

JANE EYRE

Based on the novel by
Charlotte Brontë

Adapted for the stage by
Mark Jowett

CHARACTERS

Actor A	Actor B	Actor C
Jane Eyre	Mrs Fairfax	Mr Rochester
	Grace Poole	Voice of male servant
	Bertha	Gypsy fortune teller (turning out to be Rochester)
	Silhouette in church	

Prologue

Creepy music, dry ice, eerie cackling, figures running around, a mad figure running loose, then others restraining her until she subsides...

Images on screen of countryside rolling past and the sound of a horse and carriage on a journey... JANE appears, at first silhouetted by the images, becoming increasingly lit as images of the journey fade behind her...

JANE

Were I to tell you of my entire childhood, the writing of it would fill a hundred pages. I will spare you my unhappy infant years, unloved by the wife of my late uncle and I will not dwell on my school days, which were harsh. But imagine, dear audience, that I have survived these times, and have now decided to begin a journey, to take my first steps in life as a young adult. I have just advertised myself as a governess in the newspaper – and to my joy, I have received a reply. Imagine me now, on my journey to my new employer, who remains, for a short while still, completely unknown to me. The trotting of hooves lulls me into a slumber and I dream of what my future may bring me...

Fade to black. The hooves get louder at first; then fade out – to be replaced by the sound of a crackling fire.

Scene 1

MRS FAIRFAX is in a cosy parlour, knitting by the fireplace.

MALE SERVANT'S VOICE (*off stage*)

Will you come this way, ma'am?

JANE enters. MRS FAIRFAX gets up and crosses the room to greet her.

MRS FAIRFAX

You must be Jane Eyre! How do you do, my dear? You must have had a long journey.

JANE

Mrs Fairfax, I suppose?

MRS FAIRFAX

That's right, dear. You must be very cold. Let me help you with your coat

JANE
Thank you.

MRS FAIRFAX
Now come over to the fire. One of the maids has prepared a drink for you.

JANE
That is very kind...

MRS FAIRFAX goes to a table where a drink is standing.

JANE
Shall I have the pleasure of seeing Miss Fairfax tonight?

MRS FAIRFAX
What did you say, my dear? I am a little deaf.

MRS FAIRFAX approaches Jane with the drink.

JANE
I was asking if I shall see Miss Fairfax tonight?

MRS FAIRFAX
Miss Fairfax? Oh, you mean Miss Varens! Adele Varens is the name of your pupil.

JANE
She is not your daughter?

MRS FAIRFAX
No. I have no family. *(Handing her the drink)* Here you are.

JANE
Thank you.

MRS FAIRFAX
Do you have family, Miss Eyre?

JANE
No. My parents died when I was very young.

MRS FAIRFAX

Oh I am sorry to hear that... *(Slight pause)* Well I am glad you have joined us. It will be most pleasant living here now with a companion. For several months, I felt quite alone moving about in this empty house. But then the little girl arrived with her nurse and brightened up the place immensely – and now you are here, life will be very cheerful!

JANE

I am very happy to be here, Mrs Fairfax. I only hope my company will be agreeable...

MRS FAIRFAX

I have no doubt of that, my dear! But I'll not keep you sitting up tonight! You must be tired: I'll show you your bedroom. I'll just get a candle...

MRS FAIRFAX exits.

JANE *(narrating)*

I had not expected such a friendly reception! I had imagined that Mrs Fairfax would treat me like a servant. Instead I felt like a valued guest! My heart warmed to the worthy lady. She led the way up a staircase of dark oak and along a gloomy corridor. There was a chill in the air and I was glad to reach my room.

Once inside my spirits were raised. My room was not grand, but it was warm and friendly.

A clock strikes twelve. Sounds and light suggest transition from night to following morning.

JANE

I slept soundly that night and awoke to a bright day. I dressed quickly and stepped out into the sunlit garden...

MRS FAIRFAX appears behind her.

MRS FAIRFAX

I see you are an early riser! How do you like Thornfield?

JANE

I like it very much!

MRS FAIRFAX

Yes, it is a pretty place; but I fear it will be getting out of order, unless Mr Rochester visits more often.

JANE

Mr Rochester? Who is he?

MRS FAIRFAX

The owner of Thornfield. Did you not know he was called Rochester?

JANE

No. I thought Thornfield belonged to you.

MRS FAIRFAX

To me? Bless you, child; what an idea! I am only the housekeeper.

JANE

And the little girl?

MRS FAIRFAX

Adele is Mr Rochester's ward.

JANE

Is she here?

MRS FAIRFAX

Yes you will meet her soon. I hope you are more able than I am to follow her speech.

JANE

Is she difficult to understand? Does she speak too softly?

MRS FAIRFAX

Why no, my dear, far from it. But she does mix her English with so many foreign words...

JANE

Foreign words?

MRS FAIRFAX

Did I not say? Adele is French. Mr Rochester brought her over from France for her education.

JANE

Am I to start lessons with her today?

MRS FAIRFAX

Perhaps you could spend some time with her before lunch. But first of all, why don't I show you over the rest of the house?

JANE

I would like that!

MRS FAIRFAX

Well, let us begin with the dining-room...

Sounds of the garden cross-fade to a clock ticking.

JANE

What a beautiful room!

MRS FAIRFAX

Yes... I had to open the windows: Everything gets so damp when rooms stay empty for a long time...

JANE

And is this the drawing room, through here?

MRS FAIRFAX

That's right, dear.

JANE

In what order you keep these rooms! Anyone would think people came here every day.

MRS FAIRFAX

Mr Rochester's visits here are rare – but they are often sudden and unexpected; so I always keep these rooms ready for his arrival.

JANE

Is Mr Rochester a demanding sort of man?

MRS FAIRFAX

Not particularly so; but he has a gentleman's tastes and habits...

JANE

Do people like him, generally?

MRS FAIRFAX

Oh, yes; the family have always been respected here.

JANE

But do you like him? Is he liked for himself?

MRS FAIRFAX

I have no reason not to like him...

JANE

What sort of character does he have?

MRS FAIRFAX

Oh... Impeccable... although... He is rather peculiar. He has travelled much and seen a great deal of the world and... I dare say he is clever, but I never had much conversation with him.

JANE

How is he peculiar?

MRS FAIRFAX

It is not easy to describe... but you cannot always be sure whether he is in jest or serious, whether pleased or displeased; you don't completely understand him – at least, I don't... But it does not matter: he is a good master. *(Pause)* Let us go to the top of the house.

JANE follows MRS FAIRFAX to another part of the stage. The lights dim to suggest gloomy corridors.

MRS FAIRFAX

Here we are – the top floor.

JANE

Do the servants sleep in these rooms?

MRS FAIRFAX

No; they have rooms at the back; no one sleeps here. If there were a ghost at Thornfield, this would be its haunt.

JANE

But there is no ghost?

MRS FAIRFAX

No – but it is said the Rochesters have been quite violent in their time: perhaps that is why they rest tranquilly in their graves now.

JANE

“After life’s fitful fever they sleep well”...

MRS FAIRFAX starts to move on.

JANE

Where are you going now, Mrs. Fairfax?

MRS FAIRFAX

Onto the roof. Come and see the view.

MRS FAIRFAX exits.

JANE (*narrating*)

I followed her through a trap-door to the roof. Looking down, I surveyed the grounds laid out like a map: the lawn, a field beyond, a wood, a nearby church and hills framing the view. All was pleasing. But I wondered if I would ever discover what life was like beyond those hills – or if my role from now on was to be companion to a housekeeper and governess to a little girl... if the lonely rooms of Thornfield would be my entire world from now on... I turned and went back down the ladder. Mrs Fairfax stayed behind a moment to fasten the trap-door. In the corridor below I could scarcely see anything ahead of me. All was dark after the dazzling sky above...

As JANE moves along the dark corridor, we hear an unearthly laugh. JANE reacts with alarm. The laugh comes again. MRS FAIRFAX re-appears.

JANE

Mrs Fairfax! Did you hear that laugh? Who is it?

MRS FAIRFAX

One of the servants? Perhaps Grace Poole...

JANE

But did you hear it?

MRS FAIRFAX

Yes... I often hear her. She sews in one of these rooms.

We hear the laugh once more, more faintly.

MRS FAIRFAX (*addressing a closed door*)

Too much noise, Grace! Remember directions! (*Pause, change of mood*) Well, let me take you to meet your pupil!

MRS FAIRFAX leads the way. With a small shudder JANE takes one last look at the door where the laugh came from. Then she hurries after MRS FAIRFAX. Once the stage is empty, we hear the laugh again. Fade to black.

Scene 2

Creepy music. On screen we see flowing red curtains, a book flying through the air. Eerie laughter blends in with stern voices – criticising JANE, and mocking her. Sounds of sobbing. Music reaches a crescendo and LIGHTS UP.

JANE is fetching her coat, preparing to go outside. MRS FAIRFAX enters, holding a letter.

MRS FAIRFAX

Ah there you are, Miss Eyre. All well, I trust?

JANE

Yes, thank you – but I am afraid Adele has a cold.

MRS FAIRFAX

Poor thing! Is there anything—?

JANE

She is fine. It is nothing too serious, and she is sitting by the fire. I have given her her favourite doll to play with.

MRS FAIRFAX

That was very thoughtful of you. She has grown very fond of you these past... three months? Is it that long already?

JANE

Yes. And I am fond of her too! (*Slight pause*) Do you wish for

that letter to be posted? I could take it to the village for you.

MRS FAIRFAX

There's no need to trouble yourself... Well, if you are sure...
Thank you.

MRS FAIRFAX hands the letter to JANE.

MRS FAIRFAX

And you, yourself... are well settled in here? Your room is
satisfactory to your needs?

JANE

I am very comfortable there. It is true I had troubled dreams
last night – but I was all the happier to be greeted by my
friendly room this morning!

MRS FAIRFAX

That is pleasing to hear. Though I am sorry to hear you were
troubled by nightmares. I hope you do not suffer from them
frequently.

JANE

Not too often, Mrs Fairfax.

MRS FAIRFAX

I, myself, have never experienced such a thing. I cannot
imagine what it must be like.

