

PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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Young Jane Eyre

Story by
Charlotte Bronte

Adapted for the Stage by
Marisha Chamberlain

Young Jane Eyre was first presented by The Children's Theatre Company for the 1987-88 season.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS:

JANE EYRE

MRS. REED, her aunt

JOHN, ELIZA, GEORGIANA, her cousins

BESSIE TURBEE, the nursery maid

COACHMAN

BROCKLEHURST, Headmaster of Lowood School

MISS MILLER, Under teacher

MISS TEMPLE, Superintendent

MISS SCATCHERD, Upper teacher

MADAME PIERROT, Upper teacher

MRS. HARDEN, the cook

BARBARA, the servant girl

MRS. BROCKLEHURST, wife of BROCKLEHURST

AUGUSTA, THEODORA, his daughters

DOCTOR

GREAT GIRLS (MONITORS):

- LUCY GILLESPIE
- LAURA COOPER
- JILLIAN FYFE
- SUSAN EVANS

OTHER GREAT GIRLS:

- HELEN BURNS
- GRACE JOHNSON

MIDDLE GIRLS:

- PHOEBE WALKER
- PATRICIA KNAPP
- CAROLINE WARREN
- SALLY PEEBLES
- JULIA SEVERN
- EDITH ROBBINS

LITTLE GIRLS:

- DOROTHY EVELETH
- EMMY BRISTOL
- MARY ANN WILSON
- JANE EYRE
- JUDY VAUGHAN

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

Early January, Gateshead Mansion, Durham. Lights up on JANE, age ten, alone with her doll, absorbed in play.

JANE (VOICE OVER) There was no possibility of taking a walk that day and I was glad of it. I never liked long walks, especially on chilly afternoons. What I liked was to be left alone, since I did not belong here, in this house where no one liked me. But where else could I go? I was only a little girl – motherless, fatherless, penniless. Still, I could picture myself on a journey... my destination? Anywhere from here!

MASTER JOHN enters. He stares at JANE as he stuffs a cream puff into his mouth. JANE looks up, sees him, and freezes. He sticks out his tongue out. Lights out. Lights up on JANE and BESSIE. BESSIE darns a sock.

BESSIE And after all the others had tried on the glass slipper, and it had not fit, the footman took the glass slipper and placed it in front of Cinderella and she slipped her foot inside...

JANE And when the footman saw the glass slipper fit, he gave it to Cinderella and she struck the glass slipper on the toe and it shattered into a heap of diamonds. And she put them in her pocket for money and went out on her travels.

BESSIE Oh, no, darling. Wherever did you get that idea? That's not how the story goes.

JANE Oh? Why not?

BESSIE Come over here and finish your work, Jane. *(Hands JANE a sock to darn.)*

JANE Yes, Nurse. Am I like Cinderella?

BESSIE No, I'm afraid you're not even one of the ugly sisters. You're a cousin -- a poor relation and an orphan. Hold the stocking like this, darling, and run your thread evenly back and forth across the toe.

GEORGIANA and ELIZA rush in.

GEORGIANA Now, keep calm, Eliza.

ELIZA Why, should I?

GEORGIANA Please keep your temper.

ELIZA You took them, didn't you? You took them and you lost them!

GEORGIANA I did not!

ELIZA I shall have apoplexy!

GEORGIANA I didn't take them! If I took them, I would have them in my hand right now.

JANE Where are they going?

BESSIE To the theater.

MRS. REED (*Offstage.*) Eliza! Georgiana!

BESSIE Oh, girls! Your mother's calling. The carriage is at the door.

ELIZA The carriage can rot!

GEORGIANA Eliza is working herself into a state!

BESSIE Why? What's the matter?

ELIZA Opera glasses! I can't go to the theater without opera glasses, now can I, you stupid cow?

GEORGIANA Bessie! Don't just sit there.

ELIZA Bessie, you have them!

BESSIE Oh, no --

GEORGIANA Yes -- blame Bessie, but don't blame me.

MRS. REED *(Offstage)* Young ladies, the carriage!

BESSIE Your mother, girls . You'll be late. Best go without them.

ELIZA No, no, I will not! I will not go without them.

BESSIE Come, let's look in the parlor.

GEORGIANA Your color is rising - I know, Eliza - I sympathize -- I quite agree...

ELIZA *(Overlapping.)* I will not go without opera glasses! I will not! I will not! I will not! Never! Never! Never!

BESSIE and GEORGIANA and ELIZA exit. JANE shrinks back trying to stay out of the furor. MASTER JOHN enters, looks at JANE, takes out the opera glasses, peers at JANE through them. JANE back away.

JANE Bessie!

JOHN whips the glasses away from his eyes.

JOHN Don't you open your trap! (Silence) You don't dare say a thing, do you, Miss Mope?

Blackout. MRS. REED enters with a lit candleabrum, followed by BESSIE, ELIZA, GEORGIANA AND JOHN who carried a pile of four large presents and a small one. The group sweeps through the room and the event is conveyed by gesture – the dialogue need not be audible. Mid-scene, JANE appears upstate and watches the proceedings.

MRS. REED Ah, my dear children. What a pleasure it is to share in our Christmas bounty. *(MRS. REED distributes presents to ELIZA, GEORGIANA AND JOHN.)* Here you are sweet Eliza...

ELIZA Oh, how pretty! Thank you Mother.

JOHN Where's mine?

MRS. REED ...and for you, dear, dear Georgiana...

GEORGIANA It's simply gorgeous.

JOHN Now? Is it my turn now?

MRS. REED ...and for you, my darling, darling John. Apple of my eye.
(GEORGIANA and ELIZA take a moment to admire the wrappings.
JOHN tears into the box directly.) Take your presents and go along.
(The Reed children exit. MRS. REED turns back and hands the small
present to BESSIE.) Oh, and we mustn't forget Bessie.

BESSIE moves toward an exit, examining her present. She regards JANE, who stands empty-handed. Blackout.

Lights up on JANE finishing a drawing. She sets the drawing down and brings her doll over to see it.

JANE You see, it's the dog, Murgatroydt, and we have to learn what dogs know. They are happy, very happy running about and eating any kind of food you give them and if you just touch their heads they go wild with joy.

JOHN (Offstage.) Georgiana! Liza! Where are you? I'm bored! (JOHN enters. JANE snatches the drawing to hide it.) What do you have there?

JANE Nothing.

JOHN I want to see it.

JANE But I don't care to show it.

ELIZA and GEORGIANA enter.

GEORGIANA John, there you are!

ELIZA Come, John, we want you to drive the buggy to the village.

JOHN Jane's hiding something.

GEORGIANA What is it?

ELIZA Come, what's that behind your back?

JANE It's a picture.

GEORGIANA What kind of picture?

ELIZA What of?

JANE backs away. They pursue her. JOHN sneaks behind them to grab the picture.

GEORGIANA Did you draw it yourself?

ELIZA I'll bet you think it's pretty.

JANE My doll thinks it's pretty. (*JOHN grabs the picture.*)

JOHN Got it! It's a dog.

ELIZA That's Murgatroydt?

GEORGIANA Why has he only three legs?

JANE You can't see the fourth.

MISS ELIZA What do you mean you can't see it?

JANE I mean it's out of sight in the picture.

MRS. REED (*OFFSTAGE*) Children! Tea time!

GEORGIANA Well, it's a fair likeness but he can't run on three legs.

ELIZA You've crippled him. Coming, Mother.

GEORGIANA and ELIZA exit. JOHN offers the drawing to JANE. As JANE reaches to take it, he pulls it back, tears it in half, then give it to her.

JOHN Here you are.

