (CONT'D)
It is I, Jane Eyre, sir.

ROCHESTER
What in the name of all the elves in Christendom -

JANE
Your room is set on fire.

Jane takes the ewer and throws water on the curtains. Rochester leaps out of bed, pulls the fabric from its rail and smothers the remaining flames.

They don't stop until all the flames are quenched. Smoke billows out through the window into the cold gale.

JANE (CONT'D)
I'll light the lamp.

ROCHESTER
Light the lamp at your peril.

Jane becomes aware that Rochester is only half dressed. She turns away, mortified. He is pulling on a shirt.

JANE
A noise aroused me from my sleep.

ROCHESTER
What noise?

JANE

There was someone at my door. I opened it. A candle was burning there, placed on the matting.

ROCHESTER

Stay here. Don't make a sound.

Rochester gets his coat and puts it round her. He goes, taking the light. Jane looks at his ruined chamber; the blackened drapes on the four poster bed, the fireplace, the huge wardrobe. It is not unlike the red room.

Jane wraps the coat around her. Overhead, she hears a door thud to. She waits. Nothing, not a sound. She backs into an armchair. She curls up inside the coat.

CUT TO:

A gust of wind blows in through the window bringing the first light of day. Jane wraps the coat tighter. She closes her eyes, running her fingers down the lining, smelling its owner.

She looks up. Rochester is watching her.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Say nothing about this. You're no talking fool.

JANE

But -

ROCHESTER

I'll account for this state of affairs. Say nothing.

JANE

Yes, sir.

(She takes off his coat.)

ROCHESTER

Is that how you would leave me?

Rochester is between Jane and the door.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Jane, fire is a horrible death. You have saved my life. Don't walk past me as if we were strangers.

JANE

What am I to do then?

ROCHESTER

At least... take my hand.

Rochester holds out his hand. Jane takes it. Rochester wraps her hand in both of his.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

I have a pleasure in owing you my life.

JANE

There is no debt.

Rochester is looking at her small hand. She tries to inch it back. He doesn't let her. She looks up at him.

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 my very inmost being so, for nothing. People talk of natural sympathies... You.

Rochester is drawing her slowly closer. Jane, disconcerted, is trying to resist.

JANE

Good night then, sir.

ROCHESTER

So you will leave me?

Jane doesn't move. Her breath is heightened. It vapourises.

JANE

I am cold.

ROCHESTER

Go.

At last, he relaxes his grip. She passes him. She goes.

68A

INT. DAWN. THORNFIELD - CORRIDOR/JANE'S BEDROOM.

68A

*

Jane enters her room. Dawn is breaking. She is wide awake. She cannot rest. As light begins to saturate the room Jane gazes at the new day, inspired, enlivened, unquiet.

69

INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - ROCHESTER'S BEDROOM.

69

*

Jane looks in to see Leah and John cleaning the soot from the woodwork and windowpanes. Grace Poole comes out with an armful of ruined drapes. She speaks as if Jane is complicit in her lie.

GRACE

Master was reading in his bed last night. Fell asleep with his candle lit and the curtains got on fire.

Mrs Fairfax bustles by in her role of damage assessor.

MRS FAIRFAX

Mr Rochester put it out with the water from his stand. We must thank providence he awoke. If it were not for his swift actions we could have all been burnt alive in our beds.

Mrs Fairfax's outrage seems directed particularly at Grace. Grace is unaffected. She passes her and goes.

70

INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GREAT HALL.

70 *

Jane peers in. The room is cold. Jane crosses it. There is no sign of Rochester. The house is once more quiet as a church. Mrs Fairfax crosses the gallery.

JANE

Has Mr Rochester not sent for us today?

MRS FAIRFAX

Why, he's gone away. Were you not aware? He left after breakfast.

Jane takes this piece of news like an invisible shock.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

He's gone to The Leas, Mr Eshton's place. I believe Blanche Ingram is there. She's a great favourite of his.

JANE

Oh?

MRS FAIRFAX

I saw her two years ago when Mr Rochester had a party here. The most elegant girl. They sang a duet together; made a lovely harmony. I was quite surprised he didn't make a proposal - but she has no fortune... In every other way they'd make a splendid match. Perhaps it's his intention now.

Mrs Fairfax has given Jane a veiled warning.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

Of course it's far more likely he'll go off to Europe. He often leaves without so much as a fare-you-well and I don't see him for a year.

71

DELETED.

71 *

72 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - ROCHESTER'S ROOM.

72 *

Jane is at the window watching the rain hammer against it. The room has been stripped bare and scrubbed clean. All trace of its owner have gone. Desolate. Jane is having an intense emotional reaction to the loss of Rochester. As she brings a hand up to her face, we see that it is shaking.

Adele is watching her from the doorway, puzzled.

ADELE (O.S.)
Qu'avez-vous, mademoiselle?

Jane turns.

73 DELETED.

73 *

74 INT. EVENING. MORTON - THE SCHOOL ROOM.

74 *

Jane finds herself in front of St John Rivers. She is in her little schoolroom at the end of the day. The classroom is empty. Her life is bare. It shows on her face. He is waiting expectantly for an answer.

ST JOHN
I asked how you were.

Jane immediately puts on a sprightly face and starts to tidy up.

JANE
I'm getting on very well.

ST JOHN
Do you find the work too hard?

Two girls have tidied all the slates and chalk. Jane smiles at them.

JANE
Not at all. Thank you girls.

The girls run out. Jane continues clearing up. A bluebottle is buzzing against the window.

ST JOHN
Is the solitude an oppression?

JANE
I hardly have time to notice it.

ST JOHN
Then perhaps -

JANE
A few months ago I had nothing. Now
I have a home and work;
(MORE)

JANE (CONT'D)
free and honest. I wonder at the
goodness of God and the generosity
of my friends.

St John approaches her; speaks intimately.

ST JOHN
What you had left before I met you,
I don't know. But I counsel you to
resist firmly every temptation to
look back.

JANE
It's what I mean to do.

The buzzing fly is oppressing Jane dreadfully.

ST JOHN
We can overcome every kind of human
weakness. A year ago I was myself
intensely miserable. I considered
my life so wretched that it must be
changed - or I would die. After a
season of darkness, light broke -

Jane reaches out and swats the fly with an utterance of
disgust. She half kills it and hits it again, mercilessly.

St John is both repelled by her inexplicable passion and
offended. He feels she hasn't listened. He turns to go.
Jane sees what she has done. She tries to placate him.

JANE
Why were you intensely miserable?

St John stops at Jane's desk. He starts flicking through
her papers. He speaks with a forced nonchalance.

ST JOHN
A year ago, I was weak enough to
fall in love.

Jane moves involuntarily towards him.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)
I scorned this weakness, fought
hard against it - and won.

Jane is incredulous.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)
I could have sunk down in the
silken snare and known a feverish,
delusive bliss. I could have
squandered my future upon it.

JANE
You could have been happy.

ST JOHN

Is that what you seek, to be happy?

St John senses the struggle in her lack of answer.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)

I wonder if we do not share the same
alloy...

JANE

What do you mean?

He is about to say more, when he suddenly snatches up a piece of paper.

ST JOHN

Is this yours?

JANE

Yes.

His eyes, in an instant, seem to take in everything about her. He opens his mouth to speak - then checks himself.

JANE (CONT'D)

What's the matter?

ST JOHN

Nothing.

He folds the paper and takes it.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)

Good night.

He goes. Jane looks after him, dumbfounded.

74A INT. NIGHT. MORTON - JANE'S COTTAGE.

74A *

Jane is washing. It is very cold. She kneels over a basin of water in front of her tiny fire. She quickly takes her chemise off and washes her top half. Then quickly into the towel. She pulls it around herself. Her brief nakedness has brought up a host of painful emotions; shame, desire, an agony of love.

She goes into her dark bedroom andcurls up on the bed.

75 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - JANE'S BEDROOM.

75 *

Jane unlocks her door. Mrs Fairfax is on the threshold of her room, a letter in her hand.

MRS FAIRFAX

He's back tomorrow.

Jane is flushed with anticipation.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

He gives directions to prepare all
the rooms but he cannot give numbers.
I'm to get more staff from the George
Inn. Miss Ingram is coming!

Jane does her best to hide her disappointment. Mrs Fairfax is flustered.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

Supplies to be got; linen, the
mattresses... I'll go to the
George. No, I'll tell Martha...

Jane can sense that the old lady is overwhelmed.

JANE

May I assist you, Mrs Fairfax?

Mrs Fairfax approaches Jane in a rush of gratitude.

76

INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE SECOND FLOOR.

76

*

Adele comes skidding down the newly polished gallery in her tights. Jane passes, wearing a housekeeper's apron over her dress. She throws herself into preparing the house.

She enters Rochester's room with an armful of bed linen. It has been returned to its former glory. Adele follows. Jane gives Sophie the sheets.

*

77

INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE KITCHENS.

77

*

Jane sets down several bottles of wine on the kitchen table in order to dust them. The kitchen is a hive of activity - except for one lone figure sitting in a chair by the fire, smoking a pipe; Grace Poole. Martha and one of the hired under cooks are talking about her.