JANE

Well I am glad you are spared them. I was... not always
happy in my childhood and... sometimes in my dreams, I feel
I am there again... in a room with red curtains – The whole
room is red, burning red, there is banging at the door...
shouts and screams fill my head. And then it becomes clear:
I am the one banging at the door... I am the one screaming...
to be let out...

*The stage fades to red. MRS FAIRFAX remains still. Sounds of cries and
banging fade in. As the stage fades to black, a new sound blends in: the
drumming of hooves...*

Scene 3

On the screen we see images of the countryside racing past, as if viewed from horseback. Then all goes black as we hear the horse neighing in alarm, the sound of man and horse crashing to the ground, and a dog barking. LIGHTS UP on ROCHESTER lying against a grassy bank in pain.

ROCHESTER
What the deuce am I to do now?

JANE enters, sees the man and approaches.

JANE
Are you injured, sir?

ROCHESTER curses under his breath, but gives no clear reply.

JANE
Can I do anything?

ROCHESTER
Just stand to one side

ROCHESTER attempts to rise, painfully, to his feet, then checks one foot as it feels sprained.

JANE
If you are hurt, I can fetch someone from the village.

ROCHESTER
Thank you: I don't have any broken bones, only a sprain...

Again ROCHESTER tries to stand properly – but finds it painful.

JANE
I will not leave you, sir, till I see you are fit to mount your horse.

ROCHESTER
Shouldn't you be at home yourself? Where are you from and what are you doing out here alone?

JANE

From just below; and I am not afraid of being out alone. I have just been to the nearest village to post a letter and am now on my way back.

ROCHESTER

You live just below... Do you mean that house with the battlements?

JANE

Yes, sir. Thornfield Hall.

ROCHESTER

Whose house is it?

JANE

Mr Rochester's.

ROCHESTER

Do you know this... Mr Rochester?

JANE

No, I have never seen him.

ROCHESTER

Why not?

JANE

Since my time there, he has never visited.

ROCHESTER

Do you know where he is?

JANE

No, I don't.

ROCHESTER

You are not a servant at the hall?

JANE

No.

ROCHESTER

So, you are...?

JANE

The governess.

ROCHESTER

Ah, the governess! I had almost forgotten! I will not ask you to fetch help, but you may help me yourself, if you will be so kind.

JANE

Yes, sir.

ROCHESTER

If you would lead me to my horse...

JANE

Lean on my shoulder, sir...

ROCHESTER

Very well...

He looks bemused for a moment; then does as she suggests. They exit together. We hear his horse speeding off; then just the wind in the trees. JANE re-enters.

JANE

He mounted his horse – and was gone! I was alone. All that remained was to return to Thornfield... and yet... I was filled with a sense of loss... For one brief moment I had felt such excitement. All too briefly! And I feared it would become all too soon a distant memory...

We have the impression of her returning home and removing her coat. MRS FAIRFAX comes in to fetch her knitting.

MRS FAIRFAX

Ah there you are Miss Eyre! I was beginning to worry about you. There was no difficulty with posting the letter?

JANE

None at all, Mrs Fairfax. Thank you for your concern. My journey took... a little longer than expected, that is all. Do we have guests? I saw the stable boy with a different horse...

MRS FAIRFAX

Not a guest, Miss Eyre. The owner! Mr Rochester has returned. But there has been an accident. Just near here, his

horse slipped, and the master has injured his ankle. The doctor has been called.

JANE
Oh, I see...!

MRS FAIRFAX
I beg your pardon?

JANE
I mean – that is why the boy was with a different horse!

MRS FAIRFAX
Yes indeed! Now, where did I put my knitting...?

JANE
Over there – on that chair.

MRS FAIRFAX
Oh goodness me! I have just walked past it! I hope I am not becoming blind as well as deaf... Well, Mr Rochester has no further need of me this evening, so I shall withdraw. Good night, Miss Eyre.

JANE
Good night.

MRS FAIRFAX exits, leaving JANE alone, flushed with excitement. She goes to fetch a lantern and for the first time sees a cane on the table. She picks it up and examines it with wonder. Then she replaces it as she found it and exits with the lantern. Fade to black.

Scene 4

Images of time passing, leaves blowing, curtains billowing and an old clock ticking.

LIGHTS UP on JANE in her room, lost in thought. MRS FAIRFAX arrives at her door.

MRS FAIRFAX
I hope I am not disturbing you, but... Mr Rochester would like you to take tea with him in the drawing-room.

JANE
When is his tea-time?

MRS FAIRFAX
Oh, immediately: he keeps early hours in the country.

JANE
Is it necessary to change my frock?

MRS FAIRFAX
No... But... You want a brooch, perhaps.

JANE
Oh... I have one here.

MRS FAIRFAX
Oh, yes. Very pretty. Let me help you.

MRS FAIRFAX helps JANE attach the brooch, then leads her to the drawing room, where ROCHESTER is seated with his leg up. At first, ROCHESTER pays no attention to JANE...

MRS FAIRFAX
Here is Miss Eyre, sir.

ROCHESTER
Let Miss Eyre be seated.

Unfazed, JANE sits down. An awkward silence follows...

MRS FAIRFAX
It is unfortunate that you had to see so many visitors today – suffering as you are with that sprain. I fear it must be very painful.

ROCHESTER
You need not fear too much, Mrs Fairfax. No doubt I will survive the evening at least.

MRS FAIRFAX
Still, to go through the whole day without thought to your own suffering—

ROCHESTER

Madam, I should like some tea.

MRS FAIRFAX

Oh, yes of course! One moment...

MRS FAIRFAX exits, a little flustered. ROCHESTER looks at JANE for the first time. She looks back coolly, unflustered.

ROCHESTER

How do you find the girl?

JANE

Adele? Oh – she is doing well enough.

ROCHESTER

Well enough, eh? If you have succeeded in getting her to study at all, then I commend you. The child is monstrously spoilt. She has already discovered that I have brought back a present for her and will not stop pestering me until she has opened it. (*A beat*) Did you expect a present, Miss Eyre? Are you fond of presents?

JANE

I hardly know, sir; I have little experience of them: they are generally thought pleasant things.

ROCHESTER

Generally thought? But what do you think?

JANE

I should need time, sir, before I could give you a worthy answer: a present has many faces to it, has it not?

ROCHESTER

Miss Eyre, you beat about the bush.

JANE

Because I have less confidence in my deserts than Adele: she can prefer the claim of old acquaintance, and says you have always given her playthings; but I have done nothing to entitle me to a gift.

ROCHESTER

Oh, don't fall back on over-modesty! I have examined Adele, and find you have taken great pains with her: she is not

bright; yet in a short time she has made much improvement.

JANE

Sir, you have now given me my present. There is nothing that I should wish for more than praise of my pupil's progress.

ROCHESTER

Humph!

MRS FAIRFAX comes back in with a tray and things for tea. She proceeds to arrange the cups, spoons, &c., with assiduous celerity.

MRS FAIRFAX

Will you hand Mr Rochester's cup?

JANE takes the cup from MRS FAIRFAX and passes it to ROCHESTER. There is a brief moment between them, then JANE returns to her seat. MRS FAIRFAX passes JANE a cup, then sits further away with her knitting.

ROCHESTER

You have been here for three months?

JANE

Yes, sir.

ROCHESTER

And you came from--?

JANE

Lowood school.

ROCHESTER

Ah! How long were you there?

JANE

Eight years.

ROCHESTER

Eight years! No wonder you have the look of another world. I marvelled where you had got that sort of face. When you appeared last night, I had half a mind to demand whether you had bewitched my horse to make me fall...

MRS FAIRFAX stops knitting for a moment, bemused by this unexpected turn in the conversation...

ROCHESTER
Who are your parents?

JANE
I have none.

ROCHESTER
Uncles and aunts?

JANE
None; nor brothers and sisters.

ROCHESTER
And your home?

JANE
I have none.

ROCHESTER
Who recommended you to come here?

JANE
I advertised, and Mrs Fairfax answered.

MRS FAIRFAX
And I am thankful for the choice I made. Miss Eyre has been an invaluable companion to me, and a kind teacher to Adele.

ROCHESTER
Don't trouble yourself to give her a character. I shall judge for myself. Have you seen much society?

JANE
Only the pupils and teachers of Lowood School...

ROCHESTER
The director of Lowood, is a deeply religious man, is he not?

JANE
Some might say so.

ROCHESTER
But not you?

JANE
No. We all disliked Mr Brocklehurst. He was a harsh man; he cut off our hair to humiliate us; and for economy's sake bought bad needles and thread, with which we could hardly sew.

MRS FAIRFAX
That was very false economy.

ROCHESTER
Was that the worst of his failings?

JANE
No. *(Pause)* He told the younger children chilling tales of sudden deaths and made them afraid to go to bed. When he was in charge of kitchen supplies he starved us. Luckily a committee was formed in my later years, after which conditions improved considerably.

ROCHESTER
How old are you now?

JANE
Eighteen, sir.

ROCHESTER
For one so young, there is much experience to read on your face. What did you learn at Lowood? Can you play the piano?

JANE
A little.

ROCHESTER
We shall see if that is the case by and by. Adele showed me some sketches this morning, which she said were yours. I don't know whether they were entirely your work; probably a master aided you?

JANE
No, indeed!

ROCHESTER

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

JANE

You shall judge for yourself, sir.

ROCHESTER scrutinises each painting.

ROCHESTER

You appear to have taken much time with them, and some thought. Where did you copy these from?

JANE

Out of my head.

ROCHESTER

That head I see on your shoulders?

JANE

Yes, sir.

ROCHESTER

Are there more subjects like this in that head?

JANE

I think so: I hope it will yield better subjects.

ROCHESTER

In this picture with the clouds – I feel as if the wind really is blowing through them as we speak... You use water colours?

JANE

Yes sir.

ROCHESTER

Some of these are rather, macabre. You must have some dark thoughts inside that head... Were you happy when you painted these?

JANE

I was absorbed, sir: yes, I was happy. To paint them was one of the greatest pleasures I have known.

ROCHESTER

That is not saying much. Your pleasures, by your own account, have been few... You did these while at school?

JANE

Yes, during a summer vacation.