Blackout. Lights up on MRS. REED seated on a couch, conducting Bible recitations For ELIZA, GEORGIANA and JOHN. JANE stands at the periphery.

ELIZA *(Psalm 79)* ...For we are your people and the sheep of your pasture; we will give you thanks forever, O Lord and show forth your praise from age to age.

MRS. REED Very good, Eliza. Now, John, let's hear yours.

JOHN Noooo...

MRS. REED *(Finds a page in the Bible.)* Ah, the twenty-third psalm.

JOHN *(Gets up to recite.)* The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not wait...

MRS. REED "Want".

JOHN Want. He maketh me to lie down ... under the haystack.

MRS. REED To lie down i n green pastures, John.

JOHN He leadeth me ... to the horses.

MRS. REED No.

JOHN He leads the horses to water.

MRS. REED No, John. He leads me beside still waters –

JOHN Quiet, old girl. I've got it now. He leads me beside still waters...

MRS. REED He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness –

JOHN Right, right. Righteousness...

MRS. REED For?

MASTER JOHN For his own private purposes.

MRS. REED For his name's sake. Have you even read this, John?

JOHN Yes. Yes, I have -- listen: Yea!

MRS. REED Good.

JOHN Yea, though -- yea, though I walk...

MRS. REED Yes, where? Honestly, John!

JOHN Through... through... through...

JANE *(Blurts out.)* Through the valley of the shadow of death!

GEORGIANA Well!

JANE claps her hand over her mouth. JOHN stares at her.

MRS. REED *(Fixes JANE with a glare.)* No one asked you to speak. *(Turns to JOHN)* John -- to your room and stay there til you you know your verse. Girls, shall we find something nice to eat? John, to your room at once!

With a menacing gesture toward JANE, JOHN exits followed by the other Reeds. Blackout. Lights up on JANE, reading a book in the library.

JOHN Jane Eyre? Oh, Jane? Cousin Jane? Stupid Jane? Where the dickens is she? Go tell Mama she's run away!

ELIZA enters the library and finds JANE.

ELIZA No she hasn't. She's hiding in the library.

JOHN enters the library. GEORGIANA follows. JANE gets up and faces JOHN.

MISS ELIZA There she is!

JANE What do you want?

JOHN No, no, no -- say, "What do you want, Master John".

JANE Master John.

JOHN I want you to come here.

JANE goes to him, holding her book behind her back.

JOHN What a r e you doing? Reading our books? Reading our books when you should be a beggar? Do you know, little cousin, that one day soon this whole estate -- the house and grounds and everything in it will be mine, all mine. You are reading my books, without my say so. You'd better learn a lesson. Stand here and don't turn around. *(He sets her upstage; takes the book from her.)*

JANE What are you doing? *(JOHN lobbs the book at JANE, hitting her on the head with it. JANE cries out.)*

JANE Ow! Ow! *(Summons her courage.)* You! Do you know what you are?

JOHN No? What am I?

JANE You are a wicked, cruel boy! You are like a murderer – like a barbarian – you- you – you Roman Emperor!

JOHN What! What! Did she say that to me?

ELIZA Did you hear that?

GEORGIANA And I thought she was such a mouse!

JOHN I'll show you! *(JOHN runs at her, beats her with his fists, and grabs her hair. She strikes back – gives him a nosebleed and kicks his knee.)* Rat!
Rat!

BESSIE enters to investigate the commotion.

GEORGIANA Help! Bessie! Bessie Turbee!

E L I Z A Stop her! Stop her!

BESSIE (Pulling JANE and JOHN apart.) Miss Jane! Stop it!

JANE But I didn't - it wasn't –

MRS. REED enters.

JOHN Ow! Ow! Mama! Look what she's done -- the wild, savage, filthy beast!

MRS. REED Be quiet, John. (*Silence. MRS. REED turns her back on JANE.*) Bessie, take her to the Red Room.

JANE No!

MRS. REED Pardon me?

JANE It was he! He struck me with a huge book. He flew at me with his fists. He pulled my hair. He was killing me.

MRS. REED Killing you?

JANE I am always quiet and polite. You have never seen me fight before. I tel you, we was killing me!

MRS. REED Liar!

JANE I am not a liar!

JOHN Watch out! She strikes like a mad cat.

GEORGIANA Yes, you are!

ELIZA Oh, for shame!

JANE I never even speak in this house!

MRS. REED Bessie? I told you to take her to the Red Room.

JANE My uncle died in the Red Room.

MRS. REED Your uncle? He was my husband.

JANE He was my good uncle - he loved me - and he died in the Red Room.

MRS. REED So?

JOHN How dare you open your mouth to my Mother.

MRS. REED Master John, do not go near her; she is unworthy of your notice. I do not choose that you and your sisters should associate with her again.

JANE Oh?

MRS. REED Ever again.

JANE It is they who are not fit to associate with me!

MRS. REED How dare you?

JANE How dare I? Because it is the truth.

MRS. REED That's enough. Bessie, take her to the Red Room and lock her in.

MRS. REED exits. Her children follow her off.

BESSIE Come along, Jane.

JANE *(Shakes BESSIE off.)* You don't have to take me. I'm coming.
(Remains where she stood, starts to cry.)

BESSIE Don't cry, now.

JANE I'm not crying. *(Lights come up in the Red Room.)* Oh, please Bessie! Don't take me there. It's too dreadful. I'm afraid!

BESSIE Come, Jane.

JANE You'll lock me in?

BESSIE I must.

JANE How long must I stay in there?

BESSIE Until she says you may come out.

JANE No, Bessie. Please don't. Have pity -- I'll suffocate!

BESSIE We must obey your aunt.

JANE She's not my aunt any longer, She doesn't love me. None of them do.

BESSIE Now, you're talking nonsense...

JANE Well, if they don't love me, I don't love them! Oh, I hate them. I could kill them!

BESSIE That's enough, Jane.

JANE Don't take me there, It's a terrible place. I'll die!

JANE screams. ELIZA appears and GEORGIANA behind her.

BESSIE What is it?

JANE (*Grabs BESSIE'S hand.*) Let me go! Let me go! Let me go to the nursery!

BESSIE What, Jane? Are you hurt?

JANE Let me go to my own bed!

ELIZA What a scream!

GEORGIANA Oh, look at her -- she screamed out on purpose!

MRS. REED appears. Her daughters vanish.

MRS. REED What's all this?

BESSIE Well, she screamed so loud, Ma'am.

MRS. REED Let go of Bessie's hand, Jane. You won't get off by screaming.

JANE Oh aunt, have pity! Forgive me. I know I am a bad girl.
MRS. REED Do you?

JANE I must be.

MRS. REED Yes, you are, And are you a liar?

BESSIE Better say yes, Jane.

JANE Don't lock me in, Aunt, I beg you.

MRS. REED Confess you are a liar. (*JANE hesitates.*) Go along with Bessie.

JANE No matter what I say, I don't believe you'll let me out.

MRS. REED No, I will not.

JANE Well, I am not a liar: if I were I should lie to save myself: I should say I loved you. But I declare I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except Master John. He's the one who tells lies, not I.

MRS. REED Really!

JANE And furthermore, I will never call you aunt again so long as I live. And when I am grown up I will never come to see you. And if anyone asks me how you treated me and how I liked you, I will say that you treated me with miserable cruelty and the very thought of you makes me sick. People think you are a good woman, but you are not. You are bad -- you are cold and hard-hearted!

MRS. REED Take her to the Red Room at once! (*BESSIE drags JANE off.*) Liar! Liar! Jane Eyre is a liar!

MRS. REED exits. BESSIE exits, with JANE. Lights up in the Red Room. Music. Cirsis. The double fairs. Blackout.

