

JANE EYRE

By

Charlotte Brontë

Adapted and abridged for the stage by

Abigail Walton

This script is intended for a youth group (Age 14+) of between 10 and 15 players. This is a flexible script and intended to be an ensemble piece of theatre. This script is approximately 50 - 60 minutes running time.

Characters

John
Eliza
Georgina
Jane
Bessie
Miss Abbott
Mrs Reed
Mr Brocklehurst
Miss Temple
Helen
Mrs Fairfax
Grace Pool
Leah
Adele
Rochester
Blanche Ingram
Mason
Wood
Briggs
Bertha
St John
Ensemble (Can multirole with above parts)



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Prologue

John, Eliza and Georgina are teasing Jane which turns into brutal torment until Jane has had enough and fights back, pushing John forcefully to the floor. The other children run away in shock and John shakily gets himself up and hastily exits after his siblings, leaving Jane alone on stage.

Jane Is Condemned

Enter Bessie and Miss Abbott.

Bessie: Hold her arms, Miss abbot: she is like a mad cat.

Miss Abbott: For shame! For shame! What shocking conduct, Miss Eyre, to strike a young gentleman, your benefactress's son! Your young master.

Jane: Master! How is he my master? Am I a servant?

Miss Abbott: No; you are less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep. There, sit down, and think over your wickedness.

Bessie: If you do not sit still, you must be tied down. You ought to be aware, miss, that you are under obligations to Mrs. Reed: she keeps you: if she were to turn you off, you would have to go to the poorhouse.

Miss Abbott: And you ought not to think yourself on an equality with the Mrs reed and master reed just because missis kindly allows you to be brought up with them. They will have a great deal of money, and you will have none: it is your place to be humble, and to try to make yourself agreeable to them.

Bessie: If you become passionate and rude, missis will send you away, I am sure.

The Red Room

Jane is in the red room, the ensemble should be present and creating a haunting atmosphere, gradually closing in on Jane.

Ensemble: The red room was a square chamber

Ensemble: Very seldom slept in, I might say never

Ensemble: Yet it was one of the largest and stateliest chambers in the mansion

Ensemble: A bed supported on massive pillars of mahogany, hung with curtains of deep red damask

Ensemble: The two large windows, with their blinds always drawn down

Ensemble: The carpet was red

Ensemble: The table at the foot of the bed was covered with a crimson cloth

Ensemble: Mr. Reed had been dead nine years

Ensemble: It was in this chamber he breathed his last

Ensemble: Here he lay in state; hence his coffin was borne by the undertaker's men

Ensemble: And, since that day, a sense of dreary consecration had guarded it from frequent intrusion.

Jane: why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, for ever condemned? Why could I never please? Why was it useless to try to win any one's favour? Eliza, who was headstrong and selfish, was respected. Georgiana, who had a spoiled temper, a very acrid nature, was universally indulged. Her beauty, her pink cheeks and golden curls, seemed to give delight to all who looked at her, and to purchase indemnity for every fault. John no one thwarted, much less punished; though he twisted the necks of the pigeons, killed the little peachicks, set the dogs at the sheep. I strove to fulfil every duty; and I was termed naughty and tiresome, sullen, and sneaking-

All: Unjust! Unjust!

Ensemble: I began to recall what I had heard of dead men

Ensemble: Troubled in their graves by the violation of their last wishes

Ensemble: Revisiting the earth to punish the perjured and avenge the oppressed

Ensemble: And I thought Mr. Reed's spirit, harassed by the wrongs of his sister's child, might quit its abode-

Ensemble: My heart beat thick; my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears

Ensemble: Which I deemed the rushing of wings; something seemed near me

Ensemble: I was oppressed

Ensemble: Suffocated

Ensemble: Endurance broke down

Ensemble: I rushed to the door and shook the lock in desperate effort.

Jane bangs on the inside of the door in the Red Room, Bessie is on the other side.

Bessie: Miss Eyre, are you ill?

Miss Abbott arrives.

Miss Abbott: What a dreadful noise! It went quite through me!

Jane: Take me out! Let me go into the nursery!

Bessie: What for? Are you hurt? Have you seen something?

Enter Mrs Reed

Jane: Oh! I saw a light, and I thought a ghost would come

Mrs Reed: What is all this? Abbott and Bessie, I believe I gave orders that Jane Eyre

Should be left in the red room till I came to her myself.