ROCHESTER

They are, for a schoolgirl, peculiar.

ROCHESTER consults his watch, and gets up, holding Jane's portfolio.

ROCHESTER

Well, now I wish you good-night. I will take these with me – if I may.

JANE

By all means.

MRS FAIRFAX gathers her knitting. She and JANE curtsey, receiving a frigid bow in return. ROCHESTER exits. JANE and MRS FAIRFAX hover for a moment before going out.

JANE

You said Mr Rochester was not especially peculiar...

MRS FAIRFAX

Well, is he?

JANE

I think so: he is very changeful and abrupt.

MRS FAIRFAX

No doubt he may appear so to a stranger, but I am so accustomed to his manner, I never think of it; and then, if he has peculiarities of temper, allowance should be made.

JANE

Why, may I ask?

MRS FAIRFAX

Partly because it is his nature; and partly perhaps because he has painful thoughts...

JANE

Painful thoughts? What about?

MRS FAIRFAX

Oh... About his brother, who died a few years ago.

JANE

His brother?

MRS FAIRFAX

Yes. The present Mr Rochester has been the owner for nine years.

JANE

Nine years is a long time. Was he so fond of his brother as to be still inconsolable?

MRS FAIRFAX

No, I believe there were some misunderstandings between them. They say his elder brother, Mr Rowland prejudiced his father against him. The old gentleman left Thornfield to Mr Rowland, but was anxious that Mr Edward should have enough money, too. It appears that, once Mr Edward was old enough, his father and elder brother took... certain steps... that were... not quite fair... in order to arrange an income for Mr Edward. Later, Mr Edward felt that they had brought him into a painful position and never forgave them. What the precise nature of that position was I never clearly knew, but for many years now, he has led an unsettled life. He hasn't stayed at Thornfield for more than a fortnight, since he inherited the estate. No wonder he shuns the place.

JANE

Why should he shun it?

MRS FAIRFAX (*suddenly evasive*)

Perhaps he thinks it gloomy.

JANE

A few more visitors would solve that – as you have experienced yourself.

MRS FAIRFAX

Indeed, although I do not know if we should be comparing my needs with those of Mr Rochester... Well, if you do not mind, Miss Eyre, I shall take my knitting to the parlour. I

never feel this room gets warm enough!

JANE

Of course, Mrs Fairfax. Do not trouble yourself with the tray. I will take it back.

MRS FAIRFAX exits with her knitting. JANE lingers and surveys the scene of her conversation with Rochester. She takes it all in for a moment, then picks up the tea tray. On her way out she pauses at the place where Rochester was sitting.

JANE *(to herself)*

Peculiar, indeed!

JANE exits. BLACKOUT

Insert short grace poole section here!!! looking for schoolbooks...?

Scene 5

A clock strikes somewhere in the house. JANE enters (it is a few weeks later) but ROCHESTER doesn't get up or turn to look.

ROCHESTER

Is that you, Miss Eyre?

JANE does not respond straight away, so that ROCHESTER goes to the extreme effort of turning and seeing her.

ROCHESTER

I see that it is. Come and be seated. Draw your chair forward. *(Pause)* You examine me, Miss Eyre. Do you think me handsome?

JANE

No, sir.

ROCHESTER

By my word! There is something singular about you. You look so quiet and serious sitting there, but when I ask you a question, you give an immediate reply, which, if not blunt, is at least brusque. What do you mean by it?

JANE

Sir, I beg your pardon. I ought to have said that beauty is of little consequence, or something of that sort.

ROCHESTER

You ought to have replied no such thing. Beauty of little consequence, indeed! And so, under pretence of softening the previous outrage, you stick a needle into me!

JANE

Mr Rochester, allow me to disown my first answer: it was only a blunder.

ROCHESTER

Just so. When I was your age, I was not so different from you: I was considerate enough to the unlucky; but Fortune has knocked me about since: and now I am hard and tough as an India-rubber ball; pervious, though, through a chink or two still, with one sentient point in the middle... Does that leave hope for me?

JANE

Hope of what, sir?

ROCHESTER

Of a re-transformation from India-rubber back to flesh?

JANE

Forgive me. I do not know what answer to make to your question...

ROCHESTER

Yes: You look very puzzled, Miss Eyre; and though you are not pretty any more than I am handsome, a puzzled air suits you. *(Pause)* Well, it would please me to learn more of you—therefore speak.

JANE smiles but says nothing.

ROCHESTER

Speak.

JANE

What about, sir?

ROCHESTER

Whatever you like.

JANE, putting up a fight, remains silent.

ROCHESTER

You are dumb, Miss Eyre. And annoyed! I beg your pardon. The fact is, I don't wish to treat you like an inferior: that is, I claim only such superiority as must result from twenty years' difference in age and experience. It is by virtue of this superiority alone that I desire you to... have the goodness to talk to me a little now, and divert my thoughts, which are troubled by... one disturbing matter.

JANE

I am willing to amuse you, if I can, sir... but how do I know what will interest you? Ask me questions, and I will do my best to answer.

ROCHESTER

Then, in the first place, do you agree with me that I have a right to be a little masterful, since I am old enough to be your father, and have roamed over half the globe, while you have lived quietly in one small part of this country?

JANE

Do as you please, sir.

ROCHESTER

That is no answer; or rather it is a very irritating one, because it is so evasive. Reply more clearly.

JANE

I don't think you have a right to command me, merely because you are older, or because you have seen more of the world; your claim to superiority depends on the use you have made of your time and experience.

ROCHESTER

Humph! I won't allow that, as I have made an indifferent use of both advantages. Leaving superiority out of the question, then, you must still agree to receive my orders now and then, without being hurt by the tone of command. Will you?

JANE smiles.

ROCHESTER

The smile is very well. But speak too.

JANE

I was thinking, sir, that very few masters would trouble themselves to ask whether or not their paid subordinates were hurt by their orders.

ROCHESTER

Paid subordinates! So, you are my paid subordinate, are you? Well then, for that mercenary reason, will you agree to let me hector you a little?

JANE

No, sir, not on that ground; but, on the ground that you care whether or not a dependent is comfortable in his dependency, I agree heartily.

ROCHESTER

I see! And would you be happy to live without many conventional forms and phrases, or would you find that insolent?

JANE

I am sure, sir, I should never mistake informality for insolence: one I rather like, the other no one would submit to, even for a salary.

ROCHESTER

Humbug! Most people will submit to anything for a salary; therefore, speak for yourself. But not one in a thousand governesses would have answered me as you have just done! I don't mean to flatter you: You may yet have intolerable defects to counterbalance your few good points.

ROCHESTER catches JANE's expression.

ROCHESTER

And so may I! That's what you were thinking, is it not? Well, you are right. God knows I am in no position to criticize others. I was thrown onto a wrong track at the age of twenty-one, and have never recovered the right course since: but I might have been very different; I might have been as good as you, Miss Eyre... I envy you your clean conscience...

Nature meant me to be, on the whole, a good man, and yet I am not so...

JANE
Well, I—

ROCHSETER
Take my word for it, I am not a villain: but, owing, I believe, rather to circumstances than to my natural character, I am a commonplace sinner. Are you surprised that I tell you this? I believe you will often find yourself chosen as the confidant of others' secrets – and they will feel, as I do, that you listen with a kind of sympathy.

JANE
How can you be certain, sir?

ROCHESTER
From my experience. *(Pause)* When fate wronged me, I turned desperate; then I degenerated. Now, when any fool excites my disgust, I cannot flatter myself that I am better than he. *(Pause)* If you are ever tempted to do wrong, Miss Eyre, dread remorse; remorse is the poison of life.

JANE
Repentance is said to be its cure, sir.

ROCHESTER
It is not its cure. Reformation may be its cure; and I could reform... but what is the use of thinking of it, cursed as I am? Well, since happiness is denied me, I have a right to get pleasure out of life... and I WILL get it, cost what it may.

JANE
Then you will degenerate still more, sir.

ROCHESTER
Possibly: yet if I can get pleasure... pleasure as sweet and fresh as wild honey...

JANE
It will taste bitter.

ROCHESTER
How do you know? You never tried it.

JANE

I only remind you of your own words, sir: you said error brought remorse, and you said remorse was poison. But... to speak truth, sir, the conversation has got out of my depth. Only one thing, I know: you said you were not as good as you should like to be. It seems to me, that if from this day you began with resolution to correct your thoughts and actions, you would in a few years have laid up a new store of recollections, to which you might revert with pleasure.

ROCHESTER

Well said, Miss Eyre. At this very moment, I am laying down good intentions. I know what my aim is now. You seem to doubt me.

JANE

Not at all, sir. If you will—

JANE gets up to leave.

ROCHESTER

Where are you going?

JANE

To put Adele to bed: it is past her bedtime.

ROCHESTER

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

JANE

No sir, merely puzzled.

ROCHESTER

I think you are afraid, all the same...

JANE

Well you could say I am afraid – in the sense that I have no wish to talk nonsense.

ROCHESTER

I see you laugh rarely, Miss Eyre – but believe me, you are not naturally austere, any more than I am naturally vicious. In time, I think you will learn to be natural with me. It is as if I were watching a bird inside a cage... were it but free, it would soar cloud-high.

JANE

It has struck nine, sir.

ROCHESTER

Never mind. Adele is with Sophie, putting on a new dress: in a few minutes she will enter; and then I shall see – a miniature of Celine Varens, as she used to appear on the stage...

JANE

You have... spoken little of Adele's mother.

ROCHESTER

Her mother, Celine, was a French opera-dancer, towards whom I once cherished a great passion. She claimed to feel the same passion for me. And so I installed her in an apartment; gave her servants, a carriage, and diamonds. In short, I began the process of ruining myself like any other young fool.

One night I visited when Celine did not expect me. She was out. I went to her bedroom and stepped out onto her balcony to take some fresh air... I looked down, and, all at once, her carriage arrived. My heart thumped with anticipation. As Celine stepped out, I was about to call down, when a man jumped from the carriage after her! You never felt jealousy, did you, Miss Eyre? Of course not: because you never felt love. You have both yet to experience.