JANE (Voice over.) After that night, I kept to myself in the nursery, where I was allowed to take my meals and peace was restored. I stood at the window and talked to the birds. I listened for Bessie's footsteps on the stairs, because I had no other company. Bessie sometimes sang to me. On occasion, I ventured to hide on the stair and listened to the conversations, the comings and goings in the parlor.

Lights up. BESSIE leads JANE to the sofa.

SCENE TWO: BROCKLEHURST

BESSIE Straighten your dress, Jane. You're to wait here.

JANE Me? Someone wants me?

BESSIE Hush, child. Someone is coming.

JANE Who, Bessie? Who? Please do tell me.

BESSIE The rector of a school.

JANE A school, Bessie? A school with books.

BESSIE Well...

JANE With books -- with globes and maps?

BESSIE Not a fancy place, I don't imagine.

JANE Yes?

BESSIE Now, be calm, Jane, and keep a civil tongue.

MRS. REED enters. A doorbell chimes.

MRS. REED Bessie? The door.

BESSIE exits. JANE approaches MRS. REED, but finds herself unable to speak. MRS. REED turns away from JANE. The long shadow of MR. BROCKLEHURST falls across the parlor floor. BROCKLEHURST enters, followed by BESSIE. BROCKLEHURSTR regards MRS. REED, who points to JANE.

MRS. REED That one, there.

BROCKLEHURST crosses to JANE.

BROCKLEHURST Your name, little girl?

JANE Jane Eyre, sir.

BROCKLEHURST Well, Jane Eyre, and are you a good child?

JANE hesitates. MRS. REED shakes her head.

MRS. REED You won't like the answer.

BROCKLEHURST Don't protect her if she is naughty.

MRS. REED Naughty, Reverend Brocklehurst? She's a wicked, wicked girl. I can't bear the sight of her.

BROCKLEHURST *(To JANE)* Come here. *(JANE crosses to him. He places her stright before him.)* Can you tell me where the wicked go after death?

JANE They go to hell.

BROCKLEHURST And what is hell?

JANE A pit full of fire.

BROCKLEHURST And should you like to fall into a pit full of fire?

JANE No sir.

BROCKLEHURST What must you do to avoid it?

JANE *(Studies MRS. REED, studies BROCKLEHURST)* I must keep in good health and not die.

MRS. REED Impertinent!

BROCKLEHURST Oh? And how will you manage that, pray tell?

MRS. REED Reverend Brocklehurst, she's insincere.

BROCKLEHURST Are you mocking me?

JANE No, sir.

MRS. REED You see how things are?

JANE Excuse me, sir Are you the headmaster? Headmaster of a school?

BROCKLEHURST Madam, did she ask your permission to speak?

JANE A school with books? With globes and maps?

MRS. REED Silence, Jane.

JANE Mrs. Reed, I wish to go to school.

MRS. REED Don't worry, I won't be keeping you here.

BROCKLEHURST *(Glancing about the room.)* Lowood School is a humble place. The food is plain. The clothes are simple.

MRS. REED It will do.

BROCKLEHURST Why, just the other day, my daughter Augusta remarked at how the dear Lowood scholars in their cotton pinafores stared at her as though they'd never seen a silk dress before, as though they were the very children of the poor.

MRS. REED I said it will do, Reverend Brocklehurst. Your school will do for Jane. (*After a beat.*) She is not my daughter!

BROCKLEHURST But I don't wish you to be shocked when you come to visit.

MRS. REED Oh, I won't be coming to visit. And as to holidays, you may keep her with you. She needn't come back here at all.

BROCKLEHURST Little girl, do you say your prayers morning and night?

JANE Yes, sir.

BESSIE Do you read your Bible? (*JANE nods yes.*) With pleasure? With enthusiasm?

JANE I suppose I do.

MRS. REED Oh, Reverend Brocklehurst, I wouldn't believe her.

BROCKLEHURST And why not?

MRS. REED Well, I hesitate to say it but –

JANE Mrs. Reed –

MRS. REED There is a word for her.

JANE I wish to go to school. To learn. To work hard. To be good. Don't ruin my only chance!

BROCKLEHURST Begin your education by learning to keep silent. Have you no respect at all for your elders?

MRS. REED That is not the greatest of her crimes. The greatest is that she is a liar. Jane Eyre is a liar.

BROCKLEHURST A liar!

MRS. REED There, the word is said.

JANE Say what you please . I want to go to school.

MRS. REED Well, sir. Will you take such a pupil?

BROCKLEHURST The teachers would certainly have to be informed.

MRS. REED Yes, but will you t a k e her?

BROCKLEHURST I will inform the teachers, Madam, that Jane Eyre is a liar and no one will believe her again.

JANE (*Gasps*) No! No!

BROCKLEHURST Yes, I'll take her.

MRS. REED It would be so much easier if she were pretty. Her trunk. Bessie!

BROCKLEHURST Put her on the night coach, Madam, and leave the rest to me. Good evening, Madam.

MRS. REED exits before BROCKLEHURST finishes speaking. BROCKLEHURST exits.

BESSIE Well! You little sharp thing! Don't you have a new way of talking! "I must keep good health and not die!"

JANE Bessie...

BESSIE Jane? ...I'll miss you.

JANE You will? You'll miss a liar?

BESSIE I never said you were a liar.

JANE Oh, Bessie! (*They embrace.*)

SCENE THREE: JOURNEY BY NIGHT.

The coach arrives. JANE clings to BESSIE. Sounds of wind and horses.

COACHMAN Hurry! Hurry it up now, Miss.

BESSIE Ready, Jane?

COACHMAN Where may she be goin' o' this wild night?

BESSIE To Lowood School.

COACHMAN Why, that be seventy miles! She's naught a little wee button of a girl. She alone? No one to look after her?

JANE I look after myself!

COACHMAN Then, let go your nanny. Anyone can see your keen set to go.

COACHMAN packs JANE into the carriage, and hoists her trunk onto the roof.

BESSIE Take care of her!

COACHMAN AY, ay.

BESSIE Don't forget your Bessie! Don't forget your Bessie Turbee!

JANE Goodbye, Bessie Turbee, goodbye!

BESSIE exits. The wind blows harder. The coachman cracks his whip.

COACHMAN The wind is wild as a pack o'dogs tonight.

JANE Yes, sir.

COACHMAN You needn't "sir" me I'm no gennelmun and you're a brave girl. An' proud too, aren't ye?

JANE I try no to be proud.

COACHMAN Well, proud or not, you're very little. I'll keep an eye out over ye. Go on and sleep if yer able.

The storm rages harder. Lights down.

JANE (Voice over.) Sleep? I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat, either – the bread that Bessie'd given me. And I couldn't cry. All I could do was to look, look out the window for miles and miles as night turned into day and then into night again. Gradually, the country changed. Great grey hills heaved up. We climbed and then descended a valley, dark with wood...

COACHMAN Whoa! Here we are. Here we are, now. Wake up, lassy!

Lights up on the COACHMAN and JANE at the gate of Lowood school, West Yorkshire. MISS MILLER appears, bearing a lantern, opens the gate.

MISS MILLER Is there a little girl called Jane Eyre?

COACHMAN Someone like that. I don't know her name. (To JANE) Goodbye, lass. (COACHMAN exits.)

MISS MILLER (Studies JANE) Oh, dear. Come in Hurry -- come in , come in .

SCENE FOUR: STUDY HOUR

MISS MILLER Come along now, directly to the schoolroom – the girls are at study hour.

MISS TEMPLE enters.

MISS TEMPLE Just a moment, Miss Miller.

MISS MILLER Oh, Miss Temple! Good evening. Excuse us, please.