Jane affects not to listen, but is keenly interested. She moves a bit nearer with her work, trying to overhear.

UNDER COOK

No wonder the master relies on her -

Martha notices Jane's curious glance. She shushes the under cook. At that moment, Sophie rushes in with Adele.

SOPHIE

(in French)

They are here!

Adele makes a bee-line for the kitchen window.

ADELE

Regardez! Regardez!

Jane curiously looks over Adele's shoulder. From her P.O.V we can see the guests arriving, THREE carriages and a pair of horses at the head, BLANCHE and Rochester. The servants are filing out of the kitchen to greet the party. Adele follows, pushing her way through the bottleneck down the corridor.

77A INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE KITCHEN CORRIDOR/ENTRANCE HALL 77A *

Adele flies out of the corridor into the great hall. Jane follows Mrs Fairfax into the hall, helping her to untie her apron.

Mrs Fairfax, slightly flustered, goes into the lower courtyard and organises the staff into a line to greet the guests. She stands at the head, forming herself into a picture of helpful dignity.

Jane, who has no place in the line, is unsure where to go.

77B INT/EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GREAT HALL/OUTSIDE WINDOW. 77B *

Adele is at the window. Jane gravitates towards her, unable to stop herself from watching Rochester gallantly helping Blanche off her horse. They then lead the party towards the house as servants unload the carriage's luggage and supplies. Blanche is leaning on Rochester's arm, already established as first lady of the party. She is an elegant young woman, beautifully attired.

ADELE
Qu'elle est belle...

Blanche laughs at something Rochester has said. She half smiles at Mrs Fairfax and the staff but has eyes only for him. Jane is both troubled and dazzled. She turns away trying to quell her emotions.

Rochester enters the house. Adele, hearing his voice, runs to the door.

JANE
Adele, come away. He will not ask for you today.

Adele's face falls.

77C INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - A STAIRWELL 77C *

Jane walks down towards the kitchen. In a dark recess, one of the visiting valets is making fun of Sophie. She is giggling, blushing. Her laughter dries up as Jane passes.

78

INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE KITCHENS.

78 *

Jane enters. The staff are just finishing their meal - eaten before the guests have theirs. Mrs Fairfax doesn't lose a single opportunity to give out instructions.

MRS FAIRFAX

And for those of you who are new to
Thornfield I'd like to remind you
that the third floor is absolutely
out of bounds. The floors are very
old and quite unsafe...

The visiting servants stare at Jane as she passes, unsure of her status. Martha ignores her, too focussed on the meal she is preparing.

Jane threads her way through to the larder, picks up a tray and begins to load it with cold food. Leah comes in.

LEAH

Is everything all right, miss?

JANE

It seems that in the excitement,
Adele and I have been forgotten.

Leah looks momentarily contrite - and is gone.

79

INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE GALLERY.

79 *

Jane comes on to the gallery with her tray, just as the ladies start to issue from their rooms. She stands in a corner. An approach of chatter; subdued vivacity. A flurry of multicoloured silks, lace and velvets. They descend the staircase as noiselessly as a bright mist.

Jane steps out. She walks into the path of Blanche Ingram, who is stunning - and ghostly - in white. They both startle.

JANE

Excuse me, miss.

Rochester is at the top of the stairs.

ROCHESTER

You dazzle me quite.

They turn, unsure of whom he is addressing. Jane instantly sees by his expression that it is Blanche. He pays no heed to Jane who sinks into the shadows.

BLANCHE

All these old houses have a grey
lady. I think I've just met yours.

Blanche is affecting defenseless shock. Rochester gallantly offers his arm. Blanche lays her gloved hand on it, letting her fingers appreciate his strength.

80 INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE STAIRCASE BY THE GREAT HALL. 80 *

Adele and Jane sit on the stairs, listening to Blanche and Rochester sing. Their voices thrill. Jane is trying not to feel. But when Rochester hits an exceptionally beautiful note, she involuntarily closes her eyes. A quiet anxiety of jealousy rushes through her.

Adele leans into Jane. She is crying.

ADELE
She sing like Maman...

Jane folds Adele into her arms and takes her up to bed.

81 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - BACK STAIRS/LANDING/BLANCHE'S ROOM. 81 *

There is a flurry of morning activity. Servants carry water up the back stairs and covered chamber pots down. Beds are being made, fires set. Adele puts her curious nose through Blanche's door, where one maid is spot-cleaning the armpits of the previous night's gown. Lady Ingram, tall and imperious, is addressing another maid.

LADY INGRAM
Will you do something else with her hair? We have seen that style twice already this week -

Blanche sits at the mirror, looking into her looking glass - in which Adele is just visible. Jane pulls her away with an apologetic curtsey.

JANE
Adele you must not...

Mrs Fairfax approaches them in a great hurry, holding a precarious flower arrangement.

MRS FAIRFAX
Tonight. He wants you both in the drawing room after dinner.

Adele leaps up, delighted. Jane is blanched.

JANE
Not me, surely.

MRS FAIRFAX
I'm instructed to tell you that if you resist, he'll come up and get you himself.

JANE
I don't have a dress.

MRS FAIRFAX
Don't worry child; who will notice?

81A DELETED.

81A *

82 INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE GREAT HALL

82 *

Jane is delivering Adele into the centre of the company. She has on her best dress - still very plain - and has tried something different with her hair.

ADELE
Bonjour, mesdames, monsieurs.

Adele makes a dainty curtsey - pink frock, ringlets, lace gloves. In the midst of the crowd is Blanche.

BLANCHE
Why, what a little puppet.

Adele blissfully disappears into a moving sea of dresses. Jane watches her go, proud of her charge. Rochester is with the men. Jane watches him. She hears a smattering of his conversation.

COLONEL DENT
You simply must replace it, Fairfax.
That conveyance you brought us in
has been around since the last
crusade I should think.

Rochester laughs a low easeful laugh. Jane smiles to see it. Only one guest is looking in her direction; Blanche.

Jane backs into a nearby window seat; always her place of refuge. Blanche arrives at Rochester's side. Jane pulls her work on to her lap; a beaded purse. She doesn't lift her eyes from it - but she listens.

BLANCHE
I thought you weren't fond of
children?

ROCHESTER
I'm not. She was left on my hands.

BLANCHE
Why don't you send her to school?

ROCHESTER
She has a governess.

Jane glances up. Rochester is turning his back to her.

BLANCHE

Oh the poor child. I had half a dozen
governesses in my day - detestable,
ridiculous incubi -

LADY INGRAM

Did you say governesses? Mr
Rochester... I ache for you. I've
been a martyr to their incompetence
and quite hysterical caprice. It's a
miracle they didn't send me quite
demented. At best they're constant
weepers and at worst they're morally
degenerate -

ROCHESTER

How?

LADY INGRAM

You can imagine.

ROCHESTER

My imagination fails me.

LADY INGRAM

But I see that one of the tribe is
hidden there behind the curtain.

ROCHESTER

Yes but my curiosity is past its
appetite. It must have food.

LADY INGRAM

I will tell you all about them in
your own private ear...

ROCHESTER

(Closer to her)
Pray tell me now.

Jane's fingers sew. Only the briefest flash of her eyes
shows her mortification. Blanche's effete brother is
sprawled on a chaise nearby.

LADY INGRAM

I give you but one image. The lone
female scheming to improve her
lot... Looking coyly up with dowdy
eyes to see what son and heir she
can ensnare.

Lady Ingram glances meaningfully at her son. He affects not
to have noticed.

LORD INGRAM

You were an awful bully to that
French one, Blanche.

BLANCHE

Madame Joubert... I couldn't help myself. I was a curious child and I had a scientific interest in the way her face would redden and her veins pop out.

*
*
*
*
*

Rochester is moving away. Blanche sees that the subject is failing to amuse him; a momentary flash of panic.

*

BLANCHE (CONT'D)

Enough of the whole dreary race. We shall have music - and a new subject, if you please. Signor Eduardo, what shall it be?

*

She sits and starts playing a brilliant prelude on the piano. Rochester considers her.

*

ROCHESTER

Beauty...

BLANCHE

Why there's nothing new to be said.
I give you back male beauty. Mamma,
what's your idea of male beauty?

LADY INGRAM

My son, of course.

LORD INGRAM

Hear hear.

BLANCHE

Oh, Tedo's quite typical of the
young men of today. They're so
absorbed in the pursuit of fashion
that they've forgotten how to be men
at all.

LORD INGRAM

I say -

BLANCHE

A man should pay no heed to his
looks.

(Glancing at Rochester)

He should possess only strength and
valour; a gentleman or a highwayman.
His beauty lies in his power.

ROCHESTER

So a pirate would do for you?

BLANCHE

(Quietly)

As long as he resembled you.

Rochester laughs quietly. Jane is heading for the door.

Jane closes the door on Blanche. She breathes in fresh air,
almost nauseous. Blanche's splendid prelude drifts out.

Rochester comes into the hall from the other door. Jane
instantly bends down and pretends to be tying her shoe.

ROCHESTER

Why did you leave the room?