Bessie: Miss Jane screamed so loud, ma'am

Mrs Reed: Let her go. Loose Bessie's hand, child: you will now stay here an hour longer, and it is only on condition of perfect submission and stillness that I shall liberate you then.

Jane: O aunt! Have pity! Forgive me! I cannot endure it--let me be punished some other way! I shall be killed if--

Mrs Reed: silence! This violence is all most repulsive

Meeting Mr Brocklehurst

Mrs Reed and Mr Brocklehurst are sat in the drawing room, Jane is stood between them looking unhappy.

Mr Brocklehurst: Her size is small: what is her age?

Mrs Reed: Ten years.

Mr Brocklehurst: So much? Your name, little girl?

Jane: Jane Eyre, sir.

Mr Brocklehurst: Well, Jane Eyre, and are you a good child?

Mrs Reed: Perhaps the less said on that subject the better, Mr. Brocklehurst.

Mr Brocklehurst: No sight so sad as that of a naughty child, especially a naughty little girl. Do you know where the wicked go after death?

Jane: Go to hell. They go to hell.

Mr Brocklehurst: And what is hell? Can you tell me that?

Jane: A pit full of fire.

Mr Brocklehurst: And should you like to fall into that pit, and to be burning there for ever?

Jane: No, sir.

Mr Brocklehurst: Do you say your prayers night and morning?

Jane: Yes, sir.

Mr Brocklehurst: And the psalms? I hope you like them.

Jane: No, sir. Psalms are not interesting

Mr Brocklehurst: That proves you have a wicked heart; and you must pray to God to change it: to give you a new and clean one: to take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Mrs Reed: Mr. Brocklehurst, this little girl has not quite the character and disposition I could wish: should you admit her into Lowood school, I should be glad if the superintendent and teachers were requested to keep a strict eye on her, and, above all, to guard against her worst fault, a tendency to deceit. I mention this in your hearing, Jane, that you may not attempt to impose on Mr. Brocklehurst.

Mr Brocklehurst: Deceit is, indeed, a sad fault in a child. Mrs. Reed. I will speak to Miss Temple and the teachers.

Mr Brocklehurst exits.

Jane: You told Mr. Brocklehurst I had a bad character, a deceitful disposition; but I will let everybody at Lowood know what you are, and what you have done.

Mrs Reed: Jane, you do not understand these things: children must be corrected for their faults.

Jane: Deceit is not my fault!

Mrs Reed: But you are passionate, Jane, that you must allow and now return to the nursery, there's a dear, and lie down a little.

Jane: I am not your dear; I cannot lie down: send me to school soon, Mrs. Reed, for I hate to live here.

Lowood School

Ensemble as Lowood girls: If I were to fall, from cliff top or tower

Or wander in marshes, by false light
beguiled,

Still will my saviour, with promise
and power,

Take to his bosom this poor orphan
child.

Mr Brocklehurst: Miss Temple, fetch the stool. Place the child upon it. We have a new pupil here at Lowood. Jane Eyre. She seems ordinary enough, a plain-feathered bird indeed. Who would think Her an agent of the evil one? But I have learned from the good and pious woman who adopted this girl as an orphan that her she Has a sharp, wicked and deceitful tongue. Eyre. On this pedestal of infamy, you will remain all this day. Of

food and drink you shall have none, for you must learn how barren is the life of the sinner. Children, shun her from your sports, exclude her from your conversation, withhold your friendship and deny your love from this day forth. This - girl – is - a – liar!

Brocklehurst leaves. Miss Temple leads the other girls out. Helen Burns sneaks out of the line.

Helen: Would you like some bread?

Jane: Who are you?

Helen: Burns. Why do you start?

Jane: You remind me of-- may I show you?

Helen helps Jane off the stool. Jane picks up her portfolio and shows a picture to Helen.

Helen: What is it meant to be?

Jane: I meant it to be the evening star. But, looking at you, it seems to me that it was your face I was trying to draw. What is your name besides Burns?

Helen: Helen.

Jane: Helen Burns. Why do you stay with a girl whom everybody believes to be a liar?

Helen: I cannot think everybody believes you a liar.

Jane: After what Mr. Brocklehurst said before the whole school?

Helen: Mr. Brocklehurst is not God. Nor is he even a great or good man. And suppose all the world did think you wicked. If your own Conscience absolved you from guilt, you would still have friends, Jane Eyre.