MISS TEMPLE But who is this?

MISS MILLER The new girl.

MISS TEMPLE The child is very young to be sent alone. She had better be put to bed soon – she looks tired. (MISS MILLER exits with JANE.) The new girl? Doesn't she have a name, Miss Miller?

MISS MILLER (Offstage.) Jane Eyre!

MISS TEMPLE Jane Eyre.

Lights down. Lights up in the schoolroom. Miss Miler leads Jane in. The scholars, fifteen girls ranging from seven to seventeen in age sit on benches. They murmur as they study: multiplication tables, the chronology of the Napoleonic wars, the planets of the solar system and the conjugation of French verbs. All of them study copy books, except for Helen Burns who has a large and handsome book which she is reading intently. Miss Miller indicates a place for Jane to sit beside Helen.

JANE What is your book? Is it interesting? (Helen shows it to Jane.)

HELEN Silence.

MISS MILLER Did someone speak? (Helen stands up.) Helen Burns?

HELEN Yes, ma'm. I spoke. I beg your pardon.

MISS MILLER Where is your copy book, Burns?

HELEN I finished my lesson early, Miss Miller.

MISS MILLER Oh, very well. You may be seated.

JANE *(Gets to her feet.)* I spoke, too. May I have a copy book, Miss Miller?

MISS MILLER You? What would you want with a copy book? What would you copy in it? You've had no lessons yet. You're new.

The girls look up, stare at Jane and break into laughter. Miss Miller claps her hands for silence. They obey immediately. Miss Miller retreats to the teacher's table.

MARY ANN You'll get one tomorrow.

JILLIAN New girl!

LAURA Will tomorrow be soon enough, eager beaver?

LUCY She thinks a copy book is something really special.

GRACE What a goody-good girl.

MISS MILLER All right, that's enough. Silence. Back to your studies, all of you.

Silence reigns. The murmuring resumes. Miss Miller passes amongst the girls.

JANE *(Voice-over.)* Study hour continued for a very long time. Perhaps it was an hour - it felt like three or four. And this was not the kind of study I imagined -- no stacks of books to read, no globes, no maps; but rather, an endless repetition of little facts that no one seemed to care about. I didn't care, either, that two times two was four and Rome, the capital of Italy ...

Jane nods off. Miss Miller shakes her as she passes by.

JANE Yes? What? *(A bell rings.)*

MISS MILLER Supper bell! Monitors, collect the copy books and fetch the supper-trays!

The monitors, four Great Girls: Grace, Laura, Susan and Jillian, collect and put the copy books away, then bring out four mugs and four large crackers. The girls form four groups and each group passes a mug around, drinking from it in turn. The mug is passed to Jane.

JANE Why, it's only water!

MARY ANN Too right.

Mary Ann takes the mug from Jane. Phoebe, after breaking off a piece of the cracker, hands it to Jane. Jane passes it to Emmy, without partaking.

EMMY Aren't you eating?

PHOEBE Don't you know how? Just close your mouth on it and chew.

GRACE If you don't want yours, I'll have it.

MARY ANN Pick on someone in your own form.

GRACE I'll take yours, too. I can it if I want, now can't I?

MARY ANN Here, have half of mine and leave us alone.

JANE I want it if it's mine. (*Eats.*)

LUCY Not very pretty, is she?

EMMY She can't help it. Probably born that way.

JANE Oh? I didn't comment on your looks, did I? How rude!

GRACE "How rude!"

JANE Who asked you?

GRACE Oh, really?

MARY ANN Hah! (*Aside to Jane.*) Good for you.

A bell rings. The monitors clear the trays away. The Scholars rise and take their places in a double line. They stand, hands folded, eyes downcast. Jane walks to the line, hesitates.

JANE *(Aside.)* Where do I belong?

DOROTHY Sssh.

JANE Please tell me –

CAROLINE You're not allowed to talk.

MISS MILLER I will bless the Lord who giveth me counsel; my heart teacheth me...

SCHOLARS Night after night.

MISS MILLER I have set the Lord always before me; because he is with me –

SCHOLARS I shall not fall.

MISS MILLER Seek him that darkeneth day into night and turneth deep darkness into morning.

SCHOLARS Amen.

MISS MILLER *(To Jane, indicating place.)* Take your place, for heaven's sake.

JANE Where?

MISS MILLER Here! *(Jane steps into line.)*

LUCY You're not supposed to talk, new girl.

JANE You're talking.

MARY ANN See? She's no goody-good girl.

LUCY Maybe not, but if you're going to survive, you'd better learn to shut up.

MARY ANN That's true.

MISS MILLER Hush! Silence, everyone. (*Sings.*) All praise to thee my God this night...

The Scholars file off to the dormitory, singing the Tallis Canon as they go.

SCHOLARS All praise to thee my God this night.
For all the blessings of the light
Keep me, of keep me, King of Kings
Beneath Thine own almighty wings.

SCENE FIVE: DREAM

Beside Helen in the dormitory, Jane sleeps fitfully. Jane's dream begins. Lights come up in the Red Room. The double sits weeping silently, her head in her hands.

VOICES Will tomorrow be soon enough, eager beaver? The wind's a pack o' wild dogs. Hurry! Hurry it up! Liar. Liar. The wild, savage, filthy beast! Jane Eyre is a liar and no one will believe her ever again.
Liar. Liar. Liar!

Jane cries out in her sleep. Helen appears with a candle.

HELEN Little girl? Do you know where you are?

JANE Yes! Yes, at school.

HELEN Good.

JANE And you're Helen Burns.

HELEN Yes. Would you like to tell me your dream?

JANE No!

HELEN You're sure?

JANE Yes.

HELEN All right. (*Blows candle out.*)

SCENE SIX: SCHOOLDAY

The rising bell rings without waking Jane. It's still dark. Mary Ann comes to Jane's bed.

MARY ANN Wake up! Wake up, new girl.

JANE But it's still night.

MARY ANN Come, you must hurry.

JANE Let me light the candle.

MARY ANN There's not time.

JANE I want to wash.

MARY ANN Don't bother. The wash water is frozen.

JANE But I'm dirty.

MARY ANN So's everyone else. Just put on your clothes and come on.

JANE Get dressed?

MARY ANN Yes. We're due in the schoolroom.

JANE Why?

MARY ANN Why? To begin the school-day!

The schoolgirls whisk the tables and benches into place.

MISS MILLER Classes form!

The Scholars arrange themselves in forms – the Great Girls, the Middle Girls, and the Little Girls. A distant bell tinkles. The Upper Teachers, Miss Scatcherd and Madame Pierrot enter the schoolroom. Jane stands to one side, uncertain.

MISS SCATCHERD Young ladies, we will greet the morning with Psalm 24. You should know it. Of course you do. You know it well.

SCHOLARS Yes, Miss Scatcherd. The Earth is the Lord's and all its fullness. The world and all who dwell therein.

SCATCHERD Just a moment. *(To Jane.)* Go to your place.

JANE I don't know where I belong.

SCATCHERD Are you being impertinent?

JANE No. You see, I'm new.

SCATCHERD Oh. So you are. Well, look at you. You belong with the little girls in the lower form, don't you?

JANE Yes, Miss. *(Jane takes her place with the Little Girls.)*

SCATCHERD Helen Burns, step forward. Straighten your collar. You're never quite right, are you. ... Very well, then. Psalm 24.

SCHOLARS The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and all who dwell therein. For it is He who founded it upon the seas and made it firm upon the rivers of the deep. Who can ascend the hill of the Lord? And who can stand in His holy place? Those who have clean hands and a pure heart.

SCATCHERD I beg your pardon - what is that? What is that sound? ...Helen Burns?!

