

**JANE EYRE**

Written by

Moira Buffini

Adapted from the novel by

Charlotte Bronte

**2ND DRAFT  
6TH MARCH 2008**

**EXT. A MIDSUMMER DAWN. THORNFIELD - THE GROUNDS.**

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

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

Her need to escape is so great that she crawls forward until she is able to raise herself to her feet. She runs.

She reaches an antique stile by a brook. She lifts herself on to it. She lands on the road. And runs.

**I/E. DAY. A ROADSIDE/COACH.**

The sun is higher in the sky. Jane exhausted, now running down a main road. Her spirits lift at the sight of an approaching coach. She flags it down.

Jane empties her purse into the driver's hand. He looks at her money then suspiciously back at her. A terse nod indicates she can get in.

**CUT TO:**

Jane sinks into a dark corner. Her fellow passengers look

shocked by her dishevelled appearance at such an early hour. She undertakes a tremendous effort not to betray her emotional state. She doesn't sob, she doesn't howl - although her breathing threatens to. Slowly, unable to bear the day, she closes her eyes.

**EXT. EVENING. WHITCROSS.**

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

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

She runs as fast as she can after the coach. It is receding towards the horizon. She comes to a halt, objectless, lost, alone. She pulls her knitted shawl around her.

She leaves the road and sets off across the moor, into the gathering dark.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 2.

**EXT. NIGHT. THE MOOR.**

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

**EXT. DAY. THE MOOR.**

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

**EXT. TWILIGHT. THE MOOR.**

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

**EXT. DAWN. THE MOOR.**

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

side, watching her. It is Helen Burns.

Helen reaches out. She touches Jane's hand. Jane wakes. She sits up. She is alone.

**EXT. DAY. BY A RIVER.**

Jane is crouched on a rock watching the waters go by. The sky is overcast. The first big drops of rain land on the stones. Jane makes no movement.

A raven lands on a rock nearby. Jane is suddenly filled with a wild rage. She picks up a stone and hurls it at the bird with a raw cry. The gesture exhausts her. She watches the bird wheel away, as the rain starts to pour.

**EXT. TWILIGHT. A FARM BY A WOOD.**

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

**CUT TO:**

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

**EXT. NEXT DAY. A WOOD.**

It has stopped raining. Jane is huddled under a tree. She is shaking, shuddering. The life has gone out of her eyes.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 3.

**EXT. DAY. THE EDGE OF THE WOOD.**

The moors rise away above her to the horizon. Jane looks up at the sun starting to set. The clouds are red and gold.

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

**EXT. EVENING. THE MOOR.**

Dark clouds are banking up; the rain starts again. Jane is struggling through a marsh. Her boots are stuck.

She falls. Her hand disappears into mud; her face pressed against the earth. She doesn't move. She has reached the point of despair.

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

**EXT. NIGHT. THE MOOR/MOOR HOUSE.**

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

**CUT TO:**

Jane is crawling through the narrow garden. On her knees, she peers through a window.

On either side of a bright little fire sit two young women. They look exactly like Jane; slight, neat, dressed in black. One, Diana, has her hair slightly curled and hides her gentle eyes behind spectacles. The other, Mary, is very young; no more than seventeen. Each has a book on her knee. They are talking intimately.

They look so close, so loving and the room looks so cosy that it pains Jane considerably.

**CUT TO:**

Jane knocking at the door. Hannah, an old servant answers. She is suspicious; Jane looks like a wretch.

**HANNAH**

What do you want?

Jane manages to find her voice.

**JANE**

Shelter.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 4.

**HANNAH**

I can't take in vagrants. Here's a penny. Now take it and go.

**JANE**

I have no strength to go.

**HANNAH**

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

**JANE**

**(DESPERATE)**

But I must die if I am turned away.

The door slams shut. Jane lets out a hopeless wail.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

God help me. I will die.

She turns away, her hope gone. As she collapses, she finds herself supported by a strong pair of black-clad arms.

**ST JOHN**

All of God's creatures must die. But not prematurely - and not on my doorstep I hope.

Jane is lifted up. She finds herself looking into the face of the handsomest man she has ever seen; St John Rivers. He lifts her over the threshold into the warmth of Moor House.

**INT. NIGHT. MOOR HOUSE - THE KITCHEN.**

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

**HANNAH**

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

Hannah falls silent as she sees Jane.

**ST JOHN**

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

He sets Jane down before the hearth. She can barely stand. She is soaked to the bone, filthy with mud. Her skin has a ghastly pallor. Diana and Mary enter.

**DIANA**

St John, who is it?

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 5.

**ST JOHN**

I don't know; I found her at the door.

**HANNAH**  
**(GUILTILY)**

I thought her one of the gypsies from the cross.

**MARY**

She's as white as death.

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

**DIANA**

Hannah, some water.

**MARY**

She's worn to nothing. She looks like a spectre. St John, if you hadn't taken her in, we would have fallen upon her dead body in the morning.

**DIANA**

Mary.

**ST JOHN**

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

**HANNAH**

There's milk and bread for you.

Jane tries to mouth her thanks. She sips the milk. Eats a mouthful of bread. Diana kneels at her side.