Jane: You, Helen?

Helen: Yes, me. And yourself. And God.

Lowood girls run back across the stage. They bang into Jane and scatter her drawings then run off taunting – "liar, liar". Miss Temple follows them on and hears them.

Helen: Jane, perhaps you feel as though you have come to a terrible place. Perhaps you feel hate towards those who sent you here. But life is too short to spend in nursing animosity.

Jane: At my aunt's house I was solitary and despised. She thought I could do without one bit of love or kindness but how can we live so?

Helen: You are loved, Jane. An invisible world surrounds you, a kingdom of spirits commissioned to guard you.

Miss Temple has picked up a few of Jane's drawings, she holds them up.

Miss Temple: Do you not see them? Here they are. You have been blessed with talent and intelligence. Not everyone at Lowood is cruel. One can learn here. Intelligence and a proper education will give you independence. Independence of mind.

Typhoid

A split stage with Mrs Reed writing on one side and a tableaux of Jane and Helen on the other side.

Mrs. Reed: Dear Mr. Brocklehurst, I extend my sympathy for the sufferings that have been visited upon you and your institution. I rejoice to hear that you and your family have removed to a place of safety, where the epidemic of typhoid fever cannot reach you. In reply to your query: it is not possible for me to remove Miss Eyre from Lowood school. I will not risk bringing her under my roof, to infect to my own dear boy, and I have no other place to keep her. In God we all trust, and I do not doubt that the moral education you have imparted to the child will enable her to bear whatever fate the almighty has in store. Most sincerely yours,
Mrs. Sarah Reed

Exit Mrs Reed.

Jane: Helen.

Helen: Is it you, Jane? What are you doing here? It is almost midnight.

Jane: I couldn't sleep until I saw you. They said-they said you--
Jane takes Helen's hand.

Helen: You're freezing. Your little feet are bare. Come here beneath my Quilt.

Jane climbs into bed next to Helen.

Jane: Oh, it is warm. They said you were sick. But you look so happy, so peaceful. I am glad it wasn't true.

Helen: I am happy, too, Jane. I'm going home.

Jane: Oh, Helen, I shall miss you, but I am glad. You will come back when the typhus epidemic has ended? You're lucky. I know Mrs. Reed would never send for me, even if I become ill.

Helen: No, Jane. To my last home, where all is light. I am going to God.

Jane feels her forehead and recoils at the heat.

Helen: Don't be sad, I'm happy.

Jane: But I could not bear it if you .. I cannot bear it.

Helen: Do not say so. You have a passion for living, Jane. You must remain in good health, and not die.

Jane: Don't leave me. Don't leave me. We should never see one another again.

Helen: Don't cry. Don't cry, Jane. One day, one day, you will join me in the region of bliss...

Jane: Do you really believe so?

Helen: The everlasting will never destroy a mind that he has created. I believe in almighty power. I trust to eternal love. I could sleep now. Don't leave me. I like to have you near.

Jane: I will not leave you, Helen.

Thornfield Hall

A movement sequence could be choreographed here to show the passing of time.

Jane is DSR, holding out and advert to be placed in the paper.

Jane: A young lady is desirous of a situation as governess. She received her education at Lowood Academy, where she has been a student six years, head girl for the last three, and teacher for two. She is qualified to teach the usual elements of a good

British curriculum, together with drawing and French. Please direct responses to Miss J.E. at the Yorkshire village post office.

Miss Fairfax appears DSL with a newspaper.

Miss Fairfax: If J.E., who advertised in the Yorkshire Herald of last Thursday, is able to give satisfactory references, and can guarantee spoken fluency in French, a situation can be offered to her. There is but one pupil, a little girl, under 10 years of age. The salary is 30 pounds per annum. Please send references, address and all particulars to Mrs. Fairfax, Thornfield hall.

Miss Fairfax and Jane turn in to face each other.

Jane: Are you Mrs Fairfax?

Mrs Fairfax: Indeed I am.

Jane: I am Jane Eyre

Enter house staff going about their chores.

Mrs Fairfax: What a tedious journey you must have had. In winter! Leah, please take up Miss Eyre's things!

Leah: Yes, Mrs. Fairfax! Uh ... where am I to put her? She not being exactly

Mrs Fairfax: The room we made up for her a week ago, Leah. Second floor, front.