HELEN Yes, Miss?

SCATCHERD What is that sound?

HELEN My stomach, growling.

SCATCHERD Your stomach, growling. Well. That's not very nice, is it? Not ladylike, not dainty at all.

HELEN I'm sorry, Miss.

SCATCHERD Let me see your fingernails, Helen Burns.

JANE *(To Mary Ann.)* Don't we get breakfast?

MARY ANN Sshh!

MISS MILLER What's the matter, little girl?

JANE I'm afraid I've missed breakfast. I'm dreadfully hungry.

MISS MILLER No, you haven't missed breakfast. No one's eaten breakfast. Now, hush up.

SCATCHERD *(To Helen Burns.)* Would you call these fingernails clean?

HELEN No, Miss.

SCATCHERD Go and stand! *(Helen goes to the center of the room and stands calmly.)*
Please continue, girls: "Those who have clean hands –

SCHOLARS Those who have clean hands and a pure heart, who have not lifted up their soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully, they shall receive the blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of their salvation.

SCENE SEVEN: BREAKFAST

A bell. The cook, Mrs. Harden, and the servant girl, Barbara, enter with steaming bowls.

MISS MILLER Take your places for breakfast, everyone.

The Scholars move to their places for breakfast. Helen Burns remains standing.

MISS SCATCHERD Don't stand there like an ox. Take your place at the table.

HELEN Thank you, Miss. *(Helen moves to her place. In the midst of the traffic, Jane detains Laura.)*

JANE My fingernails are dirty, too.

LAURA Whose aren't? Keep quiet about it.

JANE Well, why didn't Helen Burns tell Miss Scatcherd her fingernails were dirty because the wash water was frozen?

LAURA It wouldn't help. Scatcherd doesn't like her.

JANE Don't you like Helen Burns? Doesn't anybody like her? She seems quite nice.

EDITH Oh, we like her well enough.

JANE Then why don't you defend her if you like her?

PHOEBE Defend her?

JANE *(Patiently.)* Why didn't you tell Miss Scatcherd the wash water was frozen?

LUCY Listen up. You don't speak here unless you're called upon.

MARY ANN It's the rules.

JANE Are the rules written down? May I see them?

JULIA Of course not.

JANE Then how will I know them?

MARY ANN Just watch out.

JANE Is there really a rule that our stomachs mustn't growl?

EMMY No. Nobody can help that.

JANE Then what about her? Miss Scatcherd? Is she allowed to be mean whenever she wants?

LAURA Of course she is. She's the teacher.

LUCY Now, that's a rule.

PHOEBE That's the chief rule, here.

MARY ANN Don't look so disappointed. You'll get used to it.

EDITH That, or go back where you came from.

JANE Oh!

JILLIAN Barbara, is breakfast burned?

BARBARA Of course it is. She cooked it. (*Indicates cook.*) You know Cook always burns the breakfast. It's a matter of policy with her.

EVIE Phew! Smell! It's rotten too, isn't it?

EDITH I can't eat this.

JUDY None of us can.

BARBARA I wouldn't eat it myself.

LUCY But we have nothing else.

EMMY It's the same every day!

DOROTHY It's all burnt!

MRS. HARDEN Shut up and eat. You'll not get more.

SALLY There's garbage in it.

PATRICIA She dumped in those moldy potatoes.

BARBARA *(Arranges a tea tray for the teachers.)* Yes, those big, slimy green ones.
She dumps in the garbage all the time.

MRS. HARDEN Are you wanting me to crown you with a brass pan?

BARBARA No, your ladyship.

SCATCHERD Mrs. Harden, is there some problem?
MRS. HARDEN *(To Barbara.)* Give them their tea.

BARBARA Yes, your ladyship.

MRS. HARDEN Give it them!

MARY ANN *(To Jane.)* Are you hungry?

JANE Starving! I've not eaten for two days!

MARY ANN Then you must try.

Mary Ann takes a spoonful and retches. Jane takes a spoonful, makes herself swallow.

JANE *(Voice-over.)* Breakfast would soon be over and yet no one was eating. I wondered how these girls kept alive – for it was apparent

that this was not the first time breakfast had been spoiled. I thought they must survive like the bushes and trees, taking their nourishment from the ground they stood upon. As for me, I knew I must eat, and if I must learn to eat burned porridge, then I would gnash it down.

Miss Temple enters. Miss Scatcher and Miss Miller rise from the teacher's table.

SCHOLARS "Look, it's Miss Temple." "Shh." "Miss Temple's here." (*Scholars rise.*)

MISS MILLER Miss Temple!

SCATCHERD Why, Miss Temple, we weren't told to expect you.

MISS TEMPLE Good morning, Miss Scatcherd.

SCHOLARS Good morning, Miss Temple.

MISS TEMPLE Good morning, girls. Please do sit down – I don't mean to interrupt your breakfast.

Mrs. Harden takes the porridge pot and with Barbara in tow, tries to slip out of the schoolroom.

MISS TEMPLE I came down early to welcome our new scholar. Has she been introduced? ...Miss Miller?

MISS MILLER Er . . . why, no.

MISS TEMPLE Just a moment. Cook? What is that smell?

MRS. HARDEN Good morning, Miss Temple.

BARBARA Good morning, Headmistress.

MISS TEMPLE Bring the kettle here.

MRS. HARDEN I don't know what smell you mean.

MISS TEMPLE It's that, there in your kettle. Was someone ill? (*Mrs. Harden won't answer.*)

BARBARA It's breakfast, Miss.

MISS TEMPLE This is breakfast? Then we'll have a taste, won't we? (*Takes a spoonful.*) Come, I expect you both to join me.

Miss Temple sniffs a spoonful, empties it into the kettle.

BARBARA I tell her it's garbage, Miss! I tell her it's burned!

MRS. HARDEN I'll pull your tongue from your saucy head.

MISS TEMPLE Silence! This is insupportable. Why as someone not told me of this? Miss Scatcherd? Miss Miller?

SCATCHERD I ... I wasn't aware.

MISS TEMPLE But can't you smell? Girls? Why has no one told me that you are being asked to eat garbage?

SCATCHERD We are teaching them not to complain.

MISS TEMPLE I see. ... Mrs. Harden? Barbara? Clear this away and follow me to the kitchen. Carry on, girls. I'll return shortly. (*A bell rings.*)

MISS MILLER Form classes!

The scholars form classes. Books and slates are passed around. Mrs. Harden and Barbara leave the schoolroom with the serving bowls. Miss Temple enters, detaining them just outside.

SCENE EIGHT: LESSONS

The Little Girls gather around Miss Scatcherd, the Middle Girls with Miss Miller, the Great Girls with Madame Pierrot.

SCATCHERD *(To the lower form.)* You may begin.

LOWER FORM A as in apple,
 B as in bear.
 C as in cabbage,
 D as in dare.

MISS MILLER All right, girls. Now, then: on June 18, 1815 the Emperor Napoleon of France met the great British general, the Duke of?

SCHOLARS Wellington.

MISS MILLER Wellington, i n the battle of?

SCHOLARS Waterloo. *(Jane crosses to Miss Miller's class.)*

JANE Excuse me, Miss. May I join your class?

MISS MILLER I beg your pardon? *(The schoolroom falls silent.)*

SCATCHERD New girl, get back to your place.

JANE Excuse me, Miss, but I already know how to read -- and I've read a good many books.

SCATCHERD Yes? So?

JANE Well, they are just learning the alphabet.

SCATCHERD Did anyone ask you to speak up?

JANE No.

SCATCHERD Then go back to your form without delay.

Lessons resume. Dialogue in parenthesis should be spoken under other dialogue.