ROCHESTER seems to be in the grip of some hated thought... After a pause, JANE ventures to ask:

JANE

Did you... leave the balcony, sir, when Miss... Varens entered?

ROCHESTER

What? Oh. Well, to resume. I walked into the room, told Celine to vacate her apartment, ignored her hysterics, and challenged my rival to a duel. Next morning I left a bullet in one of his withered arms, and thought I had done with all of them forever. But Celine abandoned her child and claimed I was the father – though I see no proofs of my paternity written on her face. But, hearing that the girl was destitute, I brought her to England to educate her. But now you know

Adele is the illegitimate offspring of a French opera-dancer, you will perhaps think differently of your post?

JANE

No: Adele is not answerable for either her mother's faults or yours: and now that I know she has been forsaken by her mother and disowned by you, I shall cling closer to her than before.

ROCHESTER

Oh, that's how you view it! Well, it is getting late, and Adele will be restless to show off her new dress... Will you join in the general merriments?

JANE

I will join you shortly. I would like to take some air.

ROCHESTER

Do not stay out too long...

ROCHESTER exits. JANE stares out at her future – which looks golden...

Scene 6

But then the lights fade and the music changes. JANE moves across to the other side of the stage.

JANE

That night my head was so filled with thoughts I could not sleep. I crossed to my window and looked at the garden lit by the moon...

There is a vague murmur, a groaning in the distance but coming nearer. JANE turns to listen. The clock strikes two and makes her jump. She is just beginning to think she imagined the whole thing, when there is the sound of fingers brushing past her door, and scraping along the walls, just outside her room!

JANE

Hallo?

Then someone laughs nearby.

JANE

Who's there? Is that... Grace Poole? Answer me!

More eerie moaning, and then the sound of footsteps and a distant crackling getting louder. Smoke begins to fill the stage. JANE sees the smoke, and is alarmed. She fetches a candle and exits to find the cause. On the screen we see flames flicker and grow. The sound of a raging fire fills the stage.

We are now inside ROCHESTER's room. As JANE enters with her candle we see ROCHESTER dimly lying asleep, the flames gathering above his bed.

JANE

Wake up, sir! Wake up! Mr Rochester! Please!

As ROCHESTER is in a deep sleep, JANE turns and looks for something – and sees a jug of water. She rushes to fetch it. She takes aim with the jug...

JANE

WAKE UP!!

... JANE sends the water flying. The flames vanish and the sound is replaced by hissing. ROCHESTER wakes up with a start and examines his soaked bedding with disbelief.

ROCHESTER

What the deuce...? Is there a flood?

JANE

No, sir, but there has been a fire.

ROCHESTER

Jane Eyre! What have you done, you sorceress? Have you plotted to drown me?

JANE

Please get up, sir. Somebody has plotted something, that is for certain!

ROCHESTER

Then I shall need to get into some dry garments, if there is anything dry in this room after your action. Yes, here is my dressing-gown. Now bring some more light!

JANE brings over another candle. ROCHESTER surveys his bed.

ROCHESTER
Tell me what happened.

JANE
I heard... strange noises, sir. At first I thought it was Pilot going past my room – but then I heard a laugh... and steps going upstairs... Then smoke led me here, to your room.

ROCHESTER
I see...

JANE
Shall I call for help?

ROCHESTER
No, Jane: Be still. You must be cold. Take my cloak. Now sit down and tell me more about this night's events. (*Slight pause*) What did you see when you opened your door?

JANE
A candlestick on the ground – and smoke...

ROCHESTER
And this... odd laugh... Is it a laugh you have heard before?

JANE
Yes, sir: there is a woman who works here, called Grace Poole. She laughs in that way.

ROCHESTER
Just so. Grace Poole. She is, as you say, unusual. Please say nothing about tonight's incident to anyone. I will explain everything to the others in the morning. But first I must... make sure there is no further damage to the building.

JANE
Can I help?

ROCHESTER
No. You must be tired. Return to your own room now.

JANE
Good-night, then, sir.

ROCHESTER

What! Is that all? You have saved me from a horrible death! And you walk past me as if we were strangers! At least shake hands.

JANE offers him her hand. ROCHESTER clasps it in both of his.

ROCHESTER

You have saved my life: I owe you an immense debt. You know my character now. To be in debt like this to anyone else – for me, would be... almost intolerable. But with you it is different...

ROCHESTER is still clasping her hands...

JANE

You owe me no debt.

ROCHESTER

I knew you would do me good in some way. I saw it in your eyes when we first met: their expression did not... did not... strike delight to my very inmost heart so for nothing. My cherished preserver, good night!

JANE

Good night.

JANE looks down. ROCHESTER follows her gaze and sees he is still clasping her hand.

ROCHESTER

Here. I release you.

ROCHESTER lets go of JANE's hand. JANE exits. ROCHESTER remains still for a moment, lost in thought – but remembers an urgent reason to leave the room. BLACKOUT. On the screen we see images of a turbulent dream...

JANE (*narrating*)

I both wished and feared to see Mr. Rochester on the day which followed this sleepless night: I wanted to hear his voice again... But the only voices I heard were those of his

servants discussing the fire that had nearly killed their master.

My candle had nearly burned down with all its use the night before and so I went in search of Leah, one of the servants, to see if I could trouble her for a new candle.

All the time, a figure, its back to JANE and the audience, has been busy sewing. JANE approaches the figure, thinking it to be Leah...

JANE

Oh there you are Leah. I—

The figure turns. It is GRACE POOLE, who raises her head calmly to meet JANE's gaze.

GRACE

Good morning, Miss.

JANE

Oh... Good morning, Grace. I was... looking for Leah... Has anything happened here? I thought I heard the servants talking together a while ago.

GRACE

Master fell asleep with his candle lit, and the curtains got on fire. Fortunately, he awoke before the bed-clothes caught fire, and he was able to quench the flames with a jug of water.

JANE

A strange affair! Did no one wake from the noise and go to help him?

GRACE

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

JANE

I did... I am certain I heard a laugh, and a strange one.

GRACE

It is hardly likely master would laugh when he was in such danger: You must have been dreaming.

JANE

I was not dreaming.

GRACE

Have you told master that you heard a laugh?

JANE

I have not spoken to him this morning.

GRACE

You did not think, last night, of opening your door and looking out?

JANE

No – I bolted my door.

GRACE

Then you are not in the habit of bolting your door every night?

JANE

I did not think it necessary. But in future, I shall take good care to make all secure before I lie down.

GRACE

It will be wise to do so. You were looking for Leah?

JANE

Yes... For a new candle. The one I have is almost finished.

GRACE

There will be some stored in the kitchen.

JANE

Oh, thank you.

GRACE

It would be well to be careful, though. It is dangerous to keep a candle lit at night.

JANE exits, troubled. GRACE watches her leave calmly. Fade to black.

Scene 8

MRS FAIRFAX is in her usual spot in the parlour, knitting. JANE enters.

MRS FAIRFAX

Ah Jane my dear! You ate so little at dinner. I fear you are not well today.

JANE

No, no. I never felt better.

MRS FAIRFAX

Then you must prove it by displaying a good appetite; will you pour the tea while I knit off this needle? It is a good thing that the weather has been fair for Mr Rochester's journey today...

JANE

I did not know Mr Rochester was out.

MRS FAIRFAX

He has gone to Mr Eshton's place. I believe there is quite a party assembled there.

JANE

Do you expect him back tonight?

MRS FAIRFAX

No! Nor tomorrow either. He is very likely to stay a week or more. Maybe months.

JANE

Months!

MRS FAIRFAX

When these fine, fashionable people get together, they are in no hurry to separate. Mr Rochester is a particular favourite: the ladies are very fond of him.

JANE

Will he meet ladies there?

MRS FAIRFAX

Several, including the Honourable Blanche and Mary

Ingram.

JANE

Are they beautiful?

MRS FAIRFAX

Blanche came here to a Christmas ball when she was eighteen. There must have been fifty ladies and gentlemen present – but Miss Ingram was considered the belle of the evening.

JANE

What was she like?

MRS FAIRFAX

Tall, fine bust, sloping shoulders; long, graceful neck: olive complexion; eyes rather like Mr Rochester's: large and black, and as brilliant as her jewels. And such a fine head of hair; raven-black with the glossiest curls I ever saw.

JANE

She was greatly admired?

MRS FAIRFAX

Yes, indeed: and not only for her beauty: She and Mr Rochester sang a duet!

JANE

Mr Rochester? I was not aware he could sing.

MRS FAIRFAX

Oh! he has a fine voice. And Miss Ingram sang delightfully.

JANE

And this... beautiful and accomplished lady, is not yet married?

MRS FAIRFAX

It appears not: I fancy neither she nor her sister have very large fortunes.

JANE

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

MRS FAIRFAX

Oh! Well you see there is a considerable difference in age: Mr Rochester is nearly forty; she is only twenty-five.

JANE

What of that? More unequal matches are made every day.

MRS FAIRFAX

True: yet I should scarcely fancy Mr Rochester would entertain an idea of the sort. But you are not eating!

JANE

No, I am not hungry. Can I pour you another cup?

MRS FAIRFAX

No, my dear. I have a few more errands to attend to and then I shall retire. Are you certain you are not feeling unwell?

JANE

Quite certain, thank you.

MRS FAIRFAX

Good night then.

JANE

Good night, Mrs Fairfax.

MRS FAIRFAX exits.

JANE (*narrating*)

What a fool I had been! What a fool! For a moment I had flattered myself that Mr Rochester had feelings for me! And allowed myself to imagine a future where Mr Rochester and I could be together as equals. What was I thinking? A man of his stature, with a mere governess! And a plain one too, no doubt with far fewer 'accomplishments' than the beautiful Blanche! Poor stupid dupe! It is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them when no good can come of it. And so I vowed to control my feelings. No sentiment! No regret! Only... sense and resolution!

JANE holds this resolve for a few seconds before burying her head in her hands... Lights fade, sounds suggest time passing. MRS FAIRFAX enters, carrying a letter. Lights snap full up.

MRS FAIRFAX
Good Morning, Miss Eyre. Up already!

JANE
Oh, yes. I awoke early... I see you have a letter.