JANE

I am tired, sir.

ROCHESTER

Why didn't you come and speak to me?
I haven't seen you for weeks. It
would have been normal and polite to
wish me good evening.

JANE

You seemed engaged.

ROCHESTER

You look pale.

JANE

I am well.

ROCHESTER

What have you been doing while I've been away?

JANE

Teaching Adele.

ROCHESTER

You're depressed. What's the meaning of this? Your eyes full of -

Rochester catches sight of Mrs Fairfax, who is watching them with an expression of unease. Rochester barks at her.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

What is it?

MRS FAIRFAX

A gentleman has arrived to see you, sir... He says he's travelled a long way, from Spanish Town, Jamaica. And indeed I think he must have come from some hot country because he won't take off his coat. Mr Richard Mason. I've put him in the morning room.

*
*

Rochester cannot speak.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

Have I done wrong?

ROCHESTER

Bring him to my study.

Mrs Fairfax goes. Rochester sinks on to the stairs.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Jane - Jane. This is a blow.

Blanche's prelude trills on in the great hall. Over it, the guests' laughter. Rochester takes Jane's hand.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

If I were to go to those people and they looked at me coldly and sneered, then left me one by one, what would you do? Would you go with them?

JANE

No sir. I'd stay with you.

ROCHESTER

And if they came and spat at me,
what then?

JANE

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

ROCHESTER

And if they cast you out for it?

JANE

I'd care nothing about it.

ROCHESTER

You'd dare condemnation for my sake?

His look is intense. Jane feels out of her depth.

JANE

For the sake of any friend who
deserved it.

Rochester rapidly lets go Jane's hand as if her reserved reply has somehow betrayed him. She follows his gaze. A gaunt man is approaching them.

ROCHESTER

Richard.

MASON

Fairfax...

They embrace. Mason is genuinely moved as if reunited with a much-loved older brother. Rochester is doing a fine impression of delight.

ROCHESTER

How the devil are you?

83A

INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE GREAT HALL - BALCONY.

83A

*

Jane walks along the balcony just as Blanche's prelude finishes to enthusiastic applause. Blanche looks round and smiles. She is mortified to see that Rochester has gone. Her mother gives her a reproving look - as if she has failed in some way. Blanche's eyes meet Jane's. They are full of resentment, suspicion.

84

INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - STAIRWELL LEADING TO LONG GALLERY 84

*

Jane is on her way to her room. She hears a low guttural moan in one of the recesses. She approaches, determined to investigate. In a dark corner one of the valets is forcing his attentions on Sophie. She is willing him on, ecstatic.

Jane, the innocent, doesn't realise what is going on at first. Then she turns, mortified.

85 INT. DAY. LOWOOD - THE HALL.

85 *

Helen Burns is walking towards Jane with something in her arms. Jane is standing on the pedestal of infamy, ten years old. The rising sun is all around her.

Jane looks down at the bundle. In it, is a newborn boy. Jane looks up to ask Helen for help. But Helen has gone.

The baby starts to cry. Jane panics.

The crying becomes deafening, terrifying. It is not a baby's cry but a MAN's scream.

86 INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - JANE'S BEDROOM/ THE GALLERY.

86 *

Jane wakes, hearing a savage, sharp shriek that seems to split the night in two. Overhead, the sounds of a struggle. A man cries out. Cries out again in pain and horror. Jane hears footsteps rush past her door. She starts to pull on her dress.

Directly over head she hears a muffled voice scream for help.

A great stamp on the floor above; something falls with a thud; the man whimpering now. Jane grabs her candle and leaves her room.

The guests likewise are all issuing from their rooms; some with candles, some stumbling into the dark. The gallery is filling with terrified ladies and shocked gentlemen. Their shadows dance grotesquely on the walls.

LADY INGRAM

Oh what is it?

BLANCHE

Who is hurt? Who screamed like that?

LORD INGRAM

Where's Rochester?

Rochester comes forth from the latched door at the end of the gallery, holding a candelabra.

ROCHESTER

I'm here, be composed.

Blanche flies towards him like a banshee. She embraces him in an affectation of fear. Rochester patiently removes her.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

A servant has had a nightmare, that's all. She's an excitable person and has taken a fit with fright.

He is speaking to Blanche gently, as if she's a child. He pushes her hair aside; an intimacy that causes a pang to Jane. She looks down; sees by the light of her candle that Rochester's dressing gown is smeared with blood.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

I must see you back into your rooms because until the house is settled, she can't be properly looked after.

BLANCHE

Is there anything I might do?

ROCHESTER

Miss Ingram, ladies, please return to your nests like the doves that you are. I assure you, all is well.

Blanche coyly acquiesces, using every opportunity to show off her semi-opaque nightgown. The candles flicker as the guests make their way back to their rooms.

Blanche is the last to leave, eyes lingering on Rochester. At her door, Lady Ingram awaits. She closes Blanche into her room with a loaded glance at Jane: What are her intentions?

As soon as she's gone, Rochester turns to Jane.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Make no noise.

Holding the light aloft, he heads for the third floor.

Rochester stops by a low door. He puts a key in the lock.

ROCHESTER

Be steady. I need you.

He unlocks it. A room hung with tapestries; a dark oak cabinet along one wall with portraits of the apostles on its panels. One part of the tapestry is hooked up over a hidden door - which lies open to an inner chamber. A dull, sickly light shines out.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Wait.

He goes to the inner chamber. A moan of anguish, of remorse greets him. Jane shudders. Rochester locks the door.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
Here. Bring the water.

Rochester goes to a low day bed. Richard Mason is lying on his side, his back and all the linen soaked in blood. There is a wound to his neck, jagged, bruised and ugly; a bite. Jane controls her reaction. Rochester cuts the bloody shirt away revealing a stab wound to the back of his shoulder.

MASON
Am I dying?

ROCHESTER
Not at all.

MASON
She bit me - while the knife was in -
Bit me -

ROCHESTER
It was folly to see her tonight and alone.

MASON
I thought I might have done some good.

ROCHESTER
Richard -

MASON
She sucked the blood. Said she'd drain me -

ROCHESTER
You must think of her as dead, dead and buried -

MASON
How can I?

He starts to cry. Rochester is silenced, infuriated. He turns to Jane.

ROCHESTER
Can you clean this?

Jane looks at the daunting mess. She begins to clean it. Rochester is taking a phial from a wooden box. He puts ten drops of crimson liquid into a tiny glass.

Mason is calming; staring at Jane with puzzlement.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
Drink Richard, it will give you the strength you lack.

MASON
Will it hurt me?

ROCHESTER

Drink!

Mason drinks. Rochester turns to Jane.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

I must go for the doctor. Sponge the blood away when it returns. Give him water if he wants it. Do not speak to him for any reason. And Richard - on pain of death - do not speak to her.

Rochester takes the candelabra leaving only one light. He is gone. Mason is staring at Jane, receding into a trance. There is something about the pupils in his eyes that she finds chilling. She dips the sponge in the bloody water and wipes away the trickling gore.

CUT TO:

The water in the bowl is dark red, the wounds covered in strips of cloth. Low low buzzing of a bluebottle. It lands on one of the dressings. Jane brushes it away, disgusted.

Mason is insensible, his eyes still open. Jane hears a deep human moan from the inner chamber. Mason makes her start by taking her wrist. He is trying to say something. He sinks back, unable.

CUT TO:

Jane is gazing at the carved wooden cabinet; the faces of the apostles, a crucifix at the top; the suffering of Christ. The buzzing of the fly. In the distance the church bell tolls four. A lock turns in the inner door. It opens. Jane is paralysed. Mrs Poole comes out. She locks the door behind her, walks across the room and disappears.

Jane hears a distant whisper. She glances at her patient; he is sleeping. She approaches the inner door and puts her ear to it.

A woman's whisper. A language unrecognisable to Jane. Some kind of incantation, maybe a prayer. It is urgent, like a warning. She listens, fearful, fascinated. She hears footsteps approach. She dashes back to the bed just as Rochester opens the door. With him is Carter, the doctor.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

How does he?

Jane has not composed herself enough to speak.

DR CARTER

He's bled a great deal.

ROCHESTER

Hurry Carter, be on alert, the sun will soon rise and he must be gone.

88 DELETED.

88 *

89 EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GROUNDS.

89 *

A carriage waits. Rochester and John lift Mason in. Carter follows. Jane hands him Mason's great coat.

MASON

Fairfax - Let her be treated as tenderly as may be -

ROCHESTER

I do my best and have done it and will do it!

John drives the carriage away. For a moment Rochester doesn't move. Then he takes Jane's arm and pulls her away from the house.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

That house is a dungeon.

JANE

It is a splendid mansion, sir.

ROCHESTER

It is slime and cobwebs.

Dawn light illuminates the trees. Rochester keeps walking.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

It's a strange night you've passed.

JANE

Yes sir.

ROCHESTER

You showed no fear.

JANE

I was afraid. Of the inner room.

ROCHESTER

It was locked.

JANE

Mr Rochester, who did that violence?

ROCHESTER

I cannot tell you.

JANE

Why do you protect them?