LOWER FORM (E as in ever,
F as in fate.
G as in garden,
H as in hate.)

MISS MILLER Napoleon had, the year before, gone into exile on the island of?

MIDDLE FORM Elba.

SCATCHERD (*Detaining Helen.*) Burns, you are standing on the side of your shoe;
turn your toes out immediately.

HELEN Yes, ma'am.

SCATCHERD Don't poke your chin out. Draw it in. (*Helen lowers her chin. The
schoolroom goes silent.*) Burns, I insist that you hold up your head.
How dare you stand before me in that attitude.

MADAME

PIERROT Excuse me, Miss. We wish to begin our study of the French.

SCATCHERD Pardonnez moi. Burns? (*Gestures for her to join the first form. Lessons
resume.*)

PIERROT Bonjour, mes enfants.

FIRST FORM Bonjour, Madame.

PIERROT Comment allez vous?

FIRST FORM Bien, madame.

PIERROT Pourquoi bien? Il fait froid. Il neige, il neige, il neige. Repetez la
phrase: Voila les fenetres

FIRST FORM: (Voila les fenetres. Voila la neige. Voila la porte. Voila la tableau noir. Voici la cloche.)

MISS MILLER (But in 1815, Napoleon escaped Elba and contrived to gather about him a secret army on the border of?)

MIDDLE FORM (Belgium)

LOWER FORM (I as in ivy, J as in jelly
K as in kippers, L as in late.
M as in meal. N as in nuthatch.
O as in oil. P as in patch.)

MISS MILLER: The army stood 120,000 strong, L'Armee du Nord, as it was called; and Napoleon was one of the greatest generals the world has ever known. Nevertheless, our own Duke of Wellington, a brilliant strategist and a steady leader, proved more than a match for Napoleon.

SCATCHERD Little girl? New girl?

JANE Yes, Miss.

SCATCHERD Spell 'elephant.'

JANE Elephant. E - L - E - P - H - A - N - T.

SCATCHERD That's correct.

JANE Thank God!

SCATCHERD What did you say?

JANE Oh! Thank you, Miss Scatcherd!

SCATCHERD Just a moment, class. Burns!

HELEN Yes, Miss?

SCATCHERD Unbelievable. Is that a splotch of food on your pinafore?

HELEN Excuse moi, madame.

PIERROT Oui. (*Madame Pierrot gestures for Helen to go to Miss Scatcherd.*)

SCATCHERD Since all of you are listening, you may as well learn now that we are young ladies here. We are not animals. We do not smear our food on ourselves. Burns, you may take this slate, make a sign that says one word and you may stand with it hung 'round your neck. What is that one word?

HELEN Fig. (*Madame Pierrot approaches.*)

PIERROT Cushon.

SCATCHERD Pardon me?

PIERROT In French, the word is "cushon".

SCATCHERD She'll write it in English so she remembers what it means.

HELEN Yes, Miss Scatcherd. (*Madame Pierrot retreats. Lessons resume.*)

MISS MILLER On the morning of July 15, the Duke of Wellington rose early and mounted his horse – what was his horse's name?

LOWER LEVEL: (Q as in quarrel
R as in rail
S as in settle
T as in tail
U as in useful
V as in vale)

MIDDLE FORM: Copenhagen.

LOWER FORM (W as in wheel.
X as in xenon.
Y as in yellow.)

MISS MILLER ...and rode from the inn at Waterloo to the battlefield.

LOWER FORM (Z as in zeal.)

Jane slips away from the first form and approaches Helen Burns.

JANE (Voice-over) Nine o'clock was geography and history; ten, grammar; ten-thirty, penmanship, and eleven to twelve, an entire hour of arithmetic. Helen Burns stood there quite calmly the whole time. Had it been I, I should have wanted the Earth to open up and swallow me whole. But she – she seemed lost in a daydream. I'd seen in her eyes that she was far away – in some other country or on some distant star.

JANE Burns? ... Helen Burns? ...

HELEN Shh.

JANE May I stand here with you?

HELEN What? Stand with me?

MISS MILLER Jean? Joan? Whatever your name is...

JANE Yes, Miss?

MISS MILLER New girl, get back to your place. You cannot wander as you please. And you're not to speak to that girl – she's being punished.

JANE But it doesn't seem fair.

MISS MILLER That's none of your business. Do you wish to be punished too?

JANE No, Miss!

SCATCHERD Miss Miller, is there some problem there?

MISS MILLER We have a little busybody who has an opinion on everything. She doesn't think it's fair for Helen Burns to be punished.

SCATCHERD I see you're a troublemaker. Well, I'll give you all the trouble you can handle.

SCENE NINE: REPRIEVE

Mrs. Holden and Barbara enter with baskets of rolls. Miss Temple follows. Jane scurries back to her place.

MISS TEMPLE Good day, girls.

SCHOLARS Good day, Miss Temple.

SCATCHERD Why, Miss Temple!

MISS TEMPLE Yes, here I am again, upsetting the routine for the second time today.

SCATCHERD Of course. Pardon me.

SCHOLARS "Mmmm." "What a smell!" "What's in the basket?" "Probably something for her to eat in private." "No -- she wouldn't do that to us." "Whatever it is, it's delicious."

MISS TEMPLE Please be seated everyone.

SCATCHERD Burns, sit down. And take off that ridiculous sign.

Barbara steals a roll and wolfs it down. Mrs. Harden reaches for a roll. Mrs. Temple crosses to them.

MISS TEMPLE Mrs. Harden, who paid for these?

BARBARA You did, Mum, out of your own pocket!

MISS TEMPLE Exactly.

Mrs. Harden tries again to sneak a roll. Miss Temple turns to her, and holds out her hand. Mrs. Harden puts the roll into it.

MISS TEMPLE If I have my way, you'll be gone by nightfall.

BARBARA Yes, Miss, she's criminal.

MISS TEMPLE Both of you -- by nightfall. (*She gestures for the baskets to be set down and gravely surveys the scholars.*) You had this morning a breakfast which you could not eat. You must be hungry - I've ordered a lunch of rolls with cheese to be served to all.

PIERROT O, alors!

SCATCHERD Really? A lunch? How singular.

MISS TEMPLE On my own responsibility. (*Barbara and Mrs. Harden grudgingly pass around the cheese rolls. Miss Temple takes a roll and brings it to Jane Eyre.*) Now, Jane, please stand. I'd like to introduce Jane Eyre, our newest scholar. And I hope everyone will make her welcome here. (*To JANE*) How's your first day been? ... Speak up. Don't be afraid.

JANE Madam, are you the headmistress?

MISS TEMPLE Yes.

JANE Where is the headmaster?

MISS TEMPLE There is none.

JANE Oh?

MISS TEMPLE Tell me, how old are you, Jane Eyre?

JANE Ten years old, ma'am.

MARY ANN And already she can read and write.

EMMY And spell, Miss.

LUCY I don't think she can draw, Miss, but I'll teach her!

JANE Oh, will you?

JUDY I could teach her cat's cradle.

MISS TEMPLE Can you sew, Jane?

JANE Only a little, but I'll improve.

MISS TEMPLE Fine. And I hope you'll be a good child.

JANE Yes, Miss. I'll do my best.

Miss Temple steps to the center. The girls grow quiet.

MISS TEMPLE Good day, girls.

SCHOLARS Good day, Miss Temple.

Miss Temple exits. The little girls crowd around Jane, to bask in the glamour of Miss Temple's recent attention to her.

MARY ANN (To Jane, offering her hand.) My name is Mary Ann.

LUCY I still say she's not pretty - Jane Eyre.

MARY ANN But she's jolly when she smiles. See?

MISS MILLER To the garden!