MRS FAIRFAX
Yes indeed, and from the master. Now I suppose we shall know whether we are to expect his return or not.

MRS FAIRFAX takes her time perusing the letter and making little noises to herself in response to what she reads, driving JANE to the edge of frustration.

JANE
Mr Rochester is not likely to return soon, I suppose?

MRS FAIRFAX
Indeed he is! In three days, he says: that will be next Thursday; and not alone either. All the best bedrooms are to be prepared, and the guests will bring their own servants: so we shall have a full house of it.

JANE
Will... Miss Blanche Ingram be coming?

MRS FAIRFAX
Yes indeed, and several family members too. (*Shouting as though into the next room*) Leah! Leah? Oh where is she? There are curtains to sew in one of the guest rooms.

JANE
Perhaps I should fetch Grace Poole down...

MRS FAIRFAX
Oh no! She cannot come down here now! I mean... I feel sure she will have work enough where she is...

JANE
She must be very good at her work.

MRS FAIRFAX
What makes you say that, dear?

JANE
I overheard some of the maids talking and they said she

earns almost five times more than most of the staff – which did seem strange to me...

MRS FAIRFAX

Oh... Well, you know the tittle-tattle of maids. What would they know of Miss Poole's salary? Well! There is much to be done!

MRS FAIRFAX swallows her tea and hastens away to commence operations. JANE remains looking concerned...

JANE

I felt certain that Mrs Fairfax had not been completely truthful with me. She and most of the servants seemed to know something particular about Grace Poole – and it was clear that I was purposely excluded.

Scene 9

Piano music and trilling voices in the distance suggest we are in the middle of the guests' time at Thornfield. JANE is sitting reading alone in a room nearby. MRS FAIRFAX enters.

MRS FAIRFAX

There you are Miss Eyre. Will you not join the others this evening?

JANE

No, thank you, Mrs Fairfax. I am perfectly contented to remain here with my book.

MRS FAIRFAX

And yet you joined the ladies and gentlemen yesterday.

JANE

Yes, but only on the firm command of Mr Rochester. I tried several times to decline, but he insisted.

MRS FAIRFAX

Did you not find the experience enjoyable?

JANE

I exchanged scarcely a word with anyone – and withdrew as soon as I decently could. I noticed, however, that Mr Rochester and Miss Blanche remain very close.

MRS FAIRFAX
Is that so, dear?

JANE
You said it was not likely they should think of being married, but you see Mr Rochester evidently prefers her to the other ladies.

MRS FAIRFAX
No doubt he admires her.

JANE
And she him... Well, as Mr Rochester is away today, I feel no pressure to attend.

MRS FAIRFAX
I am sure you know best. Now what did I come for...? Oh yes – there is someone who wishes to meet with you.

JANE
With me? Who do you mean?

MRS FAIRFAX
A gypsy woman has arrived and insisted upon telling the fortune of all the young ladies in the house. The young ladies were most excited and have had their palms read.

JANE
That explains the laughter and excitement...

MRS FAIRFAX
They said the woman must have special powers because she knew all sorts of things about them! Things no stranger could know!

JANE
Did... Miss Blanche have her fortune told?

MRS FAIRFAX
She went in first.

JANE
Went in?

MRS FAIRFAX

The gypsy woman insisted that each lady should hear her fate in private.

JANE

And she wishes to see me?

MRS FAIRFAX

Yes, dear. She claims there is one more single lady in the house, and refuses to leave until you go to her!

JANE

Does she now? Well tell her I will see her – but she can come to me!

MRS FAIRFAX

Yes... You are quite right to teach this woman her place! I shall remain quite near, in case you need me...

JANE

I am sure I shall be quite all right.

MRS FAIRFAX exits – we hear voices and approaching footsteps. A GYPSY WOMAN enters, covered in layers of clothing and half her face hidden by a large black bonnet. She is also brandishing a small black book. JANE motions for her to be seated. The GYPSY WOMAN grunts and squats down on the seat, gathering her skirts. JANE pulls up a chair and sits opposite the woman, who scans the book for a moment, then snaps it shut.

GYPSY WOMAN

So you want your fortune told?

JANE

I don't care about it; you may please yourself: but I ought to warn you, I have no faith.

GYPSY WOMAN

It's like your impudence to say so: I expected it of you; I heard it in your step as you approached.

JANE

Did you really? You've a quick ear.

GYPSY WOMAN

I have; and a quick eye and a quick brain.

JANE

You need them all in your trade.

GYPSY WOMAN

I do; especially when I've customers like you to deal with. Why don't you tremble?

JANE

I'm not cold.

GYPSY WOMAN

Why don't you turn pale?

JANE

I am not sick.

GYPSY WOMAN

Why don't you consult my art?

JANE

Because I am not silly.

The old GYPSY WOMAN snorts under her bonnet; then gets a black pipe out. She points it at JANE.

GYPSY WOMAN

You are cold; you are sick; and you are silly.

JANE

Prove it.

GYPSY WOMAN

You are cold, because you are alone. You are sick; because the best of feelings keeps far away from you. You are silly, because you will not take one step to meet happiness where it waits for you.

JANE

You might say all that to almost any one who lives as a solitary dependent in a great house.

GYPSY WOMAN

I might say it to almost any one: but would it be true of almost any one?

JANE

There are thousands in my circumstances.

GYPSY WOMAN

You could scarcely find me one. If you knew it, you are within reach of happiness. The materials are all prepared; there only wants a movement to combine them.

JANE

I never could guess a riddle.

GYPSY WOMAN

If you wish me to speak more plainly, show me your palm.

JANE

And I must cross it with silver, I suppose?

GYPSY WOMAN

To be sure.

JANE gives the GYPSY WOMAN a shilling: she puts it in one of her boots and beckons JANE to present her palm. The GYPSY WOMAN pores over it.

GYPSY WOMAN

I can make nothing of such a hand as that: besides, what is in a palm? Destiny is not written there.

JANE

Now I believe you.

GYPSY WOMAN

It is in the eyes, in the lines of the mouth. Lift up your head.

JANE

Now you are getting closer to reality. I shall begin to put some faith in you presently.

GYPSY WOMAN (*examining JANE's face*)

I wonder what thoughts are busy in your heart during all the hours you sit in yonder room with the fine people flitting before you like shapes in a magic-lantern...

JANE

What thoughts?

GYPSY WOMAN

You have some secret hope to buoy you up with whispers of the future?

JANE

All I hope is, to save money enough from my earnings to set up a school some day in a little house rented by myself.

GYPSY WOMAN

A mean nutriment for the spirit to exist on, while sitting in that window-seat. You see I know your habits.

JANE

You have learned them from the servants.

GYPSY WOMAN

Ah! you think yourself sharp. Well, perhaps I have. But do you hope for nothing else? Have you no interest in any of the company who presently occupy this building?

JANE

It amuses me to hear their tales.

GYPSY WOMAN

What tale do you like best to hear?

JANE

Oh, I have not much choice! They generally run on the same theme: courtship. And all promise to end in the same catastrophe: marriage.

GYPSY WOMAN

And do you like that monotonous theme?

JANE

I don't care about it: it is nothing to me.

GYPSY WOMAN

Nothing to you? When a lady, young and full of health and beauty and endowed with the gifts of rank and fortune, smiles in the eyes of a gentleman you—

JANE

I don't know the gentlemen here. I have scarcely exchanged a word with one of them. They are all free to receive whatever smiles they please.

GYPSY WOMAN

Do you include the master of the house!

JANE

I scarcely see what Mr Rochester has to do with this.

GYPSY WOMAN

He has received many smiles. Have you not remarked that?

JANE

Mr Rochester has a right to enjoy the society of his guests.

GYPSY WOMAN

But have you never observed that, of all the tales told here about marriage, Mr Rochester has been favoured with the greatest number?

JANE

The eagerness of a listener quickens the tongue of a narrator.

GYPSY WOMAN

Eagerness of a listener! Yes; Mr Rochester was willing to approach those lips and looked grateful for the pastime given him.

JANE

Grateful! I cannot remember detecting gratitude in his face.

GYPSY WOMAN

And what did you detect, if not gratitude? You have detected love: have you not? And, looking forward, you have seen him standing beside his happy bride?

JANE

I came here to inquire, not to tell another's fortune. Is it known, then, that Mr Rochester is to be married?

GYPSY WOMAN

Yes; to the beautiful Miss Ingram.

JANE

Soon?

GYPSY WOMAN

It would appear so. No doubt they will be a happy pair. He must love such a beautiful, accomplished lady; and probably she loves him, or at least his purse. I know of her interest in the Rochester estate; though I advised her his fortune was far lower than she expected – which made her look most grave. I fear Mr Rochester may yet lose her to a richer suitor!

JANE

But I came to hear my own fortune, not Mr Rochester's; and you have told me nothing.

GYPSY WOMAN

Your fortune is yet doubtful: when I examined your face, one part contradicted another. Chance has given you a measure of happiness. But you need to stretch out your hand, and take it up. Will you do so?

JANE

What do you see?

GYPSY WOMAN

The flame flickers in the eye; the eye looks full of feeling; but it turns from me. The mouth should speak much and smile often. I see no enemy to your good fortune except in the brow; which seems to say, 'I can live alone, if needed. I have an inward treasure within, which can keep me alive if all external delights should be withheld. Reason sits firm, and will not let the feelings have their way. The passions may rage furiously: but judgment shall still have the last word. My harvest must be in smiles, in sweet— That will do. I rave in exquisite delirium. Rise, Miss Eyre: the play is played out!

JANE is startled, as the old woman's voice seems changed during the last few words. The figure pulls back the bonnet to reveal – ROCHESTER.

ROCHESTER

Well, Jane, do you know me?

JANE

Perhaps you should take off the cloak now, sir.

ROCHESTER

Yes I would – but the string is in a knot. Help me.

JANE helps untangle the knot. ROCHESTER casts off the cloak.

ROCHESTER
There, off with you!

JANE
What a strange idea, sir!

ROCHESTER
But well carried out, eh? Don't you think?

JANE
With the ladies you must have managed well.

ROCHESTER
But not with you?

JANE
You did not act the character of a gypsy with me.

ROCHESTER
What character did I act? My own?