Leah: Oooh! Second floor, front. I remember now, Mrs Fairfax. Second floor front it is.

Leah exits with Jane's luggage.

Mrs Fairfax: Here; your poor hands must be numb.

Mrs Fairfax undoes the ribbon on Jane's bonnet.

Mrs Fairfax: My goodness... How young you are?

Jane: I am eighteen. I have been teaching at Lowood for two years.

Mrs Fairfax: Oh yes. And I am sure we are very lucky to have you. Do sit down. Here, by the fire. I've put you on the second floor, just above. Small room, but very cosy and convenient.

Jane: I thank you, Mrs. Fairfax. I had heard that governesses were often consigned to a garret in the attic.

Grace Poole enters

Mrs Fairfax: Grace! This is Miss Eyre, the new governess. Jane, Grace Poole.

Jane: Mrs. Poole.

Mrs Fairfax: Grace does the sewing.

Grace: Right. And I had better be back at it, Mrs. Fairfax. Miss Eyre.

Grace exits, Leah reenters

Mrs Fairfax: Leah, would you make a little hot port and cut some sandwiches?

Leah: oh, yes, Mrs. Fairfax! I'll just go and make a little hot port and cut some sandwiches. That would be lovely. Thank you, Mrs. Fairfax.

Mrs Fairfax: Leah! ... and then bring them in here. For Miss Eyre and myself.

Leah: oh. Oh!

Leah exits

Mrs Fairfax: Leah is a very nice girl and Grace Poole is—but, well, they are servants – and one cannot talk to them on terms of equality.

Jane: And am I meeting Miss Fairfax tonight?

Mrs Fairfax: who?

Jane: Miss Fairfax - my pupil?

Mrs Fairfax: Oh! You mean Miss Varennes; Mr Rochester's ... ward. She is to be your pupil.

Jane: Who is Mr Rochester?

Mrs Fairfax: Why, the owner of Thornfield. Mr Edward Rochester.

Adele: Ah, mademoiselle, mademoiselle! Est-il vrai que vous soyez vraiment ma nouvelle institutrice et pouvez vous vraiment parler ma langue? (oh, miss, miss, is it true that you are really my new governess and can you really speak my language)

Leah: sorry, Miss Eyre. She don't speak no English.

Jane: So I see. Oui, enfant, je parle français. (yes child. I speak French.)

Mrs Fairfax: How very French. Bedtime now. Leah, take Adele up.

Adele: no! No no no no no no no!

Jane: Adele, je suis fatigué. Je dois aller au lit maintenant, aussi. Nous serons ensemble journaliers. (Adele. I am tired. I must go to bed now, too. We will have every day together.)

Adele: Très bien. (very well.)

Leah: Oh, it's like a miracle, having you here, miss.

Leah leads Adele off

Mrs Fairfax: You must be tired as well. Should you like to go up?

Jane: Thank you, Mrs. Fairfax.

Mrs Fairfax leads Jane to her bedroom and faint laughter and strange noise can be heard.

Mrs. Fairfax: Grace! Too much noise, Grace. Remember instructions.

Grace: Well. We're calm for the moment.

Grace exits

Jane: Ms. Poole seems ...

Mrs Fairfax: Yes. Objectionable in some ways, but she does a difficult job well, I will allow that.

Jane: Sewing?

Mrs Fairfax: Yes. A fine old house, Thornfield. But difficult to maintain.

Mrs Fairfax: Sleep well, Miss Eyre.

A hint of Bertha Antoinette's tortured silhouette flashes by.

Bertha: bungo moolatta, bungo moolatta... Etc

Groans and wails echo through the house.

First Meet with Rochester

A field. Jane USL.

Rochester (*from off*): Hellfire. Damnation. Up, you cursed beast!

The horse scrambles to its feet and charges in, terrifying Jane. Rochester limps in after, collapses. Sees Jane. They are both transfixed.

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

Rochester: Where did you come from, you unearthly creature? What are you?

Jane: Thornfield hall.

Rochester: Thornfield? You?

Jane: I am the governess.

Rochester: The governess.

Rochester tries to stand. His ankle will bear no weight. He lets out an involuntary cry.

Jane: I am on my way to post a letter. May I fetch someone to help?

Rochester: Help me yourself.

Jane: Excuse me?

Rochester: Come here. I am in distress and I must beg of you to please come here, miss governess.