The scholars exit the schoolroom. Lights down.

JANE (VOICE OVER) I should be delighted to be good if I knew what that was. We were to obey dozens of rules and all of them unwritten. I was to keep my mouth shut. I was to watch out -- to expect cruelty and hardness. And now, what was I to make of sudden kindness? What kind of place was this? What was I to say when suddenly asked to speak up and not to be afraid?

SCENE TEN: HELEN BURNS

Lights up in the garden. It is extremely cold and several smaller girls huddle together, except for the rough-neck, Judy, who plays tag with the Great Girls. Caroline and Edith hopscotch. Helen sits alone with her book. Helen coughs. Jane stands a moment by herself, uncertain of how to join in at play.

CAROLINE (At hopscotch) Hinx, pinx, the old witch winks. The devil starts to cry.

EDITH Nobody home but Jumping Joan, Jumping Joan and I.

One of the Great Girls, Grace, approaches Jane.

GRACE Did you eat your roll, Jane Eyre, or do you still have it in your pocket?

MARY ANN Leave her alone.

JANE None of your business!

MARY ANN That's the spirit. Stick up for yourself. (Judy tags Mary Ann. Mary Ann dashes away.)

JANE (To GRACE) Get away from me.

GRACE Give it over. (Judy races up and tags Grace. Laura follows.)

JUDY Not it!

LAURA You're it, Grace.

GRACE Jane Eyre's got a cheese roll in her pocket.

LAURA Oh, really?

GRACE Come on, give it over.

JANE No.

GRACE You want us to like you, don't you now?

JANE If you're mean, I don't care if you like me or not.

GRACE Oh, I think you do care. (*Grace snatches the roll from Jane.*)

LAURA Who else do you have in the world but us?

GRACE No one in the whole wide world but us.

Grace extends her hand with the roll on it, teasing Jane to try to snatch it. Mary Ann sneaks up behind Grace and takes the roll, and dashes off. Grace pursues.

GRACE Oh, no you don't. It's mine now.

Mary Ann returns to Jane and give her the roll. The other Little Girls surround Jane, keeping Grace at bay.

LITTLE GIRLS Go on, Grace. Leave her be! Leave us alone! You're not wanted.

GRACE Six of you against one of me. That's about even.

Grace stamps her foot. The Little Girls, frightened, skitter away. Judy races by again, Laura following.

JUDY I said you're it.

Grace chases off after Judy and tags Caroline.

GRACE Not it, Caroline!

CAROLINE I'm not playing.

GRACE & LAURA Sluggard!

They chase off together after Caroline. Jane steps away from the other Little Girls, edges toward Helen.

HELEN If you're going to read my book, you may as well sit beside me.

JANE *(Steps back)* I'm sorry...

HELEN Not at all. Do sit down.

JANE Are you sick?

HELEN Oh, no – I don't think so. Merely cold - of course we're cold in January.

JANE Why don't they give us gloves?

HELEN No good reason. Would you like me to rub your hands?

JANE Yes, please... I'm sorry Scatcherd was mean to you today.

HELEN I was sloppy. You needn't pity me.

JANE She was cross and mean.

HELEN Perhaps so.

JANE Well, I knew her for five minutes and already I hated her. And if she did to me what she did to you, I'd take the sign and break it up under her nose.

HELEN No, you wouldn't. If you did, the rector, Mr. Brocklehurst would expel you and that would be the end of your education and then where would you go?

JANE Mr. Brocklehurst. Reverend Brocklehurst? Is he here at school now?

HELEN No. No, I don't think so.

JANE Did he come yesterday? Did he say anything about me?

HELEN No. We haven't seen him for weeks.

JANE But he does come here?

HELEN Not often. I don't think he likes us.

JANE Oh, that's good.

HELEN Why?

JANE ... Are you an orphan, too?

HELEN My mother's dead and my father's disappeared - someplace up in Scotland, my home. All of us here are orphans or charity cases.

JANE Who pays for us to come here?

HELEN Rich people. Chiefly, Mr. Brocklehurst.

JANE And Miss Temple?

HELEN Oh, Miss Temple has no money.

JANE But she's headmistress!

HELEN She works to earn a salary – and she takes orders from Brocklehurst.

JANE Oh? Does she?

HELEN She must.

JANE You know, if people are always kind and obedient to those who are cruel and unjust, the wicked people would have it all their own way. I wanted to stand with you this morning because I know what it is to be disliked for no reason. I must hate those who, whatever I do to please them, persist in hating me. I should like to strike back at such people so hard as to teach them never to strike me again.

HELEN So it's violence that best overcomes hatred?

JANE I'll strike with words.

HELEN And that will make peace?

JANE If I want to make peace, I'll keep silent, but if I have principles, I'll speak up.

HELEN Must you say everything you feel?

JANE Well, why not?

HELEN Because if you're speaking, you can't be listening.

JANE ... Are you happy here? Of course you aren't. You can't be happy after what happened this morning.

HELEN Perhaps I am happy here. You asked rather too many questions.

A bell rings. Helen exits to the schoolroom. Jane follows. Lights down.

JANE (VOICE OVER) Time passed, leading us into the bleakest part of winter. February was so long, it seemed to contain a whole year within it, though there was a moment of brightness when we were allowed to exchange paper hearts with those we liked. I received more than one, more than two or three. I made friends and kept them, I endeavored to learn, I studied Helen Burns and I studied happiness.

SCENE ELEVEN: HUMILIATION

The scholars stand about, admiring their valentines. A bell rings. The scholars move to their places.

MISS MILLER Scholars!

Brocklehurst's shadow looms on the window. The Scholars exclaim "Look! " " Mr. Brocklehurst!" "Look out! " "Brocklehurst!"

JANE Oh, no! Not Mr. Brocklehurst! Hide me! Hide me!

SCHOLARS "Shh." "Be quiet. "" He's coming." "Here he is."

Mary Ann grabs Jane by the hand, drags her to the place. The schoolroom goes still. The scholars and teachers rise en masse. Brocklehurst enters the schoolroom, followed by Miss Temple.

SCHOLARS Good day, Mr. Brocklehurst.

BROCKLEHURST Good day.

JANE (Aside.) Don't let him see me.

SUSAN Ssh, Jane.

JANE You must hide me!

Brocklehurst hears the commotion but doesn't yet notice Jane.

BROCKLEHURST Pardon me. Has someone something to say?

SCHOLARS No, sir.

JANE Please!

BROCKLEHURST Nothing at all?

SCHOLARS No, sir.

SCATCHERD Beg his pardon, girls.

SCHOLARS Sorry, sir.

BROCKLEHURST Very well.

Jane raises her slate to hide her face, huddles in the back row. As Brocklehurst surveys the scholars, Barbara and Mrs. Harden enter, and make a noisy attempt to stand at attention.

BROCKLEHURST Ah, Mrs. Harden, my good cook. (Brocklehurst inclines his head in greeting. Mrs. Harden and Barbara curtsey enthusiastically.) Now, then. Rumor has it that some time back, a lunch was served in this room. A special lunch of cheese rolls – (Mrs. Harden and Barbara nod.) - in my school. And rumor has it that such a meal was again

served today. I looked over my regulations and found no such meal as lunch. My plan in bringing up these girls is not to accustom them to luxury. Should any little accident occur, such as the spoiling of breakfast, these girls will simply endure. There will be no harassing of servant and cook. *(To Miss Temple)* There will be no firing of kitchen staff. *(To all)* There will be no cheese rolls! Never!

MISS TEMPLE I see.

Brocklehurst nods to the kitchen staff. They exit.