ROCHESTER

My life is like walking on a crater crust that may crack and spue fire any moment.

JANE
That woman - Grace Poole -

ROCHESTER
Grace is not the danger! Jane...

Rochester is trying to find words. He sits, pulling Jane down next to him.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
I drag through life a capital error.
Its consequence blights my existence.
For years I have sought to escape it
in bitter exile, seeking respite in
heartless, sensual pleasure.

He looks at her open, anxious face. He seems to change his mind about what to say.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
This winter I came home soul-withered.
And I met a gentle stranger whose
society revives me. With her I feel I
could live again in a higher, purer
way.

Jane's face falls.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
Tell me, am I justified in
overleaping an obstacle of custom to
attain her?

JANE
There is an obstacle?

ROCHESTER
A mere conventional impediment.

JANE
But what can it be? If you cherish
an affection, Sir then fortune alone
should not impede you...

ROCHESTER
Yes.

JANE
It is an inequality but if the lady
is of noble stock and if she's
indicated that she may reciprocate -

ROCHESTER
Jane... of whom do you think I
speak?

JANE
Of Miss Ingram.

Rochester is stunned at her miscomprehension.

ROCHESTER

So... You've noticed my tender feelings for Miss Ingram?

Jane takes this confirmation like a blow.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

But I am asking what Jane Eyre would do to secure my happiness?

JANE

I would do anything for you, sir. Anything that was right.

ROCHESTER

(Gently)

Yes. And if I ever bid you do what was not right, you'd turn to me and say 'No sir, that's impossible. I cannot do it, because it is wrong.' And you'd gaze at me with that face, there; immutable as a fixed star. Perhaps the greatest danger to me, is you...

JANE

I could never harm you.

ROCHESTER

You transfix me quite.

He roughly pulls the head of a flower as if the sight of it pains him. He hands it to Jane, his face bitter.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

I feel I can speak to you now of my lovely one, for you have met her and you know her. She's a rare one, isn't she? Fresh and healthy, without soil or taint. I'm sure she'll regenerate me with a vengeance.

He turns a corner and is gone. Jane is left alone.

89A DELETED.

89A *

90 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - JANE'S BEDROOM.

90 *

Jane is lying staring at the ceiling, confounded by Rochester, wondering what he means, what he will do and what lives above her. There is a knock at the door. Leah is there.

LEAH

Letter for you, Miss.

91

INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GARDEN.

91 *

Jane approaches with the open letter in her hands. Through the garden door she sees Rochester and Blanche playing a game where they are trying to keep a feather in the air by blowing it. Blanche's maid is in attendance some distance away.

The feather falls. Rochester picks it up. Gallantly, on one knee, he holds it out to Blanche. She reaches out her hand for it, full of expectation. Jane cannot bear to witness his proposal.

JANE
Excuse me, sir.

Blanche looks at Jane with a flash of rage.

BLANCHE
Does that creeping creature want
you?

92

INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - ROCHESTER'S STUDY.

92 *

Rochester has followed Jane inside.

JANE
If you please, I want leave of
absence for a week or two.

ROCHESTER
What to do?

Jane shows him the letter.

JANE
This is from my old nurse, Bessie.
She says my cousin John Reed is dead.
He squandered his fortune and he has
committed suicide. The news has so
shocked my aunt, that it's brought on
a stroke.

ROCHESTER
The aunt who cast you out?

JANE
She's been asking for me. I parted
from her badly and I can't neglect
her wishes now.

ROCHESTER
Promise me you won't stay long.

He is about to go.

JANE

Mr Rochester, I've had no wages
yet... I need funds for my journey.

Rochester softens.

ROCHESTER

How much do you have in all the
world, Jane?

Jane shows him a few coins. He smiles.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

How much do I owe you?

JANE

Fifteen pounds.

Rochester goes to his desk, takes out some notes.

ROCHESTER

Here's fifty.

JANE

That's too much.

ROCHESTER

Take your wages, Jane.

JANE

I cannot.

ROCHESTER

Is it wrong?

Jane nods.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Then I only have ten.

She takes it.

JANE

Now you owe me five.

ROCHESTER

Indeed I do. Come back for it soon.
Meantime I shall safeguard it, here.

He puts the spare note in his breast pocket.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Do you trust me to keep it?

JANE

Not a whit, sir. You are not to be
trusted at all.

92A INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GALLERY.

92A *

Jane is walking back to her room. As she passes Blanche's door, she cannot help but overhear a conversation between Blanche and Lady Ingram.

LADY INGRAM

Your beauty is beguiling him but not your conversation. The worst is that you give and have opinions, Blanche. He wants to know that he can mould and shape you in his vein.

BLANCHE

You named me well... I am to be white canvas upon which he may paint.

Blanche sighs, deeply. Jane turns for her room.

93 INT. DAY. GATESHEAD - BESSIE'S PARLOUR.

93 *

Bessie, now housekeeper, is moving forward to meet Jane.

BESSIE

Bless you! - I knew you'd come.

They embrace.

JANE

Bessie... Shall I see her now?

BESSIE

Look at you. What a lady you've become. Why, you're almost pretty.

94 INT. DAY. GATESHEAD - MRS REED'S BEDROOM

94 *

A nurse is opening the curtains. Mrs Reed blinks in the daylight. She looks very near death.

JANE

Aunt Reed? It is Jane Eyre. You sent for me, and here I am.

Mrs Reed, with an effort, pulls her hand away from Jane's.

MRS REED

No one knows the trouble I have with that child. Such a burden. Left on my hands. Speaking to me like a fiend. The fever at Lowood. She should have died!

JANE

Why do you hate her so?

MRS REED

Her mother. Reed's sister - his
beloved. When news came of her death
he wept like a fool. Sent for the
baby.

(MORE)

MRS REED (CONT'D)

Sickly thing - not strong like mine.
But Reed loved it. Kept it by his
bed. Made me vow to bring the
creature up. Why did he not love
mine?

The words are a revelation to Jane. Mrs Reed gazes at her.

MRS REED (CONT'D)

Who are you?

JANE

I am Jane Eyre.

MRS REED

You. Is there no one in the room?

Jane motions Bessie to go. The nurse also departs.

JANE

We are alone.

MRS REED

I've twice done you wrong. I broke
the vow I made to Reed -

JANE

Please, don't think of it -

MRS REED

I am dying; I must get it out!

Mrs Reed indicates a box on her bedside table.

MRS REED (CONT'D)

Open that box. Take out the letter.
Read it.

Jane obeys. She reads the letter aloud.

JANE

'Madam, will you have the goodness to
send me the address of my niece, Jane
Eyre. I desire her to come to me at
Madeira. Fortune has blessed my
endeavours and as I am childless I
wish to adopt her and bequeath her at
my death whatever I may have to
leave. Yours, John Eyre, Madeira.'

Jane is stunned.

JANE (CONT'D)

This is dated three years ago. Why
did I never hear of it?

MRS REED

Because I wrote and told him you had
died of typhus at Lowood school.

This dreadful revelation confounds Jane.

MRS REED (CONT'D)
You fury. You were born to be my
torment.

Jane is about to rage at her aunt. But the words die on her tongue. Sitting on the nurse's chair is Helen Burns.

MRS REED (CONT'D)
(to herself)
You called the names of the dead down
upon me.

Jane forces herself to forgive.

MRS REED (CONT'D)
You cursed me.

JANE
I would have loved you if you'd let
me.

MRS REED
My life has been cursed.

JANE
Please, let us be reconciled.

Mrs Reed shrinks from Jane's touch. Jane wipes her tears.

JANE (CONT'D)
Then love me or hate me as you will.
You have my full and free
forgiveness. Be at peace.

Mrs Reed's eyes close.

95 INT. DAY. GATESHEAD - THE RED ROOM.

95 *

The morning sun is pouring in. Jane looks at herself in the mirror, a calm young woman dressed in pale grey. She goes to the bed. She puts her hand upon it, gently, as if thanking her uncle for all he did. She notices a picture on the wall. A miniature of a brown-haired woman with elfin eyes. Jane takes it off the wall. Bessie appears at the door.

JANE
My mother...

Bessie nods. Jane clasps the picture, looking round the room.

JANE (CONT'D)
Why ever was I so afraid?

96 EXT. DAY. A ROADSIDE.

96 *

A coach pulls up in the lane near Thornfield. Jane gets out. She walks through field labourers who are returning home from making the hay. We hear her voice.

JANE (V.O.)

My dear uncle, some years ago, my Aunt Reed mistakenly informed you that I had died.

97 EXT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - BY THE FOOTBRIDGE.

97 *

Jane is walking through the wooded glade where she first met Rochester. All is green and verdant and bathed in sunset light. There seems to be life everywhere.

JANE (V.O.)

I am writing to tell you that I am very much alive and living at Thornfield Hall, where I am currently governess to the ward of Mr Edward Fairfax Rochester -

ROCHESTER (O.S.)

There you are.

Jane turns. Rochester is sitting on a footbridge. For a moment her every nerve is unstrung.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Just like one of your tricks, to steal in along with the twilight. Where have you been this last month?

