

John and Jane

JOHN Boo!

JANE (*Rolls eyes, keeps reading*) What do you want, John?

JOHN I want you to come and stand before me.

JANE John Reed was four years older than I. He gorged himself at table which made him bilious and gave him flabby cheeks. He ought to have been at school, but his mama kept him home on account of/

JOHN (*Shovels sweets in his mouth*) My delicate health. Come here at once.

JANE (*Goes to him*) He thrust his tongue out at me. (*JOHN pokes his tongue at her*) When that was done, he/

JOHN (*He grabs the book from her hand*) You have no business to take our books. Mama says you ought not live here with gentlemen's children. Go and stand by the door!

JANE reluctantly goes to the door.

JANE At first I was not aware of his intentions. But when I saw him lift and –

JOHN throws the book at JANE. She ducks, and it misses.

Wicked boy. Murderer – you are like the Roman emperors!

JOHN Eliza! Georgiana!

JANE He ran at me headlong. (*JOHN runs at her. He pulls her hair. JANE screams*) I have teeth of my own, John Reed!

Aunt Reed, Jane, and Mr. Brocklehurst

AUNT R This is the girl.

JANE The man turned his head towards where I stood, and said solemnly...

BROCK What is her age?

AUNT R Ten years.

BROCK Your name girl?

JANE Jane Eyre, sir.

BROCK Are you a good child?

JANE (*Smiling*) Impossible to reply in the affirmative, I was silent.

AUNT R Perhaps the less said on that subject, the better, Mr. Brocklehurst.

BROCK Sorry to hear it!

BROCKLEHURST *slowly circles JANE.*

BROCK Do you know where the wicked go after death?

JANE To hell.

BROCK And where is hell?

JANE In a pit full of fire.

BROCK And should you like to fall into that pit, and burn there forever?

JANE No sir.

BROCK What must you do to avoid it?

JANE Keep in good health and not die!

AUNT R *shrieks.*

BROCK Yesterday I buried a little child of five years old, a good child whose soul is in heaven. It is to be feared the same could not be said of you.

JANE I wished myself far away.

BROCK Do you say your prayers night and morning?

JANE *shakes her head.*

AUNT R She does.

BROCK Do you read your Bible?

JANE I like Revelations, the book of Daniel, Genesis and Samuel, a bit of Exodus, some parts of Kings and Chronicles, Job, John and/

- BROCK** The psalms?
- JANE** No sir.
- AUNT R** Shocking!
- BROCK** I have a little boy, younger than you, who knows six Psalms by heart and when you ask him which he would rather have, a gingerbread to eat, or a verse of a Psalm to learn he says, 'the verse of the Psalm!
- JANE** Psalms are not interesting.
- AUNT R** My savior in heaven!
- BROCK** You must pray to God to take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.
- JANE** (*To us*) I was about to question how that operation was to be performed, when Aunt Reed told me to –
- AUNT R** Sit down!

JANE sits on the floor. BROCKLEHURST towers ominously behind her.

Mr. Brocklehurst, I believe I intimated in my letter that this girl has not the character I should wish. Should you admit her to Lowood school/ I should be glad if teachers kept a strict eye to guard against her tendency to deceit.

Monologues I (Helen, Jane, and Pilot)

HELEN

Spring! Temperatures no longer froze the blood in our veins. Hope traversed us. Flowers peeped out amongst the leaves. And while we were not looking, a cradle of fog descended. A pestilence breathed typhus through our schoolroom. Forty-five girls lay ill at once. Many girls went home to die. Some died at the school and were buried quickly. How sad to die when the world was pleasant. And where was I? I was removed from Jane's sight. My complaint was consumption, and in Jane's ignorance, she thought time would cure me.

JANE

The next eight years were uniform but not unhappy. In time I was invested with the office of teacher. I remembered the real world was wide, and that a field of hopes, fears, and excitements awaited those who had courage to seek them. I went to my window and looked out. *(She moves forward)* Traced the road winding round the base of a mountain. How I longed to follow it. This was not enough. I desired liberty, for liberty I gasped, for liberty I uttered a prayer. It seemed scattered on the wind. What do I do? A new position? How do people get a new position? They apply to friends. *(Laughs)* I had no friends.

PILOT

October, November, December passed away. One afternoon in January Mr. Fairfax had written a letter. Jane volunteered to carry it to town. The two miles, a pleasant winter afternoon walk. The ground was hard, the air still. She delivered her letter and returned, stopping a mile from Thornfield in a lane noted for wild summer roses and blackberries. If a breath of air stirred it made no sound. She lingered till the sun sank crimson behind the trees. A noise broke upon the evening calm, a tramp, clatter, a horse was coming. It was not yet in sight, when she heard a rush under the hedge and there ran a great dog, whose black and white color made him distinct against the trees.

Lady Lynne, Blanche, Eshton, Jane, Adele, Rochester

BLANCHE, LADY LYNNE, ESHTON *enter*. ADELE *runs to them*. JANE *steals up the back and sits*.

LADY L We devoured the room, like a flock of vultures! First there was Mrs. Eshton. Then myself, Lady Lynne. But the most distinguished was Miss Blanche Ingram!

BLANCHE *laughs*.

Genius is said to be self-conscious. (*Smiles*) No one can tell whether Miss Ingram was a genius.

ADELE *runs to* BLANCHE.

ADELE Bonjour mademoiselle.

BLANCHE Oh, what a little puppet!