JANE
No; some unaccountable one. I believe you have been trying to draw me out; you have been talking nonsense to make me talk nonsense. It is scarcely fair, sir.

ROCHESTER
Do you forgive me, Jane?

JANE
I cannot tell. I shall try to forgive you; but it was not right.

ROCHESTER
How very correct and sensible of you!

JANE
I have your permission to retire now? It must be near eleven o'clock.

ROCHESTER
Never mind. Stay a moment. What have you been doing during my absence?

JANE
Teaching Adele as usual.

ROCHESTER

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

JANE

Nothing at all. I am tired, sir.

ROCHESTER

And a little depressed... But what about?

JANE

Nothing, sir. I am not depressed.

ROCHESTER

Yes you are: so depressed that a few more words would bring tears to your eyes. If I had time, my little friend, I would love to know what all this means. If only I could be on some quiet island with only your company – and all my... hideous memories taken away... Well, I will let you go now – but I may yet ask you to join me and the guests tomorrow. Now go... Good-night, my—

ROCHESTER bites his lip, and exits abruptly.

Scene 11

On screen we see the moon appear behind the clouds, the moonlit garden, the moonlit facade of the austere building, then the moon through a bedroom window, curtains fluttering. Suddenly we hear a piercing scream and a man's yell of pain. LIGHTS UP on ROCHESTER sitting at one end of the stage, half turned away from the audience, hunched over and still. MRS FAIRFAX and JANE enter urgently carrying candles from the other side.

MRS FAIRFAX

He said to call you straight away. There has been some sort of accident. He asked for your help particularly.

JANE

Is he hurt?

MRS FAIRFAX

I do not know, dear, he has not let me approach him, and it is best not to oppose his wishes. I have placed the things he requested on the table.

ROCHESTER

Mrs Fairfax, have you not brought her yet?

MRS FAIRFAX

We are here now, sir. *(To JANE)* I had better withdraw. He asked you tend to him alone.

JANE

Thank you, Mrs Fairfax.

MRS FAIRFAX

Oh! I nearly forgot! This came for you today: I meant to give it to you earlier!

JANE

Thank you...

MRS FAIRFAX hands JANE a letter, then exits. JANE looks at the envelope, bemused, but stows it and takes a step towards ROCHESTER.

JANE

Mr Rochester? You asked to see me? Can I help in some way?

ROCHESTER

Yes, Jane, you can. But – before you come any closer answer me something. You don't turn sick at the sight of blood?

JANE

I do not think so.

ROCHESTER

Give me your hand.

JANE approaches, still from behind. ROCHESTER reaches backwards, without looking and takes her hand.

ROCHESTER

Good. Warm and steady. Approach then.

ROCHESTER turns in his chair and JANE moves round to the other side and sets her candle on the table, which also has a bowl, a sponge and bandages.

One of ROCHESTER's sleeves has been rolled up as far as it will go. His arm is covered in blood.

JANE

Oh! You have been wounded!

ROCHESTER

A mere scratch! I just need you to help clean it. Take the sponge from there to clean away the blood. That's it. Did any of the guests wake at the noise?

JANE

Some did, sir, but Mrs Fairfax explained to them that one of the servants had cried out in her sleep. I passed on the same explanation to others I saw. They have all returned to their rooms.

ROCHESTER

Very good. You both did very well.

JANE

This does not appear like a normal scratch. It looks as if something has bitten you. But I'll warrant the dog did not do this.

ROCHESTER

No, indeed not. Would to God there was an end of all this!

JANE

Was it... Grace Poole? Is she here? In the next room?

ROCHESTER

Do not be alarmed! The door is securely locked! Now be good and bind this up.

JANE takes the bandage and binds ROCHESTER's wound, finishing by tying a knot.

ROCHESTER

One would say you had done this before!

JANE

No – but it seemed clear to me what should be done.

ROCHESTER

And well done it is. I shall feel much better in no time.

JANE

And yet you are troubled – and not by the wound. Will...
Grace Poole continue to live here still, sir?

ROCHESTER

Oh... don't worry about her. Put her out of your thoughts. Now
let us see if I can stand.

JANE

Are you sure you should move so soon?

ROCHESTER

I think it would be the best thing for me! Come. Let us go into
the garden for some fresh air.

They move to another part of the stage. The lights change to suggest a moonlit garden, and there are sounds of a faint breeze.

ROCHESTER

It is good to be outside. *(Pause)* You have passed a strange
night, Jane.

JANE

Yes, sir.

ROCHESTER

It has made you look pale. You were afraid when we were
alone upstairs?

JANE

I did not know that you had locked the door of... that room...

ROCHESTER

I should have been a careless shepherd if I had left my pet
lamb, so near a wolf's den, unguarded.

JANE

Is the danger of last night gone by now, sir?

ROCHESTER

I cannot vouch for that, Jane. To live, for me, is to stand on a
crater-crust which may crack any day. Now you look
puzzled. You are my little friend, are you not?

JANE

I like to serve you, sir, and to obey you in all that is right.

ROCHESTER

Precisely: I see you do. But if I asked you to do what you thought wrong, you would say, "No, sir; I cannot do it, because it is wrong". (*Pause, seeing bench:*) Let us sit down.

ROCHESTER sits, leaving room for JANE but at first she hesitates.

ROCHESTER

The bench is long enough for two. You don't hesitate to sit at my side, do you?

JANE sits next to him.

ROCHESTER

Now, my little friend, suppose you were no longer a well-disciplined girl, but a wild boy. Imagine yourself in a foreign land where you commit a capital error – one whose consequences follow you through life and taint all your existence. The results of what you have done become utterly unbearable. Hope has deserted you. Heart-weary, you come home after years of voluntary banishment: And then: you meet someone new: you find in this stranger the good qualities you have sought for twenty years. This new person regenerates you: you desire to start your life afresh, and spend the rest of it in a more worthy way. To attain this, are you justified in overleaping an obstacle of convention? Are you justified in daring the world's opinion, in order to live forever with this gentle, gracious stranger, securing your peace of mind and regeneration of your life?

JANE

Sir if anyone you know has erred, let him look higher than his equals for strength to improve and solace to heal.

ROCHESTER

You know I speak of myself. I have been a dissipated, restless man; and I believe I have found the instrument for my cure in—

ROCHESTER pauses – and then a change comes over him.

ROCHESTER

Little friend: Don't you think if I married... Miss Ingram she would regenerate my life? You look very pale. What cold fingers! They were warmer before. *(Pause)* Jane, when will you assist me again?

JANE

Whenever I can be useful, sir.

ROCHESTER

For instance, the night before I am married: Would you keep me company through the night?

JANE

Yes, sir.

ROCHESTER

She's a rare one, is she not, Jane?

JANE

Yes, sir. Mr Rochester, I may as well mention another matter of business to you...

ROCHESTER

Matter of business?

JANE

You have as good as informed me that you are about to be married?

ROCHESTER

Yes?

JANE

In that case, sir, Adele ought to go to school: I am sure you will see the necessity of it.

ROCHESTER

To get her out of my bride's way? There's sense in the suggestion, no doubt. Adele, as you say, must go to school. And what of you?

JANE

I must seek work somewhere else. I shall advertise.

Without really thinking about what she is doing, JANE pulls out the envelope she was give earlier and clutches it.

ROCHESTER

At your peril will you advertise! Jane! Let me find a suitable post for you. I'll find you one in time. Will you do that?

JANE

I shall be glad to do so, if you, in your turn, will promise that I and Adele shall be both safe out of the house before your bride enters it.

ROCHESTER

Safe out of the house, eh! That's how you see it! Very well! I'll pledge my word on it. What is that you are holding?

JANE

Oh – a letter for me which came yesterday. With all the events occurring, Mrs Fairfax forgot to give it to me sooner...

ROCHESTER

Aren't you going to open it? Do you know who it is from?

JANE

No, not at all!

JANE opens the envelope and is taken aback.

ROCHESTER

What is it Jane? *(After a pause)* What is it?

JANE

If you please, sir, I will need to leave immediately.

ROCHESTER

Immediately? What do you mean? What to do? Where to go?

JANE

To see a sick lady who has sent for me.

ROCHESTER

What sick lady?

JANE

The woman who raised me after my parents' death. Mrs Reed of Gateshead.

ROCHESTER

You never told me that before: you always said you had no relations.

JANE

None that would own me, sir. Mr Reed is dead, and his wife cast me off.

ROCHESTER

Why?

JANE

Because she always disliked me.

ROCHESTER

In that case what good can you do her?

JANE

She is asking for me now. Perhaps she feels remorse. I cannot neglect her wishes.

ROCHESTER

Well... you can't travel without money, and I have given you no salary yet. How much money do you have, Jane?

JANE

Five shillings, sir.

ROCHESTER

Here. Take your wages. No! I shall give you only part now! You can collect the rest on your return!

JANE

Why can it matter so much to you? I shall be gone altogether soon.

ROCHESTER

Do not say that, my little friend.

JANE

But you are to marry Miss Ingram, and I must move on, sir...

most likely far away indeed...

ROCHESTER

Far away... I sometimes feel... as if I had a string somewhere under my ribs, tightly knotted to a similar string fastened to your little frame. If you move too far away, that cord will be snapped; and then I fear I should take to bleeding inwardly. As for you, you'd forget me.

JANE

Forget you? Never! I love this place: I have lived a full and delightful life here. I have known you, and have come face to face, with an original, vigorous and expanded mind. And it strikes me with terror that I must be torn from you forever!

ROCHESTER

But why must that happen?

JANE

Because you have a bride! Because you have Miss Ingram!

ROCHESTER

Miss Ingram? I have no bride! Jane! I offer you my hand, my heart, and a share of all my possessions.

JANE

You play a farce!

ROCHESTER

No, Jane! You are my equal. You, you strange, you almost unearthly thing! I love as my own flesh. You, poor and plain as you are, I entreat you to accept me as a husband.

JANE

Me?

ROCHESTER

Say yes, quickly!

JANE

Do you truly love me? Do you sincerely wish me to be your wife?

ROCHESTER

I do; I swear it.

JANE
Then, sir, I will marry you!

ROCHESTER
Edward!