JANE

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

Rochester laughs. Jane is still trying to compose herself.

ROCHESTER

A true Janian reply. She comes from another world... If I dared I'd touch you, to see if you were real.

He puts out his hand. Jane steps back. He is disappointed.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Come Jane - stay your wandering feet at a friend's threshold.

His hand is still held out. Jane takes it. This intimacy forces her feelings from her.

JANE

Thank you Mr Rochester for your great kindness.

(MORE)

JANE (CONT'D)

I'm strangely glad to get back
again. Wherever you are is my home.

She has said too much. She sees the effect on Rochester, a smile, painful, almost sardonic. She fears he is laughing at her. She hurries up towards Thornfield.

98

INT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - MRS FAIRFAX'S PARLOUR

98

*

Jane is on a low seat, Adele nestling close to her.

MRS FAIRFAX

There's been nothing official yet but he's ordered jewels from his bank and he's making preparations to travel to Europe. He's taken to singing at all times of day... the operas Miss Ingram favours so well. We'll hear their announcement soon, I'm sure.

Jane cannot endure it. She leaves.

99

DELETED.

99

*

99A

EXT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - THE GARDENS

99A

*

Jane is walking away from the house. She sees Rochester and approaches him.

JANE

You are to be married.

ROCHESTER

Indeed. I see Mrs Fairfax has intimated my intention to put my neck into the sacred noose.

JANE

Adele should go to school. And I must seek another situation.

She walks on. Then turns.

JANE (CONT'D)

Congratulations, sir.

Rochester catches her up. He walks with her out of the garden and into the grounds beyond.

ROCHESTER

Thornfield is a pleasant place in summer, isn't it?

JANE

Yes sir.

ROCHESTER

You'll be sorry to part with it.
It's always the way with events in
life. No sooner have you got settled
than a voice cries 'rise and move
on!' I'll find you a new situation
Jane, one I hope that you'll accept.

JANE

I shall be ready when your order to
march comes.

Rochester blocks her path.

ROCHESTER

Must I really lose a faithful paid
subordinate such as yourself?

JANE

You must.

Jane turns and keeps on walking - into a wilder part of the estate.

ROCHESTER

We've been good friends, haven't we?

JANE

Yes, sir.

ROCHESTER

I have a strange feeling with regard
to you: as if I had a string
somewhere under my left ribs, tightly
knotted to a similar string in you.
And if you were to leave I'm afraid
that cord of communion would snap.
And then I've a notion that I'd take
to bleeding inwardly. As for you -
You'd forget me.

Jane finally stops, her great distress escaping her.

JANE

How? I've lived a full life here. I
have known happiness. I've talked
face to face with what I reverence
and delight in - an original,
expanded mind. I have known you Mr
Rochester -

ROCHESTER

Then why must you leave?

JANE

Because of your wife!

ROCHESTER

Jane... you must stay.

JANE

And become nothing to you? Am I a machine without feelings? Do you think that because I am poor, obscure, plain and little that I am soulless and heartless? I have as much soul as you and full as much heart. And if God had blessed me with beauty and wealth I could make it as hard for you to leave me as it is for I to leave you.

This comes as a revelation to Rochester.

JANE (CONT'D)

I'm not speaking to you through mortal flesh. It's my spirit that addresses your spirit as if we'd passed through the grave and stood at God's feet, equal - as we are.

Rochester takes Jane in his arms.

ROCHESTER

As we are.

She struggles.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Don't struggle -

JANE

(Freeing herself)
I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you.

Rochester releases her.

ROCHESTER

Then let your will decide your destiny. I offer you my hand, my heart and a share of all this.

He gestures towards the house, the land. Jane is stunned.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

I ask you to pass through life at my side. Jane, you are my equal and my likeness. Will you marry me?

JANE

Are you mocking me?

ROCHESTER

Do you doubt me?

JANE

Entirely.

(BEAT)

Your bride is Miss Ingram -

ROCHESTER

Miss Ingram? She is the machine without feelings. It's you - you rare, unearthly thing. Poor and obscure as you are - please accept me as your husband.

Jane begins to believe him, she studies his face.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

I must have you for my own.

JANE

You wish me to be your wife?

ROCHESTER

I swear it.

JANE

You love me?

ROCHESTER

I do.

JANE

Then sir, I will marry you.

They embrace.

Neither Jane nor Rochester moves. Darkness is almost complete. Still the intensity of the embrace is held.

A sheet of lightning momentarily lights up the sky. Some moments later a distant rumble of thunder.

100 I/E. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE GARDEN.

100 *

It is teeming with rain. Rochester and Jane run to the front entrance. He holds his jacket around her. Lightning.

100A INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE GREAT HALL

100A *

They reach the dry hearth inside. Thunder. They are both euphoric, breathless, laughing.

ROCHESTER

Good night. Good night. My love.

He kisses her. They kiss again. Jane will not let him go.

JANE

Good night.

As Jane parts from him, she sees Mrs Fairfax above on the gallery. She is looking down, deeply shocked.

101 EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GROUNDS.

101 *

Adele is climbing over a fallen tree, Sophie with her. It has been split open by a lightning bolt. Mrs Fairfax is very concerned.

JANE

Am I a monster? Is it so impossible that Mr Rochester should love me?

MRS FAIRFAX

No, I've long noticed that you were a sort of pet of his. But you're so young and so little acquainted with men.

Adele is whispering the news in Sophie's ear. Sophie cannot hide her shock. She finds it incomprehensible.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

I don't want to grieve you child, but let me put you on your guard. Gentlemen in his position... Let's just say they're not accustomed to marry their governesses. Until you are wed, distrust yourself as well as him. Please, keep him at a distance -

Jane has heard enough. She turns away. Adele follows her. And clings to her.

102 INT. DAY. THE LIBRARY.

102 *

Jane is curled up in a window seat with Adele. They are looking through a kaleidoscope together.

JANE (V.O.)

Human beings were not meant to enjoy such happiness on earth. To imagine such a lot befalling me... It's too much like a fairy tale.

Jane looks up to find Rochester watching.

102A INT. DAY. THE GREAT HALL - BALCONY

102A *

Jane is on her way to her room. Rochester is barring her way. He will not let her pass without a kiss. She will not let him have one.

ROCHESTER (V.O.)
I shall pour my jewels into your
lap.

Jane wriggles out of his arms and runs away.

102B DELETED.

102B *

102C EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GARDEN.

102C *

Rochester is walking with Jane.

ROCHESTER (V.O.)
I'll put my diamond chains around
your neck. And clasp my bracelets on
your wrists...

He takes her hand and kisses it. He draws her close. Her
resistance is crumbling. At last she pulls away.

102D DELETED.

102D *

102E INT. NIGHT. ROCHESTER'S STUDY.

102E *

Rochester is at his piano playing an augmented forth over
and over, brooding.

Jane approaches him. She takes him in her arms and kisses
his head, like a mother would. He clings to her.

ROCHESTER (V.O.)
I will cover the head I love best
with a priceless veil...

103 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - MRS FAIRFAX'S PARLOUR.

103 *

A box sits on the table. Jane pulls out a wedding gown.

ROCHESTER (V.O.)
For you are a beauty in my eyes...

Adele, Sophie and Mrs Fairfax are all looking on. Jane
holds it up, dismayed at its opulence.

ROCHESTER
And I will make the world
acknowledge you a beauty too.

Adele pulls out a vapoury veil. It goes on and on, with a
wraith-like, ghostly shimmer.

JANE (V.O.)
Then you will not know me, sir.

Adele wraps the veil around herself.

JANE
(whispers)
I will be Jane Eyre no longer...

Adele becomes caught in the veil, tangled, distressed.

103A INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE LONG GALLERY

103A *

We move down the silent corridor, following Grace Poole. Outside, a summer gale. Grace disappears through the doorway at the end.

An old black-carved wardrobe creaks open nearby, disturbed by Grace. Inside, looking almost animate, is a once opulent dress, now rotting with age. Over it, a tattered veil. It looks ghostly. The moan of the wind sounds almost human.

104 INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - JANE'S BEDROOM.

104 *

Jane wakes. A lightening storm softly illuminates the room.

JANE
Adele?

Her wardrobe is open. Jane is unnerved.

JANE (CONT'D)
(In French)
Sophie, is that you?

A form stands in front of the wardrobe, draped in ghostly white, a woman, tall and gaunt, she wears Jane's bridal veil; a phantom bride. Jane is paralysed with terror.

The woman takes the veil and slowly tears it in half; bruised arms, dirt, predatory nails. The last thing to be revealed is her face. Her eyes reveal an urgency, as if the tearing of the veil is a message.

She puts her hand under the sheets, Jane cannot move but she sees the folds creeping towards her. She takes Jane's thigh. Jane cannot breathe.

The woman moves closer trying to communicate. She climbs over Jane, just inches away from Jane's face. She drops the veil so it covers them both. For the second time in her life, Jane goes into a fit of terror.

105 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - JANE'S BEDROOM.

105 *

Jane is waking as if from a nightmare, half out of the bed. She is relieved, imagining that she has dreamt.