Jane approaches. Rochester instantly leans all his weight on her. She almost under it; the first time she has ever touched and been touched by a man. She holds him up. And walks him closer to his horse. Rochester calms it. He springs into the saddle, grimacing as he wrenches his sprain.

Rochester: Do you have a name?

Jane: Jane Eyre

Rochester: Enchanté Jane Eyre. I am Edward Rochester. Make haste with your letter. For who knows what might lurk in these dark woods... Yah!

They both exit, Jane with a smile.

Bertha Starts A Fire

Jane is in her bedroom, surrounding her are members of the ensemble.

Jane: Was Mr. Rochester now ugly in my eyes? His gratitude, and many associations, all pleasurable and warm, made his face the object I best liked to see; his presence in a room was more cheering than the brightest fire. Yet I had not forgotten his faults; indeed, I could not, for he brought them frequently before me. He was proud, sardonic, harsh to inferiority of every description: in my secret soul I knew that his great kindness to me was balanced by unjust severity to many others. He was moody, too; unaccountably so.

Jane blows out her candle.

Ensemble: Though I had now extinguished my candle and was laid down in bed, I could not sleep for thinking of his look when he paused in the avenue

Ensemble: I started wide awake on hearing a vague murmur

Ensemble: Peculiar and mournful

Ensemble: I wished I had kept my candle burning

Ensemble: The night was drearily dark

Ensemble: My spirits were depressed

Ensemble: I tried again to sleep; but my heart beat anxiously

Ensemble: My inward tranquillity was broken

Ensemble: The clock, far down in the hall, struck two

Ensemble: Just then it seemed my chamber-door was touched; as if fingers had swept the panels in groping a way along the dark gallery outside

Jane: Who is there?

Ensemble: This was a demoniac laugh

Ensemble: Low, suppressed, and deep

Ensemble: Uttered, as it seemed, at the very keyhole of my chamber door.

Jane: Who is there?

Jane puts a shawl around her shoulders and opens the door, smoke creeps out. Jane starts coughing and approaches Rochester's bed, he is sleeping.

Jane: Wake! Wake!

Ensemble: I shook him,

Ensemble: But he only murmured and turned

Ensemble: The smoke had stupefied him.

Ensemble: Not a moment could be lost

Ensemble: the very sheets were kindling

Ensemble: I rushed to his basin

Ensemble: The splash of the shower-bath I had liberally bestowed, roused Mr. Rochester at last.

Jane throws a bucket of water over Rochester.

Mr Rochester: Is there a flood?

Jane: No, sir; but there has been a fire: get up, do; you are quenched now; I will fetch you a candle.

Mr Rochester: In the name of all the elves in Christendom, is that Jane Eyre? What have you done with me, witch, sorceress? Who is in the room besides you? Have you plotted to drown me?

Jane: I will fetch you a candle, sir; and, in heaven's name, get up. Somebody has plotted something: you cannot too soon find out who and what it is. I heard them. I heard an odd singular laugh.

Jane leaves

Mr Rochester: No?

Jane re-enters with a candle

Rochester: But you heard an odd laugh? You have heard that laugh before, I should think, or something like it?

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

Rochester: Just so. Grace Poole — you have guessed it. She is, as you say, singular — very. Well, I shall reflect on the subject. Meantime, I am glad that you are the only person, besides myself, acquainted with the precise details of to-night's incident. You are no talking fool: say nothing about it. I will account for this state of affairs/

Jane: Good night, then, sir

Rochester: What! Are you quitting me already, and in that way?

Jane: I thought I might return to bed, sir

Rochester: But not without taking leave; not without a word or two of acknowledgment and good-will: not, in short, in that brief, dry fashion. Why, you have saved my life! — snatched me from a horrible and excruciating death! And you walk past me as if we were mutual strangers! At least shake hands. You have saved my life: I have a pleasure in owing you so immense a debt. I cannot say more.

They shake hands.

Blanche Ingram

Thornfield House. The staff are preparing for Rochester's return, there will be a party.

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

Jane: Miss Ingram?

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

Jane: May I assist you, Mrs Fairfax?

They prepare Thornfield for Rochester and guests. Rochester arrives with Blanche Ingram on his arm and she is very flirtatious.

Adele: qu'elle est belle...

Jane: Adele, come away. He will not ask for you today. (To Blanche) Excuse me, miss.