BROCKLEHURST *(Paces)* Oh, Madam, when you put bread and cheese instead of burnt porridge into these children's mouths, you may indeed feed their little bodies but you strave their immortal souls! Fortitude, students! Prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance- *(swivels sharply)* Miss Temple! Miss Temple! What – what is that girl with the curled hair?

Julia claps her hand to her hair. The girls around her lift her and move her to stand on a stool before Brocklehurst.

MISS TEMPLE It is Julia Severn.

BROCKLEHURST Julia Severn, Madam! Let her step forward.

MISS TEMPLE Step forward, Julia. Don't be afraid.

Madame Pierrot leads Julia to the front of the schoolroom.

BROCKLEHURST Why has she, or any other girl, curled hair? Why, in defiance of every precept and principle of this house, does she wear her hair in a mass of curls?

MISS TEMPLE Julia's hair curls naturally.

BROCKLEHURST Naturally! But we are not to conform to nature. We are to subdue nature. Has anyone scissors?

Miss Scatcherd takes a pair of scissors from her pocket and hands them to Brocklehurst. Brocklehurst lifts a lock of Julia's hair. The scholars gasp. He cuts the lock and holds it up to the light. Jane yelps. Miss Temple goes to her.

MISS TEMPLE (Aside) What's wrong, Jane?

JANE Nothing! Nothing!

BROCKLEHURST I do not have time to be a barber. Tell all the first form to step forward and turn their faces to the wall.

MISS TEMPLE Girls. (Gestures for them to obey.)

BROCKLEHURST Has anyone a yard stick?

The Great Girls rise, and stand in a row. Miss Miller helps Julia down from the stool. Miss Scatcherd hands Brocklehurst a yardstick. Brocklehurst paces behind them, measuring hair. Jane keeps her head down.

BROCKLEHURST Turn around. Undo those top knots. (The girls in the First Form obey.) I'll send the barber over tomorrow, and he'll have a busy day of it. All those top knots must come off. The rest must be cut back as a hedge is pruned – I'd say five or six inches off, straight down the line.

MISS TEMPLE All right. Back to your places, girls.

BROCKLEHURST We are to wear our hair close to our heads, in style: simple, straight and plain.

Brocklehurst's daughters, Augusta and Theodora, and his wife enter the schoolroom, rustling, whispering, giggling. They wear rich clothes and elaborately curled hair. The entire school rises to greet the ladies.

MRS.

BROCKLEHURST Yoo hoo, Husband! We've grown weary of waiting in the carriage!

SCHOLARS Good day, Mrs. Brocklehurst, Good day Miss Brocklehurst, good day Miss Brocklehurst.

BROCKLEHURST Scholars, here are your benefactresses! Without whose patronage you would not have a crust to eat nor a roof over your heads.

AUGUSTA Oh, Mother, aren't they darling?

THEODORA *(Warmly)* Aren't they pathetic?

BROCKLEHURST Augusta, would you like this? *(Hands the lock of hair to Augusta.)*

THEODORA What is it?

AUGUSTA A lock of hair.

BROCKLEHURST I thought you might enjoy the color.

AUGUSTA How pretty! Thank you, Papa. And one of them grew it?

MRS.

BROCKLEHURST My dear, I don't mean to interrupt, but it is a trifle boring to wait in the carriage, and you did promise us rumcake.

BROCKLEHURST Yes, indeed. We'll just say goodbye.

JANE *(Cries out inadvertently)* Goodbye ! *(Drops her slate, which shatters on the floor.)*

BROCKLEHURST What? Who did that? Let the child who dropped her slate step forward. Miss Scatcherd, a stool, please.

Panicked, Jane is unable to move. Lights slowly up in the Red Room.

MISS TEMPLE *(Puts Jane forward.)* Don't be afraid, Jane.

The girls around her lift her bodily and move her to stand in front of Brocklehurst.

BROCKLEHURST Well, go on – get up on the stool. Oh, it is you. Jane Eyre, I remember you. Ladies, Miss Temple, teachers, and children, you all see this girl? She appears to be an ordinary, innocent girl - yet such, I grieve to say, is not the case. My dear children, this is a sad, a melancholy occasion; for it becomes my duty to warn you that this

girl, who might be one of God's own lambs, is something else entirely. I learned from her dear, devoted aunt who adopted her in her orphan state and raised her as a daughter, that this kindness was repaid by such dreadful behavior that said aunt was forced to separate the girl from her other children, lest a vicious example should contaminate them, for this girl – (*Brocklehurst turns Jane to face the class.*) – is not what shee seems. Teachers, you must watch her: keep your eyes on her movements, weigh well her words, scrutinise her actions. Scholars, you must be on your guard against her, you must shun her example, avoid her company, shut her out of your conversation, exclude her from your games. For this girl... this Jane Eyre... is... a liar!

MRS.

BROCKLEHURST How shocking!

AUGUSTA A liar!

THEODORA (*Regretfully*) And she looks so sweet.

BROCKLEHURST Mark her well.

Silence. Helen rises from her place, crosses to Mr. Brocklehurst.

HELEN Excuse me, sir. Can you tell me what time it is?

SCATCHERD Idiot! There's a clock on the wall. Go back to your place.

Brocklehurst consults his watch. Helen crosses back, pausing briefly at Jane's stool to look her in the eye and smile at her. Jane stands still as a statue.

BROCKLEHURST It's time we must leave you. Let Jane Eyer stand an hour longer on the stool and let no one speak to her the rest of the day.

SCHOLARS Good day, sir. Good day, ladies.

MRS.

BROCKLEHURST Good day.

THEODORA Goodby, my little darlings.

SCENE TWELVE: COMFORT REFUSED

The Brocklehursts exit. The supper bell rings. The girls queue up and leave Jane alone in the schoolroom. Jane tries to maintain her pose but a sob escapes her. She slips down off the stool and crumples to the floor, weeping.

JANE All... all lost! Never!

After a moment, Helen Burns enters the schoolroom with a cup and a cracker for Jane. When Jane sees her, she hides her face.

HELEN Jane, come drink something.

Jane pushes the cup and the cracker away from her. Helen sits on the floor beside Jane. Helen embraces her own knees with her arms and rests her head upon them, and studies Jane silently.

JANE Mr. Brocklehurst told you not to speak to me.

HELEN I guess I am disobedient.

JANE ...Why would you stay with a girl whom everyone believes to be a liar?

HELEN Everyone? There are only twenty people here, and the world contains hundreds of millions.

JANE But the twenty people here are the only ones I know and they all despise me! (*Miss Temple enters quietly.*)

HELEN You're mistaken. No one likes Mr. Brocklehurst here, in case you haven't noticed.

MISS TEMPLE Tsk, tsk. Helen!

HELEN Oh! Miss Temple!

MISS TEMPLE Jane, I came on purpose to find you.

HELEN Excuse me , please. (*Helen starts to exit. Jane struggles to her feet.*)

MISS TEMPLE No, Helen, you may stay. So, Jane. ... Have you cried your grief away?

JANE I'm afraid... I'm afraid I shall never cry it away.

MISS TEMPLE Why not?

JANE Because ... because of . . . because -- oh, I can't say! I won't -- I can't speak of it. Don't ask me . Ask someone else -- ask my nurserymaid -- Bessie, Bessie Turbee!

MISS TEMPLE Bessie Turbee.

JANE Yes – but don't ask me. I can't bear to talk about it. Really, I cannot. (*Jane rushes from the room.*)

HELEN I doubt she's a liar.

MISS TEMPLE Indeed not. I wonder what can make such a fine little girl so miserable? Do you understand her?

HELEN No. And she has nightmares, too. Something must have happened to her.

MISS TEMPLE Bessie Turbee. I remember a Bessie Turbee...

END OF ACT ONE