Then she sees the veil, rent in two. Her breath comes in great dry sobs. She is shocked to find herself still alive.

106 EXT. EVENING. - THORNFIELD - BY THE GATES 106 *

Jane is waiting, pale with anxiety. Rochester approaches on horseback, Pilot at his side. He is grinning. He pulls Jane up on the horse in front of him. She curls into his arms. Rochester senses her distress. He slows the horse. *

ROCHESTER
What is it?

Jane cannot articulate.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
Jane Eyre with nothing to say?

JANE
Everything seems unreal.

ROCHESTER
I am real enough. *

Jane touches him. *

JANE
You sir are most phantom-like of all.

107 INT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - ROCHESTER'S STUDY. 107 *

Rochester holds the torn veil in his hands. He is aghast.

ROCHESTER
This is the only explanation. It must have been half-dream, half-reality. A woman did enter your room last night and that woman was - must have been - a servant -

JANE
It was not a servant.

ROCHESTER
You know how strange things appear between sleeping and waking -

JANE
I was not asleep.

ROCHESTER
Jane, there are things about this house...

JANE
It was not a ghost.
Who is she?

Rochester is at a loss for words.

ROCHESTER

When we've been married a year and a day, I promise I'll tell you. Be satisfied Jane. When we're man and wife and far from here, I will tell you...

Jane has no choice but to accept. Rochester takes her in his arms.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Dear God. It was only the veil...

108 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - BLANCHE'S BEDROOM.

108 *

Jane is in her wedding gown. Sophie is pinning on a square of blond as a simple veil.

ADELE

Mademoiselle...

Adele gives her a small bouquet. Jane hugs her, very moved - as if she is leaving her childhood behind.

109 INT/EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GREAT HALL/GROUNDS.

109 *

Rochester is waiting at the bottom of the stairs. Jane walks down to him. Rochester, moved by her beauty, grips her hand. They pass Mrs Fairfax. She's full of concern.

They quit the house. Outside, a new coach is waiting. John watches as they pass. His expression is deeply uneasy.

110 DELETED

110 *

111 EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE CHURCH.

111 *

Rochester is striding towards a small church. As they approach the graveyard, Jane stumbles. She cannot go on. At last, Rochester perceives her. He lets her rest, suddenly full of solicitude.

When Jane is ready, Rochester forces himself to calmness and leads her into the church.

112 INT. DAY. THE CHURCH

112 *

At the altar, Jane glances at Rochester. He is looking straight ahead at the clergyman, Wood.

WOOD

I require and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgement when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it.

There is not a sound. The clergyman prepares the rings.

WOOD (CONT'D)

Edward Fairfax Rochester, do you take -

A commotion at the back of the church. Two men rapidly enter. One of them Briggs, hurries up the aisle.

BRIGGS

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

ROCHESTER

Proceed.

Wood is utterly dismayed.

BRIGGS

An insurmountable impediment exists.

ROCHESTER

Proceed!

BRIGGS

Mr Rochester has a wife now living.

Jane looks at Rochester. He denies nothing; defies everything. Briggs starts to read out a document.

BRIGGS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I affirm and can prove that Edward Fairfax Rochester was fifteen years ago married to my sister, Bertha Antoinetta Mason at St James church, Spanish Town, Jamaica. A copy of the register is now in my possession.
Signed, Richard Mason.

The figure by the door steps out of the shadows. It is Richard Mason. Rochester flies down the aisle, a groan of rage escapes him. He lifts his arm.

MASON

Good God -

WOOD

Sir, you are in a sacred place -

Mason flinches away. Rochester swallows his rage.

MASON

She is at Thornfield Hall. I saw
there in April. I'm her brother.

Rochester turns towards Jane. She remains where she was abandoned - at the altar - tiny under the vaulted arch. The bouquet falls from her hand. Rochester walks to her.

ROCHESTER

This girl knew nothing. She thought
all was fair and legal. She never
dreamt she was being entrapped into a
feigned union with a defrauded
wretch.

A tiny breath is the only noise Jane utters. Rochester pulls her from the altar to his side.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Come Jane. Come all of you and meet
my wife.

The sun outside is blinding. Jane closes her eyes.

113 I/E. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE ENTRANCE / GREAT HALL

113 *

Rochester enters pulling Jane after him, her hand still in his iron grip. Wood, Mason and Briggs follow.

Mrs Fairfax, Adele and the servants are waiting. Adele runs forward with confetti. Rochester stops her in her tracks.

ROCHESTER

Get back! Go, all of you - Go! There
will be no wedding today.

Adele has crumpled into frightened tears. Sophie comforts her, pale with shock. Jane meets Mrs Fairfax's uneasy eye as Rochester pulls her up the stairs.

114 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE LONG GALLERY.

114 *

Rochester pulls Jane along the corridor. Wood, Mason and Briggs follow, finding it increasingly hard to keep up. Rochester stops at the tapestried door. He unlocks it.

114A INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE THIRD FLOOR

114A *

Grace Poole is by the fire. She stands as if wanting to block their way.

GRACE

You ought to give warning, sir.

Rochester passes her by without a word. He leads Jane and the visitors through a narrow corridor and up another set of worm-eaten stairs. Rochester opens the door at the top with one hand; the other won't let go of Jane.

They enter an attic. Small windows, high up, too narrow to climb out of. A strongly guarded fire. There is no furniture except for a mattress.

ROCHESTER

This is Bertha Antoinetta Mason.

Jane gasps for breath. The woman who tore the veil sits with her back to us. Slowly, she rises. She wears a white shift; black rook feathers twined in her hair. Her pose is dignified, she turns towards the on-lookers, her expression triumphant. Grace has followed them in. Briggs and Wood are deeply repelled; Mason, deeply moved.

MASON

Netta. It is I, Richard...

Bertha sees him - and turns her back. She peers through a tiny gap in the shuttered window. A fly struggles against the glass. Grace addresses herself to Briggs and Wood. Jane cannot tear her eyes from the Bertha.

GRACE

She has her quiet times and her rages. The windows are shuttered lest she throw herself out. We have no furniture as she can make a weapon out of anything. I take her for a turn upon the roof each day, securely held, as she's taken to thinking she can fly.

Bertha is approaching them. Jane is frozen.

GRACE (CONT'D)

She's well cared for; I assure you.
My father has the asylum up at Whitby
and he taught me all I know.

Bertha lays her head on Rochester's shoulder and closes her eyes. Rochester, with great sadness:

ROCHESTER

My own demon...

Bertha triumphantly spits the fly at Rochester. He sees it coming and dashes it away. It lands on the bosom of Jane's dress. It struggles there. Everyone looks at it. Silence, but for Jane's slow intake of breath.

Rochester puts out a hand to remove the fly. With shocking speed and strength Bertha lays her nails into his cheek. She draws blood.

At last he lets go of Jane's hand.

Grace assists Rochester. They do not hit; they subdue. Bertha's attack is effectively contained. They have her on her knees, her arms behind her.

MASON

Netta, be calm. All will be well...

Bertha lifts her head and screams. If a scream could express the agony of a whole soul then this would. Jane turns on her heels, finds the door, exits.

115 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE LONG GALLERY.

115 *

Briggs is trying to catch up with Jane.

BRIGGS

You are clearly not to blame - and your uncle will be glad to hear it. I came at his request in order to prevent this false, dishonourable marriage. Miss Eyre?

Jane is too numb with shock to hear him. She hurries towards the sanctuary of her room, leaving Briggs standing in her wake.

116 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - JANE'S BEDROOM.

116 *

Jane stands in stillness, as the wedding dress falls crumpled to her feet.

CUT TO:

Jane slowly puts her arms around her black dress, as if it is her old self. She sits on the bed. She lies down.

117 DELETED.

117 *

118 NIGHT. THORNFIELD - JANE'S BEDROOM.

118 *

Jane wakes.

119 INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - JANE'S BEDROOM.

119 *

The moon has risen. Jane is at the mirror. Her reflection with hair loose, watches numbly as she pulls her hair into its neat bun. Behind her reflection in the looking-glass room, Jane sees Helen Burns watching her with deep concern.

She turns. No one is there.

120 INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - SECOND FLOOR.

120 *

Jane steps out of her room. Rochester is sitting opposite the door in a great wooden chair.

Jane falls forward - she has tripped over Pilot - and Rochester springs up catching her in his arms.

ROCHESTER

Jane... Forgive me. How could I? I'm worthless.

Jane comforts him. Her face is full of compassion but she says nothing. Rochester releases her.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

No tears... Why don't you cry? Why not scream at me? I deserve a hail of fire.

Jane just gazes at him weakly.

JANE

I need some water.

Rochester perceives Jane's inanition. He picks her up.

121 INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - ROCHESTER'S STUDY.

121 *

Rochester has lain Jane in front of the fire. He gives her water. She sips.

ROCHESTER

How are you now?

JANE

I'll be well again soon.

Rochester stoops to kiss her. She turns her head from him. He moves away, stung.

ROCHESTER

I know you. You're thinking. Talking is no use; you're thinking how to act.

JANE

All is changed, sir. I must leave you.