Rochester: You dazzle me quite.

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

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

Rochester dances and dines with his guests, while Jane looks on from the shadows.

Mrs Reed Is Sick

Jane and Rochester are walking around the fields.

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

Rochester: What to do?

Jane shows him a letter that she has received.

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

Rochester: The aunt who cast you out?

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

Rochester: Promise me you won't stay long.

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

Rochester: How much do I owe you?

Jane: Fifteen pounds.

Rochester takes out some notes.

Rochester: Here is fifty.

Jane: That is too much.

Rochester: Take your wages, Jane.

Jane: I cannot.

Rochester: Is it wrong?

Jane nods.

Rochester: Then I only have ten.

She takes it.

Jane: Now you owe me five.

Rochester: Indeed, I do. Come back for it soon. Meantime I shall safeguard it, here. Do you trust me to keep it?

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

Mr Rochester laughs and puts his arm around Jane as they walk out, she looks at it and is very confused.

Ensemble enter to help Jane travel; they create the train. Jane travels to see her sick Aunt Reed, she is laying in the bed and Jane kneels beside her.

Mrs Reed: I have twice done you wrong. I broke the vow I made to Reed

Jane: Please, do not think of it, Mrs Reed

Mrs Reed: I am dying; I must get it out! Open that box. Take out the letter. Read it.

Jane obeys. She reads the letter aloud.

Jane: 'madam, will you have the goodness to send me the address of my niece, Jane Eyre. I desire her to come to me at Madeira. Fortune has blessed my endeavours and as I am childless, I Wish to adopt her and bequeath her at my death whatever I may have to leave. Yours, John Eyre, Madeira'. This is dated three years ago. Why did I never hear of it?

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

Jane: I would have loved you if you had let me.

Mrs Reed: My life has been cursed.

Jane: Please, let us be reconciled.

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

Jane: Then love me or hate me as you will. You have my full and free forgiveness. Be at peace.

Ensemble enter and carry Mrs Reed away.

Rochester Proposes

Jane and Rochester are walking around the fields.

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

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

Jane: Yes sir.

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

Jane: You must.

Mr Rochester: We've been good friends, haven't we?

Jane: yes, sir.

Mr Rochester: I have a strange feeling with regard to you: as if I had a string somewhere under my left ribs, tightly knotted to a similar string in you. And if you were to leave, I'm afraid that cord

of communion would snap. And then I've a notion that I'd take to bleeding inwardly. As for you - you'd forget me.

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

Mr Rochester: then why must you leave?

Jane: because of your wife!

Mr Rochester: Jane... You must stay.

Jane: And become nothing to you? Am I a machine without feelings? Do you think that because I am poor, obscure, plain and little that I am soulless and heartless? I have as much soul as you and full as much heart. And if god had blessed me with beauty and wealth, I could make it as hard for you to leave me as it is for I to leave you. I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you.

Mr Rochester: Then let your will decide your destiny. I offer you my hand, my heart and a share of all this. I ask you to pass through life at my side. Jane, you are my equal and my likeness. Will you marry me?

Jane: Are you mocking me?

Mr Rochester: do you doubt me?

Jane: entirely.

(beat)

Your bride is Miss Ingram -

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

Ensemble dress Jane as a bride and Jane and Rochester are stood before the priest.

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

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

Mr Rochester: Proceed.

Briggs: An insurmountable impediment exists.

Mr Rochester: proceed!

Briggs: Mr Rochester has a wife now living. *(reading a document)* I affirm and can prove that Edward Fairfax Rochester was fifteen years ago married to my sister, Bertha Antoinetta

Mason at st James church, Spanish town, Jamaica. A copy of the register is now in my possession. Signed, Richard mason. The figure by the doorsteps out of the shadows. It is Richard mason. Rochester flies down the aisle, a groan of rage escapes him. He lifts his arm.

Mason: good god -

Wood: Sir, you are in a sacred place -

Mason flinches away. Rochester swallows his rage.

Mason: She is at Thornfield hall. I saw there in April. I'm her brother.

Rochester: Briggs, wood, mason, I invite you all to come up to the house and visit Mrs. Poole's patient, and *my wife!* You shall see what sort of a being I was cheated into espousing, and judge whether or not I had a right to break the compact and seek sympathy with something at least human. This girl knew nothing. She thought all was fair and legal. She never dreamt she was being entrapped into a feigned union with a defrauded wretch. Come. All follow!