LADY L The French ward.

MRS E What a love of a child!

ROCHESTER *enters*.

JANE He comes in last. (*ROCHESTER and JANE share a look*) He is not to them what he is to me, I thought. (*She moves around him as he is frozen*) I have something in my blood and nerves that binds me to him. While I breathe and think... I must love him.

BLANCHE Mr Rochester, what induced you to take care of such a little doll?

ROCH She was left on my hands.

BLANCHE I suppose you have a governess for her. I saw a person just now – is she gone? (*Looks at JANE*) Oh no, there she is. (*JANE returns to hidden spot up the back*) I see in her the faults of all her class.

ROCH What are they madam?

BLANCHE They are a nuisance.

MRS E Indeed!

BLANCHE When I marry, no governess shall enter my household. I will suffer no competitor near my throne.

Pause, everybody looks at ROCHESTER.

ROCH Words from Miss Ingram's lips would put spirit into milk!

Everybody laughs and freezes.

JANE I quitted my corner, made my exit.

Rochester and Jane

ROCH I have a feeling with regard to you. It is as if I had a string under my ribs, tightly knotted to a string attached to the corresponding quarter of your gentle frame.

JANE I love Thornfield. I love it because I have lived in it a delightful life. I have not been trampled on. I have known you, Mr Rochester, and it strikes me with terror to be torn from you.

ROCH Why must you?

JANE Your bride.

ROCH I have no bride.

JANE But you will.

ROCH I hope/

JANE Do you think I could stay to become nothing to you? Do you think because I am poor, obscure and plain I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! I have as much soul as you. It is my spirit that addresses your spirit, just as if we stood equal, as we are!

ROCHESTER tries to embrace her, she wrestles away.

ROCH Jane be still, don't struggle so like a wild frantic bird.

JANE I am no bird and no net ensnares me. I am a free human being with an independent will – which I now exert to leave you!

She makes to leave.

ROCH I offer you my hand, my heart.

JANE You play a farce/

ROCH I ask you to pass through life at my side. Jane, be still!

JANE stops.

My bride is here, because my equal is here. You – you strange, unearthly thing. I love as my own flesh. Jane, marry me.

Long pause. JANE doesn't know whether to believe this is happening. She moves to him, judging, checking.

JANE Let me look at your face. Turn to the moonlight.

ROCH (*He does so as she circles him*) Read on, but make haste for I suffer. Say Edward, I will/

JANE (*Touching his face*) I will marry you.

Jane, St. John, Diana, Mary

- JANE** I am an orphan. I passed eight years at Lowood charitable school. I left last year to become a governess. The reason for my departure thence I cannot explain. I slept two nights in the open air and wandered two days without tasting food. I know all you have done for me/
- ST JOHN** You said your name was Jane Elliott?
- JANE** Elliott is not my real name.
- ST JOHN** My sisters have pleasure in keeping you as a treasure. I feel more inclination to put you in the way of work, but observe, my sphere is narrow. If you are inclined to despise the day of small things, then seek more efficient succor than I can offer.
- JANE** He returned to his book. (*She looks at MARY and DIANA – no help, they return to their books. JANE moves forward*) The more I knew of the inmates of this house the better I liked them. If there was a leader it was Diana. She was vigorous and offered to teach me/
- DIANA** German. Ich bin Diana. Sie sind Jane.
- JANE** Ich bin Jane.
- DIANA** Das ist zer gut.
- JANE** They discovered I could draw, pencils and colour boxes were put at my service. Mary took lessons.
- MARY** Zer gut!
- DIANA and MARY laugh.
- JANE** As to St John, the ease which arose between me and his sisters did not extend to him.
- DIANA** He is of a brooding nature.
- MARY** Zealous in his labours.
- ST JOHN** Blameless in my life and habits.
- JANE** Yet did not enjoy serenity or content.

Monologues II (Rochester, Diana, and Fairfax)

ROCH

I gave the lady servants, diamonds – in short I ruined myself with swooning. Calling one evening when unexpected, I found her out. I stood on the balcony and watched. You never felt jealousy, did you, Miss Eyre? You think all existence is quiet, floating on with closed eyes and muffled ears, you do not see the rocks bristling nor hear the breakers boil at their base. You will come someday to a craggy pass where the whole of life's stream will be broken into foam and noise. Either you will be dashed to atoms or lifted up. (*Pauses, stares into the sky*) I like this day, that sky of steel. I like Thornfield now, (*Pauses*) its crow-trees, and lines of windows. But how do I... I wish to be a better man... I encountered my rival and left a bullet in his arm.

DIANA

Jane you will think us hard-hearted beings not to be moved at the death of an uncle. But we have never known him. He was our mother's brother. They quarreled long ago. He never married, had no kindred but ourselves and one other person, not more closely related than we. We cherished the idea that he would leave his possessions to us, but this letter informs that he bequeathed every penny to the other relation. He had a right of course to do as he pleased, and it is merely a momentary damp that is cast on our spirits.

FAIRFAX

She walked the last mile in penetrating rain. Iron gates, a track descending through a forest. She followed it. The darkness of dusk gathered. She beheld a house, dank, green, decaying walls. Can there be life here? She heard a man – stretched forth his hand to feel the rain. His form was of the same strong contour as ever, his hair wild, his features unaltered. He paused as if he knew not which way to turn and stood in the rain now falling on his uncovered head. He found his way back to the house and entered. His old dog Pilot bounded towards her.