JANE
Then, Edward, I will marry you!

ROCHESTER
Make my happiness – I will make yours!

They move to embrace – but a huge thunderclap surprises them – a massive flash and then BLACKOUT. On screen we see a stunted tree; then a sense of a journey and time passing...

Scene 12

LIGHTS UP on the parlour. MRS FAIRFAX is reading her bible, looking somewhat sterner than usual... JANE enters – just returned from a long journey.

JANE
Good afternoon, Mrs Fairfax.

MRS FAIRFAX
Ah. You have returned. I hope you had a good journey.

JANE
Indeed it did last long and I am glad to be home.

MRS FAIRFAX
And what news of Mrs Reed?

JANE
She passed away during my visit. She was very ill.

MRS FAIRFAX
Oh I am sorry. But it was good of you to see her.

JANE
Yes, I am glad I went... Is... Mr Rochester home?

MRS FAIRFAX
Oh, he is somewhere on the grounds...

JANE

Has he... talked to you of anything in my absence?

MRS FAIRFAX

Yes, indeed, Mr Rochester has announced that you... (*Lost for a moment*) I feel so astonished... I hardly know what to say, Miss Eyre. I have not been dreaming, have I? Is it really true that Mr Rochester has asked you to marry him?

JANE

It is true, Mrs Fairfax.

MRS FAIRFAX

Oh! Do you believe him? Have you accepted him?

JANE

Yes.

MRS FAIRFAX (*bewildered*)

Well no doubt it is true since you say so. How it will answer, I really don't know. Equality of position and fortune is often advisable; and... he might almost be your father.

JANE

No, indeed, Mrs. Fairfax! He is nothing like my father! Mr Rochester looks as young, and is as young, as some men at twenty-five.

MRS FAIRFAX

Is it really for love he is going to marry you? I am sorry to grieve you, but you are so young, and so little acquainted with men, I wished to put you on your guard. I do fear something will be found to be different to what you expect.

JANE

Why? Am I a monster?

MRS FAIRFAX

No: you are very well; and Mr. Rochester, I daresay, is fond of you... I hope all will be right in the end... but believe me, you cannot be too careful. Try and keep Mr. Rochester at a distance: Gentlemen in his station are not accustomed to marry their governess—

MRS FAIRFAX is cut short by ROCHESTER who barges in, full of energy and sweeps JANE off her feet. MRS FAIRFAX looks on with distaste...

ROCHESTER

Ah! My little lamb has returned! Not too exhausted by your journey? What the deuce have you been doing all this time? You have been away far too long!

JANE

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

ROCHESTER

Forgive me my blunt words, little friend, but I was—

MRS FAIRFAX

Shall I tell the cook you will be dining at the usual hour, or perhaps Miss Eyre would prefer to rest?

ROCHESTER looks at JANE enquiringly.

JANE

The usual hour will be fine, thank you, Mrs Fairfax.

MRS FAIRFAX

Very good... Madam...

MRS FAIRFAX exits, not at all comfortable with the situation.

ROCHESTER

Oh don't mind her! Let us step out. It is a beautiful afternoon! Did your aunt repent her sins to you before she died?

JANE

I would not put it so... Much of the time she did not know what she was saying. But in a moment of lucidity she did recognise she had done me wrong. And she gave me this letter...

ROCHESTER (*reading*)

"Madam, will you have the goodness to send me the address of my niece, Jane Eyre? It is my intention to write shortly and desire her to come to me at Madeira. As I am unmarried and childless, I wish to adopt her, and bequeath her at my death whatever I may have to leave. JOHN EYRE,

Madeira." When was this written?

JANE

Three years ago. Mrs Reed never sent it on to me.

ROCHESTER

Why on earth not?

JANE

She disliked me so much when I was a child living with her, that she could not bring herself to help me later. Instead she wrote to him that I was dead.

ROCHESTER

The devil she did!

JANE

But I am glad she withheld the news.

ROCHESTER

Glad?

JANE

Is it not obvious? If, three years ago, I had received this news, would I ever have advertised for a post as a governess. Would we be standing, side by side, now? I value a fortune of an altogether different variety.

ROCHESTER

My rare one! But you must write back to this John Eyre! You have family after all!

JANE

Yes! But all in good time. I do believe you mentioned something about a wedding before I left...

ROCHESTER (*laughs*)

My little one! Come let us walk a while... Mrs Rochester... Mrs Jane Rochester! What can I give you, my treasured one? To date you have not asked me for anything!

JANE

Well then, sir, have the goodness to gratify my curiosity, which is much piqued on one point.

ROCHESTER

What? Would you not rather ask for half my estate.

JANE

No! I would much rather have all your confidence.

ROCHESTER

Well then?

JANE

Why did you try to make me believe you wished to marry Miss Ingram?

ROCHESTER

Because I wished to render you as madly in love with me as I was with you; and I knew jealousy would be my best ally.

JANE

Foolish man! But what of Miss Ingram?

ROCHESTER

What of her?

JANE

Do you not think she will suffer?

ROCHESTER

She suffered far more at the thought of my low income.

JANE

But you were not truthful to her about your income!

ROCHESTER

No. I was not.

JANE

Your behaviour is rather eccentric...

ROCHESTER

Malicious elf! It was wrong of me to deceive her... But I never needed to impress you with riches, did I? What riches could compete with my little sprite? Well we have much to speak of! There are only ten days until the wedding and there is so much to do! One thing especially!

JANE

What is that?

ROCHESTER

Your wedding dress of course!

He laughs and they walk on... Fade to black.

Images of silk, of ribbon, of lace... and then of cobwebs and more nightmarish images... LIGHTS UP DIM to reveal JANE in bed asleep, tormented by her nightmare. She wakes up and sits bolt upright in bed, then realises where she is and relaxes again. But only for a moment. She senses something is wrong...

JANE

Is someone there? Adele is that you?

There is a groaning sound and then a figure rises up from behind her bed and moves around the room. JANE remains transfixed in her bed, wondering if she is still having a nightmare... The figure, a WOMAN with long dark hair and mad eyes, picks up Jane's wedding veil, plays with it, tries it on and then in a fit of fury throws it to the ground and tramples on it. JANE gasps, which draws the WOMAN's attention to her. The WOMAN slowly approaches JANE, almost face to face, and gives her a look so demented that JANE passes out with terror. The WOMAN withdraws. Fade to BLACK.

Scene 13

We hear church bells and sounds of morning. Light slowly filters into the room. JANE wakes up. She gets up and goes to the window. She sees the bright light of day and hears the cheerful bells. She is ready to dismiss the experience as a bad dream, but, when she turns, she sees the trampled veil on the floor still. She picks up the veil and studies it with horror. The bells get louder. ROCHESTER enters in his wedding suit. He gently removes the torn veil from JANE and drapes a white wedding gown over her. He takes her hand and leads her to the front of the stage. They stand side by side and face forward as we hear the voice of a priest intoning...

PRIEST (voice)

I require and charge you both that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not lawfully be joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it.

On screen, a silhouette wearing a top hat appears in the church doorway.

VOICE

The marriage cannot go on: There is an impediment!

ROCHESTER

Proceed!

VOICE

Mr Rochester is already married! His wife is Bertha Antoinetta Mason, they were married in Spanish Town, Jamaica – and his wife is still living at Thornfield Hall!

JANE

What is all this, Edward?

ROCHESTER

By God! I took care that none should hear of this! Enough! I am sorry, Jane, there will be no wedding today. What this man says is true. I have been married fifteen years to that woman. Come let us away and you shall see for yourself!

ROCHESTER grabs JANE by the arm and leads her from the church – in a “journey” they arrive at the top floor of the house, at which point ROCHESTER bids JANE wait, while he goes to fetch his wife. He re-enters with BERTHA, who snarls, but cannot escape ROCHESTER’s strong grip.

ROCHESTER

Meet my wife, Jane! This is the match my father and brother arranged for me! They tricked me into marrying a mad woman! This is the woman who trampled on your veil, Jane! This is the woman whose mad laughter you have heard, not Grace Poole – who has the unpleasant job of looking after this... creature.

For a moment, BERTHA breaks free and lunges for JANE, but ROCHESTER tugs her back and manhandles her off the stage, while JANE remains in shock. ROCHESTER returns, and takes a step towards JANE. She takes a step back.

ROCHESTER

Let me explain all this Jane. There has to be some resolution for us!

JANE

I can think of only one.

Resolutely JANE starts to move away.

ROCHESTER
Jane! Wait! Please hear me! Jane!

JANE
I love you, but I must leave.

ROCHESTER
Jane! Come back!

JANE exits. ROCHESTER remains, a broken man. BLACKOUT

Scene 14

On the screen we get a sense of an arduous journey. Muddy tracks. Harsh weather. Night falling...

On stage we see JANE, looking worse for wear, her clothes more ragged. She looks exhausted as she trudges across the stage. She reaches a village and sees a VILLAGER carrying food. She rushes up to him.

JANE
Excuse me.

VILLAGER
What do you want?

JANE
Could you spare a little of that bread. I have not eaten for two days.

VILLAGER
I need all this for my family.

JANE
Just a crust, please.

VILLAGER
Keep away!

The VILLAGER threatens to strike her. JANE shrieks and backs off. The VILLAGER exits. JANE sinks to the ground, exhausted and in despair. It gets

dark. She tries to sleep on a grassy bank. We hear the sound of rain. A storm is coming. A VICAR carrying a lantern arrives and nearly trips over JANE. JANE awakes with a start.

VICAR

Bless me child! What are you doing out here?

JANE

Oh, forgive me if I startled you. Please... can you help me?

VICAR

If I can, my child? Where do you live?

JANE

Nowhere now.

VICAR

But where did you come from?

JANE

From far away. I came as far as my money would take me... but I forgot all my possessions in the carriage and now I have nothing!

VICAR

My goodness you are soaked, and half-frozen! Come with me child. We must get you food and a bed for the night!

JANE

Oh, thank you... thank you!

The VICAR helps JANE away and they both exit. The rain gets louder and we hear thunder. Then the rain fades away, there is a new dawn – and we hear birdsong as the lights fade up. JANE is on stage looking at the beautiful countryside surrounding her.