ROCHESTER

No! NO!

He controls the violence of his feelings.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Jane, do you love me?

Jane nods, tears spilling from her eyes.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
Then the essential things are the same. We've gone to the altar to make our pledge. Let's make it here and now, my spirit addressing yours. Be my wife.

Jane shakes her head.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
I pledge you my honour, my fidelity -

JANE
You can not.

ROCHESTER
My love, until death do us part -

JANE
What of truth?

ROCHESTER
I would have told you!...

Jane can only articulate the betrayal with a moan.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
I was wrong to deceive you; I see that now; it was cowardly. I should have appealed to your spirit - as I do now. Bertha Antoinetta Mason. She was wanted by my father for her fortune. He sent me to Spanish Town ignorant and raw. I hardly spoke with her before the wedding...

The memory seems to take the breath out of him. He sits.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
I lived with her for four years. Her temper ripened, her vices sprang up intemperate and unchaste. Only cruelty would check her and I'd not use cruelty. Her excesses fed the germs of madness and at last, the doctors shut her up. I was chained to her for life, Jane, not even the law could free me. I became so forlorn... one night I put a gun to my head.

He stares into the fire.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
And at that moment, I decided to live, but Bertha Antoinetta Mason ceased to be my wife.
(MORE)

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

I brought her here, instead... put her under the care of Mrs Poole. No one knew her relation to me. They thought her a bastard sister or a mistress, long cast-off.

Jane's face is wrought with pity.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Have you ever set foot in a madhouse, Jane?

JANE

No, sir.

ROCHESTER

The inmates are caged and baited like beasts. I spared her that, at least. What else would you know? This is the time for truth and for trust. I will lay my life bare...

JANE

I earnestly pity you, sir.

ROCHESTER

Jane, it's not pity that I see in your eye. It is not pity -

He holds her.

JANE

Do not say it -

ROCHESTER

It is love.

JANE

I must go apart from you.

ROCHESTER

You cannot mean to leave me.

JANE

I do.

He caresses her gently, lovingly.

ROCHESTER

Do you mean it now?

He runs his hands over her, with great tenderness. Jane offers no resistance.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Jane...

Rochester lays her down.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

You have never called me by my name.
My name is Edward. Say it.
Who would you offend by living with
me? Who would care?

Jane is almost lost. She speaks in a small voice.

JANE

I would.

Jane's resolve grows. She resists.

ROCHESTER

Will you listen to me?

JANE

I must start again.

ROCHESTER

Will you hear reason?

JANE

I care for myself.

Rochester cries out in frustration. His hold on her becomes violent. Jane looks at him with utter shock.

ROCHESTER

I could bend you with my finger and thumb; a mere reed you feel in my hands.

He is above her. Jane neither moves nor speaks.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

But what ever I do with this cage I cannot get at you. And it is your soul that I want! Why don't you come of your own free will?

JANE

(crying out)
God help me!

All the life seems to go out of Rochester. He lets Jane go. She pulls herself away from him. She stands. He remains, his face buried.

She goes to the door. Rochester turns his eyes to her, willing her to remain.

Jane turns away. She flies up the stairs, along the dark gallery, into her bedroom. She locks the door.

122 INT. DAWN. THORNFIELD - JANE'S BEDROOM/THE CORRIDOR. 122 *

Jane is staring at her wedding trunk, full of new clothes. The label reads Mrs Jane Rochester.

Rochester approaches the door, carrying a candelabra. In the room. Jane puts her scant belongings in a bag. She goes to the window, looks down. Sees that she can jump onto the balcony below.

She looks at her horizon. At the edge of the grounds, a small red-haired girl is waiting for her.

ROCHESTER

Jane...

Jane stands stock still. Rochester tries the door. He leans against it. Jane goes to the door, leans her whole body against it. They listen to each other breathe.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

Let me in.

Jane doesn't move.

123 EXT. DAWN. THORNFIELD - THE GROUNDS. 123 *

First light. Jane is climbing down one of the great buttresses at the side of the house.

123A EXT. DAWN. THORNFIELD - THE GROUNDS. 123A *

Jane is running; flushed, breathless, her dress soaked with dew. She has her bag of belongings over her shoulder. She trips; falls to her knees.

She looks back. For a moment she seems paralysed. She returns her gaze to the route ahead. She crawls forwards until she is able to raise herself to her feet.

123B DELETED. 123B *

124 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - JANE'S BEDROOM. 124 *

Rochester breaks open the door. The room is empty; Jane's wedding dress is left lying on the bed.

He picks the dress up in his fist.

ROCHESTER

Jane.

124A EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GROUNDS 124A *

Rochester comes striding out of the house.

ROCHESTER

Jane...

He cries out.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)

JANE!

125 INT. NIGHT. MORTON - JANE'S COTTAGE.

125 *

Jane is lit by the candlelight and the flames from her fire, her eyes are closed in the painful memory. Outside, a snowstorm howls.

JANE

Edward...

On her knee is a sketchbook. There is a knock on the door.

CUT TO:

Jane opening the door. Rochester is there, standing in the frozen hurricane and howling darkness. Jane pulls him inside. They embrace passionately. Jane is actively pulling him towards her, delirious with love and longing.

CUT TO:

The exact same shot of Jane hearing the knock on the door. She opens it, St John Rivers is there. He wears a parson's hat and woollen scarf. The contrast between the two men - and Jane's feelings for them - couldn't be more apparent.

JANE (CONT'D)

Mr St John - What on earth brings you from your hearth on a night like this? There's no bad news I hope?

He takes off his cloak; stamps the snow off his boots.

ST JOHN

I've heard half a story and I'm most impatient to find out the end.

JANE

Please... sit down.

ST JOHN

I know who you are... Jane Eyre...

Jane starts.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)

And I know from whom you hide... a certain Mr Fairfax Rochester.

JANE

Mr Rivers! -

ST JOHN

I can guess your feelings but please
hear me. Of Mr Rochester's character
I know nothing but he professed to
offer honourable marriage to you and
he had a wife already.

Jane can hardly bear to hear him say it.

JANE

How did you find out?

ST JOHN

You told me so yourself.

St John opens his pocket book and removes the drawing he took from the schoolroom. A sketch of Adele with her name written absently at the bottom, "Jane Eyre."

JANE

As you know so much, perhaps you'll
tell me how he is?

ST JOHN

Who?

JANE

Mr Rochester.

ST JOHN

I'm ignorant of all concerning him.
I saw an advertisement in the Times
from a solicitor named Briggs,
enquiring of a Jane Eyre. I knew a
Jane Elliott. This paper resolved my
suspicion into certainty. And so I
wrote to him.

Jane still cannot respond.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)

Are you not going to enquire why he
has gone to such lengths to find
you?

JANE

What does he want?

ST JOHN

Merely to tell you that your uncle,
Mr John Eyre of Madeira, is dead;
that he has left you all his
property and that you are now rich.

JANE

What?

ST JOHN

You are rich; quite an heiress.

Silence. Jane is flabbergasted. At last, Jane looks questioningly up at him.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)
Your forehead unbends at last; I
thought you were turning to stone.
Will you ask how much you are worth?

JANE
How much am I worth?

ST JOHN
Twenty thousand pounds.

The news literally takes Jane's breath away. St John begins to laugh at her reaction. She has never seen him laugh before.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)
If you'd committed a murder and I'd
found you out, you could scarcely
look more aghast.

JANE
There must be some mistake.

ST JOHN
None at all. You look desperately
miserable about it, I must say.

Jane still cannot take it in. She frowns in disbelief.

JANE
My uncle... I never met him. I'd
forgotten him. It cannot be. I've
done nothing to earn it.

ST JOHN
That's a rare reply, Miss Eyre.

Jane is deeply moved.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)
Sit down. I have shocked you.

St John goes into Jane's tiny kitchen. He sees her dinner things as yet unwashed. He rinses out her mug, slightly fastidious, and brings her water. Jane stands.

JANE
Mr St John... The debt I owe to you
and your sisters -

ST JOHN
Is nothing.

JANE
You saved my life.

Jane drinks. She is thinking hard.

JANE (CONT'D)

Please write to them. They will have
five thousand each - and so will
you, if you'll take it.

ST JOHN

Certainly not.

JANE

We could open up Moor House again.
And if they would accept me as a
sister perhaps I could live there
with them.

ST JOHN

I've told you the news too quickly;
you're confused.

JANE

Twenty thousand is a burden but five
thousand each...

ST JOHN

You must compose yourself.

JANE

I never had a brother or sisters -
Please, let me be yours.

ST JOHN

You don't have to buy our affection.

A terrible thought occurs to her.

JANE

Are you reluctant to have me?

ST JOHN

No, Miss Eyre. On the contrary...
I'll write to my sisters, as you
request.

She throws her arms around St John. He, finding it peculiar
to be held, gently tries to calm her. He is moved. Jane's
eyes are still shining with happiness.

JANE

Brother...

She releases him. He has misunderstood her embrace.

St John stands back, watching their raw emotion, the gratitude of his sisters, the genuine delight of Jane.