Bertha

The attic at Thornfield Hall. All ensemble are present and creating an atmosphere of lunacy. The wedding party tentatively enter and watch Bertha.

Ensemble: In the deep shade

Ensemble: At the farther end of the room

Ensemble: A figure ran backwards and forwards

Ensemble: What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell

Ensemble: It grovelled, seemingly, on all fours

Ensemble: It snatched and growled like some strange wild animal:

Ensemble: But it was covered with clothing,

Ensemble: And a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.

Ensemble: Mr. Rochester flung me behind him:

Ensemble: The lunatic sprang and grappled his throat viciously,

Ensemble: And laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggled

There is a struggle between Bertha and Rochester until she is restrained by the ensemble

Rochester: That is my wife!

All except Jane slowly fade out and exit.

Jane: The whole consciousness of my life lorn, my love lost, my hope quenched, my faith death-struck, swayed full and mighty above me in one sullen mass. That bitter hour cannot be described: in truth, the waters came into my soul; I sank in deep mire: I felt no standing; I came into deep waters; the floods overflowed me.

Jane Is Taken in By St John And His Sisters

Jane is reading and there is a knock at the door. She is surprised. There is a second knock.

Jane (to self): Edward Rochester?

There is a third knock, Jane gets up and answers the door.

Jane: John? What are you doing here?

St John: I only know half a story; I insist on hearing the rest.

Jane: Sit down

St John: I know you are Jane Eyre, not Jane Elliot

Jane is silent. John takes out a piece of paper.

St John: Dear Miss Jane Eyre, thank you for helping me with my English. Yours, Adele. Pretty little drawing. I saw an advertisement in the times from a solicitor named Briggs, enquiring of a Jane Eyre. I knew a Jane Elliott. This paper resolved my suspicion into certainty. And so, I wrote to him. Are you not going to enquire why he has gone to such lengths to find you?

Jane: What does he want?

St John: Merely to tell you that your uncle, Mr John Eyre of madeira, is dead; that he has left you all his property and that you are now rich.

Jane: Excuse me?

St John: You are rich; quite an heiress.

Jane: There must be some mistake.

St John: None at all. You look desperately miserable about it, I must say.

Jane: My uncle... I never met him. I'd forgotten him. It cannot be. I've done nothing to earn it.

St John: That is a rare reply, Miss Eyre. I go to India in six weeks, should you like to do with me?

Jane: To India?

St John: indeed

Jane: I must think on this, but yes, I would like this very much. You and your sisters have done so much for me, and now you will chaperone me to India.

St John: As my wife

Jane: Excuse me?

St John: How can I take out to India a girl of nineteen, unless she is my wife? You will learn to love enough.

Jane: Love enough? I scorn your idea of love

St John: How dare you!

(In Jane's mind) **Rochester:** Jane

Jane: Shh

St John: What do you hear?

(In Jane's mind) **Rochester:** Jane

Jane: Where are you? Are you there?

(In Jane's mind) **Rochester:** Jane

St John: Why are you talking to the air?

(In Jane's mind) **Rochester:** Jane

Jane: Wait for me, I am coming

Jane pushes St John out and breathes deeply against the door.

Jane: I am coming to you.

Jane Returns to Thornfield

Thornfield has burnt down, and it is now a skeleton of a manor house. Rochester is blind and sat on a pile of rubble or wood. Jane enters and takes everything in, she does not speak for a while.

Jane: Good evening

Mr Rochester: Who is it? What is it? Who speaks?

Jane: You do not know?

Mr Rochester: Great god! — what delusion has come over me? What sweet madness has seized me?

Jane: No delusion — no madness: your mind, sir, is too strong for delusion, your health too sound for frenzy.

Mr Rochester: Jane Eyre. You have come back to me.

Jane: I have

Mr Rochester: Am I hideous, Jane?

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

Mr Rochester: The wickedness has not been taken out of you. There was another fire, worse/

Jane: \I know

Mr Rochester: I lost/

Jane: \I know

Mr Rochester: I am widowed

Jane: Yes, you are. That is not why I am here; I do not intend on asking for your hand in marriage

Jane takes Mr Rochester's hand

Mr Rochester: You are altogether a human being, Jane? You are certain of that?

Jane: I conscientiously believe so, Mr. Rochester.

END.