JANE (*narrating*)

I would not have survived the night if the kind man had not led me to his home. I learned he was the local vicar – and he was a true man of God. I recovered and in time found work, teaching the local children. It is true most of them had little learning and progress was difficult, but I rejoiced that I had a worthy position in the village.

It was my great fortune that one thing remaining on my person was the letter from my uncle in Madeira – John Eyre. As soon as I could, I wrote to him. For several months I heard nothing, until one day news came that my uncle was dead and I had inherited the sum of twenty thousand pounds! Suddenly I was a woman of means. I saw to it that the school was improved and that the children of the village had more books.

Since my time of despair almost one year ago I had come so far and so quickly. I was thankful... and yet... and yet... Do not think I had forgotten Mr Rochester, the man I was prepared to marry. Circumstances beyond my awareness made that impossible – but what if... what if I had gone against convention and lived with him anyway? We could have travelled the world together and not a soul would have known we were not man and wife? But I would have known.

I tried to imagine him now. Was he alone still – or in the arms of another woman? Was he in Thorndean still or far away in a distant country? One night in particular, I was so consumed with thoughts of him that I could not sleep. Although it was a wild and windy night, I gathered a cloak round me and stepped out.

JANE steps across the stage, hugging herself a little in the cold. Then we hear faintly, as if floating across the mountains, a voice:

ROCHESTER (voice)
Jane! Jane!

JANE is startled and strains to hear again. The voice comes louder and clearer:

ROCHESTER (voice)
Jane! Jane!

JANE stares out at the hills in wonder. The voice has gone, replaced by the sound of the wind. We can see she has resolved to act.

JANE
I must find out what has happened to him. I am coming! Wait for me!
I will come!

As she exits the wind howls and mixes with shouts and screams, and the sound of a raging fire. The stage fills with smoke and we hear mad laughter: BERTHA is on stage, on the loose. We see her dimly in the red glow, looking around wild-eyed. Then ROCHESTER arrives to try to subdue her and get her away from the inferno.

ROCHESTER

Bertha! Come here! Do as I say! Bertha!

BERTHA cackles and darts off, pursued by ROCHESTER. We hear more laughter then one final scream followed by the sound of a building crashing in. On screen we see flames, and then embers and wreckage.

Scene 15

On screen we have the sense of another journey and then of a building much changed – now derelict, with broken, sooty stones strewn on the ground... Sounds of a carriage coming to a halt.

JANE

How fast I walked! How I ran sometimes! How I looked forward to catch the first view of the well-known woods! On I hastened. I looked forward to seeing the stately house; I saw a blackened ruin. No roof, no battlements, no chimneys: All had crashed in.

JANE stands and stares at the ruins and then is transfixed as ROCHESTER steps out and takes the air. He seems to look in her direction and yet does not register her at all. JANE holds her breath and makes no move. Before she can decide what to do or say, ROCHESTER sighs then MRS FAIRFAX emerges and helps him back indoors. ROCHESTER leaves something behind that JANE moves across to pick up or examine. After a moment MRS FAIRFAX comes out again and is surprised to see JANE.

JANE

Mrs Fairfax. How are you?

MRS FAIRFAX

Is it really you, Miss Eyre?

JANE

Yes indeed.

MRS FAIRFAX
Come inside. It's starting to rain!

JANE
Thank you.

MRS FAIRFAX
Have you no luggage?

JANE
The coachman left it at the inn.

MRS FAIRFAX
Well. Follow me.

Lights dim to suggest their entry indoors.

MRS FAIRFAX
You must be startled by the change to Thornfield.

JANE
It appears ravaged by fire!

MRS FAIRFAX
A while back, Mrs Rochester... Bertha... managed to escape again. Ever the wily one that woman! Within minutes she had set fire to the building. Mr Rochester found her on the roof. He caught her and tried to restrain her but at the last she broke free and threw herself off the battlements!

JANE
So Mrs... Rochester... is dead?

MRS FAIRFAX
Yes dear. She died instantly. Sad though it was, I hope she is in a better place now.

JANE
Amen. And Mr Rochester?

MRS FAIRFAX
He is next door!

JANE
Oh heaven be praised!

MRS FAIRFAX
But he was injured in the same fire. Trying to save Bertha delayed him, and by the time he tried to get out, the fire was raging. Burning timbers fell on him.

JANE
How bad is it?

MRS FAIRFAX
He has lost one hand, and he is blind.

JANE
Oh!

MRS FAIRFAX
These rooms are all that survive of the hall for now, and poor Mr Rochester has not the energy to arrange any improvements now. *(Pause)* I was about to go in and see him. He wants some water.

A bell is rung. Lights up on a dim figure at the far end of the stage. It is ROCHESTER. A tray has been prepared, which MRS FAIRFAX is about to carry in.

MRS FAIRFAX
That's him – thinking I've forgotten!

JANE
Give the tray to me; I will carry it in.

MRS FAIRFAX smiles and exits. JANE picks up the tray and moves to the other side of the stage towards ROCHESTER.

ROCHESTER
Thank you Mrs Fairfax. Put it over there on the table.

JANE carries the tray to the table and sets it down. ROCHESTER senses something out of the ordinary.

ROCHESTER

Mrs Fairfax? Is that you?

JANE
Mrs Fairfax is in the kitchen.

ROCHESTER stretches his hand out to feel who is there.

ROCHESTER
Who is this? Speak again!

JANE
Will you have a little water, sir?

ROCHESTER
Who is it?

JANE
I came only this evening.

ROCHESTER
Great God! What sweet madness has seized me?

JANE
No madness.

ROCHESTER
And where is the speaker? Is it only a voice? Oh! I cannot see, but I must feel, or my heart will stop.

ROCHESTER moves forward with one of his hands stretched out, trying to feel her. JANE takes his hand in hers.

ROCHESTER
Her small, slight fingers! If so there must be more of her. Is it really you, Jane? This is her shape... this is her size...

JANE
And this her voice. She is all here: her heart, too. I am so glad to be near you again.

ROCHESTER
Jane! My living darling! You are come back to me then?

JANE

I am and will never leave you again from this day.

ROCHESTER

And you do not lie dead in some ditch under some stream?

JANE

No, sir! I am an independent woman now.

ROCHESTER

Independent?

JANE

My uncle in Madeira is dead, and I have inherited his wealth.

ROCHESTER

A rich woman, indeed? Will you stay with me?

JANE

Certainly: I will be your companion: I can read to you, walk with you, be your eyes and hands.

For a moment, ROCHESTER is at a loss for words. Fearing she has been too forward, JANE takes a hesitant step backwards.

ROCHESTER

No, Jane; do not go. Now that I have heard your voice, you must not leave again...

JANE

Well, sir, I will stay with you.

ROCHESTER

Yes, but you understand one thing by staying with me; and I understand another. You cannot always be my nurse, Jane: you must marry one day.

JANE

I don't care about being married.

ROCHESTER

You should care, Janet: I would try to make you care... but... a sightless block!

JANE

It is time some one undertook to rehumanise you – for I see

you are being metamorphosed into a lion – and your hair reminds me of eagles' feathers; whether your nails are grown like birds' claws or not, I have not yet noticed.

ROCHESTER

On this arm, I have neither hand nor nails. It is a mere stump. A ghastly sight! Don't you think so, Jane?

JANE

It is a pity to see it; and a pity to see your eyes, and the scar on your forehead. But one is in danger of loving you too well for all this; and making too much of you.

ROCHESTER

I thought you would be revolted when you saw me.

JANE

Did you? It's cold in here – why do you not have a fire?

ROCHESTER

It is cold... I had not noticed.

JANE

We'll get a good fire started. Can you see anything when a fire is lit?

ROCHESTER

With the left eye: nothing. With the right eye I see a red glow.

JANE

Can you see me?

ROCHESTER

No, my fairy: but I am only too thankful to hear and feel you. But where have you been all this time? What have you done?

JANE

All in good time, sir! It is getting late.

ROCHESTER

Do not leave yet, Jane. Tomorrow I fear I shall find you gone!

JANE

You need fear no such thing. More importantly...

ROCHESTER
Yes?

JANE
Do you have a comb?

ROCHESTER
A comb?

JANE
Yes! Your hair is in a terrible state!

ROCHESTER
Am I hideous, Jane?

JANE
Very, sir: you always were, you know.

ROCHESTER
Humph! The wickedness has not been taken out of you,
wherever you have been.

JANE
Yet I have been with good people; far better than you.

ROCHESTER
Who the deuce have you been with?

JANE
If you twist in that way you will make me pull the hair out of
your head.

ROCHESTER
Tell me where you have been all this time, Jane!

JANE
You shall not get it out of me tonight, sir; you must wait. I
have been travelling for three days, and I am tired!

ROCHESTER
No doubt someone else has your heart. And now you must
go.

JANE
Where must I go, sir?

ROCHESTER

Your own way – with the husband you have chosen.

JANE

There is no one! You need not be jealous! My heart belongs to you; and with you it will remain

ROCHESTER

Jane, will you marry me?

JANE

Yes, sir.

ROCHESTER

Truly, Jane?

JANE

Most truly, sir.

ROCHESTER

Oh! my darling! God bless you!

They embrace as lights fade to black. Music. Lights reveal JANE alone on stage.

JANE (*narrating*)

I know what it is I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest, because I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine. We are ever together.

Adele, had been placed in a school. As soon as I could, I brought her to stay with us. Her English improved and she is now happily married.

My husband continued blind the first two years of our union, but the sight gradually came back in one eye. He cannot now see very distinctly, but he can find his way without being led by the hand: When his first child was put into his arms, he could see that the boy had inherited his own eyes, as they once were: large, brilliant, and black.

Rochester enters carrying a baby, wrapped in blankets. He goes up to JANE, who looks at her child.

ROCHESTER

My love! I see it is a bright, sunny morning!

JANE (*smiling*)

Yes! Let us go for a walk!

ROCHESTER takes her by the hand. They walk slowly across the stage, reaching the middle at the back. On screen we see bright leaves on the trees. As the lights fade to black, we see JANE and ROCHESTER in silhouette leaning in and kissing. Then the image, too, fades to black.

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