127 **DELETED.** 127 *

128 INT. NIGHT. MOOR HOUSE - THE PARLOUR. 128 *

St John is praying over the women with devoted fervour.

ST JOHN

We are bid to work while it is day.
For night cometh when no man shall
work. Help us to choose the harder
path, for as our master is long-
suffering so must we be. Amen.

The women stand.

MARY

Good night.

St John kisses Mary. He kisses Diana.

ST JOHN

Good night.

He seems to be waiting for something from Jane.

DIANA

Is Jane not our sister?

Jane turns to Diana, mortified.

As she turns back, she finds St John's face right in front of her. He kisses her. A kiss with no warmth; an experiment. It almost makes her recoil. He examines its effect, satisfied.

ST JOHN

Good night.

129 INT. NIGHT. MOOR HOUSE - JANE'S BEDROOM. 129 *

Jane closes the door. She puts her hand across her lips. The icy kiss has agonised her with the full force of her loneliness. The tiny bedroom suddenly seems to imprison her. Then a low knock at the door makes her start. She opens it. St John is on the narrow threshold.

ST JOHN

I go to India in six weeks.

St John draws Jane even closer.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)

I can see what your gifts are and why they were given. God intended you for a missionary's wife. I want to claim you. Come to India. As my wife.

Jane is utterly crestfallen.

JANE

I'm not fit for it.

ST JOHN

I trust you unreservedly. And know this; in you, I recognise a fellow soul, a soul that would revel in the flame of sacrifice.

Jane is chilled to the bone by his words. She backs away.

CUT TO:

Jane leaning against the closed door, trying to think, trying to compose herself.

130 DELETED.

130 *

131 EXT. EVENING. MOOR HOUSE - THE HEATH.

131 *

The sun is setting. Jane meets St John, walking home from his parish.

JANE

I'll go with you to India.

St John contains his delight. They walk along the crest of a hill back towards the house.

JANE (CONT'D)

I'll go with you, if I may go free.

ST JOHN

Free?

JANE

You and I should not marry.

St John couldn't be more amazed.

ST JOHN

How can I take out to India a girl of nineteen, unless she is my wife?

He dismisses her objections and walks on.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)
You have said you will come; that is
all that matters. We shall marry.
And undoubtedly enough of love would
follow.

Jane is shocked.

JANE
Enough of love?

ST JOHN
Yes, quite enough.

JANE
Of love?

ST JOHN
In all its forms.

JANE
I scorn your idea of love...

St John is mortified. A slow rage begins to boil in him.

ST JOHN
I've done nothing that deserves your
scorn.

JANE
Forgive me but the very name of love
is an apple of discord between us.
My dear brother, abandon your scheme
of marriage.

ST JOHN
Why this refusal? It makes no sense!

St John realises with a sudden fury.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)
I know where your heart turns and to
what it still clings.

Rochester's name hangs unsaid between them.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)
Why have you not yet crushed this
lawless passion? It offends me and
it offends God!

Jane thinks she hears something; her own name. A cry, very
far away. She strains to hear.

ST JOHN (CONT'D)
I am offering you -

JANE
Shhhhhh!

She hears her name.

ROCHESTER (V.O.)
Jane.

She moves away from St John.

ROCHESTER (V.O.)
JANE!

JANE
(In reply)
What is it?

St John stares at her, bewildered.

JANE (CONT'D)
Wait for me... Where are you?

She looks wildly about the moor. A desperate cry escapes her as she searches for the source of the voice.

ST JOHN
What have you heard? Why do you
speak to the air?

Jane glances at him, seeing him for what he is; a repressed, controlling, ill-guided man. She shouts:

JANE
I am coming!

Jane runs further on to the moors.

She looks all around her at the moonlit landscape.

We see Jane's desperate face. Rochester is not there. But on the horizon, showing her the way is a barefoot red haired girl, wearing a thin white nightgown.

Jane's decision is made.

132 DELETED.

132 *

133 EXT. DAY. THE ROAD APPROACHING THORNFIELD.

133 *

Jane is in a trap, being driven along the lane to Thornfield. She looks well-off and confident, much more mature than the raw schoolgirl who first arrived.

The driver stops, Jane dismounts, running towards Thornfield.

133A EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD ESTATE

133A *

Jane turns a corner and at last Thornfield is visible. But instead of the battlemented mansion, Jane sees a vast blackened ruin.

She stares at the ruin aghast.

134 EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE RUINS.

134 *

Jane approaches the house. The roof has completely gone. The great walls and battlements are blackened with fire. Empty windows gape on a hollow shell. The inside of the house has collapsed. Through the hanging door, only its charred remains can be seen. Jane gazes in horror and distress. She goes in.

135 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE RUINS

135 *

Jane wanders into the great hall. Everything is black with smoke damage. Weeds grow in patches of light. It is silent, eerie.

Jane peers into Rochester's study. Through the damage some of the old bits of furniture and artefacts can still be seen: The piano, half on its side. Rochester's chair and there, in the filth on the floor, a blackened toy of Adele's.

Jane picks it up, stricken.

A noise reverberates through the house; perhaps a beam falling, a door slamming. Perhaps an unquiet ghost. Jane suddenly feels watched. She goes back out into the hall. She turns around, watching. Out of the corner of her eye we sees something move in a doorway.

Jane can't tell if what she has seen is real or not. But she wants to find out, to question it. She approaches the doorway with urgency - and some trepidation.

There is nothing there. She walks into the room. An old blackened wardrobe is there, its door creaking open. Hanging off the back of it is Rochester's fire-damaged dressing gown. The sound of water dripping. Jane hears a footstep and spins round, startled.

Standing on the threshold is Mrs Fairfax. Mrs Fairfax looks more shocked than she does.

MRS FAIRFAX

Jane Eyre...

Jane's great distress escapes her.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

I thought gypsies were come. Then I saw you, and I thought, it cannot be, you are a ghost.

136 INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE RUINS.

136 *

Mrs Fairfax and Jane walk together through the ruins.

MRS FAIRFAX

He sought you as if you were a lost and precious jewel. He didn't rest. And as the days turned into weeks and no word came, he grew quite savage in his disappointment. He sent Adele away to school, Sophie and I to the village. He cut himself off from all society. He didn't leave the house.

Mrs Fairfax leads Jane into a room that could have once been her parlour. She has cleared a small area in front of the hearth.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

No one knows how it started. I expect Mrs Poole took too much of the gin and water and while she slept the lady, Mrs Rochester, unhooked her keys. She did what she failed to do last year; set the whole place to fire. Mr Rochester was in his study. He raised up John and Martha, cleared the house of people; did not rest until they were all safe. But then he went back in. The house was dry as tinder and the flames were tearing up so high they brought men running from the village.

Jane is looking up at the battlemented vault. Nothing of the roof remains.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)

By the time that I arrived, she was standing on the roof. The very edge. Mr Rochester was there, reaching out to her. I heard him call her name and beg her to come down. But she did not. She jumped, her arms spread out - in a bid to fly.

The drop is dizzying.

I thought that Mr Rochester would jump down too. But he stood as if he would not move until the fire consumed him.

Jane is devastated.

MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)
Why did you run away in the night
like that, child? I would have
helped you. I had some money saved.
You could have come to me -

They both sob.

JANE
Where is he?

137 EXT. DAY. FERNDEAN - THE GROUNDS.

137 *

Jane is walking through forest, along a grass grown track. She comes to a pair of iron gates. She walks through them.

She finds herself in front of a decrepit manor; no garden, just a sweeping semi circle of meadow grass. Jane stops.

John is scything the grass. He falls still when he sees her. He knows exactly why she's there and he motions to the woods at the side of the house.

Jane walks on. It is a family graveyard John has pointed to; the tombstones of the Rochesters. She walks through the stones and looks up over the last.

There, being led by Pilot, is Edward Fairfax Rochester. For a moment she watches him, hardly able to breathe.

Pilot recognises her.

ROCHESTER
Pilot.

Jane runs towards Rochester but stops short. He is on his guard, his expression wary. We finally see what the fire has done to him. His eyes are burned, his right hand hidden in his coat.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
Who's there?

Jane steps to him, putting her hand on his. She releases Pilot from his hold. Rochester feels her hand with his own. Lifts it to his face.

ROCHESTER (CONT'D)
This hand... Her hand...

Jane moves into his arms. She holds him.

ROCHESTER,
Jane Eyre - Jane Eyre.

Neither is able to speak. The emotions rise on both their faces, overwhelming them.

JANE
Edward, I am come back to you.

He holds her.

138 DELETED. 138 *

139 DELETED. 139

140 DELETED 140 *

141 EXT. NIGHT. FERNDEAN - THE GROUNDS BY A LAKE. 141 *

Night has fallen. Jane and Rochester are still close as if the hours have passed without them noticing.

ROCHESTER
You are all together a human being
Jane?

JANE
I conscientiously believe so.

His face spreads with a smile, the real sunshine of feeling.

ROCHESTER
Let us go inside.

JANE
But it's got dark. I cannot see.

Jane runs her fingers over his face, like a blind person would. They are two tiny figures, dwarfed by the edge of the dark lake. She kisses him.

125 THE END. 125