**ST JOHN**

Ask her her name.

**JANE**

I - I am J -

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

**JOHN REED**

Jane Eyre!

**DIANA**

Please, tell us how we may help you.

**ST JOHN**

Can we send for anyone? Who are your people?

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 6.

The questions are deeply troubling to Jane. She is losing consciousness.

She sees an image of a small girl of ten, running away through a great darkening room. Jane tries to follow her. The action draws her up out of the kitchen chair.

She hears John Reed's voice again.

**JOHN REED (V.O.)**

Jane Eyre! Where are you?

Jane, panicked, looking for somewhere to hide, passes out.

**INT. DAY. GATESHEAD - A GRAND RECEPTION ROOM.**

Rain hammers against the windows. Jane aged ten, looking hunted, runs in looking for somewhere to hide.

She springs behind a curtain. John Reed enters; a fourteen year old, his stomach bursting out of his fancy clothes. He is holding a riding crop as if it is a sword.

**JOHN REED**

Come out, rat. I know you are in here. Come out now and I won't punish you.

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

**JOHN REED (CONT'D)**

Rat.

He exits. Jane breathes a sigh of relief. She slowly pulls the curtain across, making the window a private sanctuary. There is a book lying on the seat. She opens it.

**CUT TO:**

Jane is sitting cross-legged, completely absorbed in her book - a beautifully drawn picture of a cormorant. She runs

her finger over it. We hear the sound of great waves plunging on to a shore.

**EXT. DAY. AN ARCTIC COAST.**

Jane, aged ten, is sitting cross-legged on an isolated rock, her eyes locked with those of a stooping black cormorant. St John's voice comes from a long way away.

**ST JOHN (V.O.)**

Diana, Mary help me get her upstairs...

The cormorant raises its wings like a great black cloak. Jane watches as it takes off and flies away.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 7.

**INT. DAY. GATESHEAD - THE WINDOW SEAT.**

Jane has her eyes closed. A great Atlantic wave hits the sash window behind her, drenching it with foam and brine. Suddenly the curtain is pulled back. John Reed stands in front of her. Jane shrinks back.

**JOHN REED**

I have been looking for you these last ten minutes.

**JANE**

What do you want?

**JOHN REED**

Say forgive me, Master Reed.

**JANE**

I have done nothing wrong. Master Reed.

John grabs the book.

**JOHN REED**

Who gave you permission to read my book?

**JANE**

I wasn't aware it was yours.

**JOHN REED**

Everything in this house is mine. You're lucky to live here with



gentleman's children like us.  
Your father had nothing. You  
should go and beg.

Jane stares him out. John can sense her contempt. He belts her with the book. Jane hits her head on the window clasp, drawing blood. She is shocked.

**JOHN REED (CONT'D)**

That's for the look you had on  
your face. You bad animal.

Jane snaps. She throws herself upon him, the rage in her released; pummelling, scratching, hurting him in any way she can. She is barely coherent.

**JANE**

Wicked and cruel - you are a  
slaver - a murderer -

**JOHN**

I shall tell mother -

**JANE**

I hate you John Reed. I hate you -  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 8.

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

**JOHN**

Mamma! Mamma! There's a rat! Rat!

Jane bites him. Hard. At that moment, Mrs Reed appears on the scene. John screams. We see Mrs Reed's shocked face. She is an overweight woman pushing forty in a bright, elaborate dress.

**INT. NIGHT. MOOR HOUSE - A BEDROOM**

Dinah and Mary are gently taking Jane's soaking clothes off; one at each side of her. Jane is distressed, approaching a delirium. She resists them.

**INT. DUSK. GATESHEAD - THE RED ROOM.**

Jane is carried in and set down on a footstool by two servants, Miss Abbot and Bessie - one at each side of her. She is still resisting.

**BESSIE**

For shame, hitting your master.

**MISS ABBOT**

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

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

**BESSIE**

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

**MISS ABBOT**

You're worse than us servants. We  
work for our keep; you do  
nothing. Pray for forgiveness  
Miss Eyre or something bad will  
come down that chimney and fetch  
you away.

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

In front of Jane, a stone fireplace gapes like a mouth. Beside it, a full length looking-glass in which her pale reflection stares out. Behind her, a bed supported on pillars of mahogany, hung with red.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 9.

The piled up pillows and mattresses glare in cold white. Jane's breathing is the only sound in the room.

A sudden gust sends rain pelting against the windows like fingernails. A distant moan of wind seems to breathe out of the black hearth. Jane reverts her nervous gaze to the pitted mirror. Her eyes lock on the small figure trapped in the mirror's visionary hollow; her white, bleeding face, her eyes glittering with fear.

It is a phantom. The eyes are black, the skin a deathly grey. Blood. Jane's breathing becomes choked with terror. She can't get her breath. We hear blood rushing through her ears. It sounds like the beating of great wings.

Slowly, a light appears over her. It may be something

shining in from outside. But to Jane it seems as if it is surrounding her, enveloping her. The figure in the looking glass opens its mouth. The scream, held in so long, finally rips from Jane's throat.

**INT. DUSK. GATESHEAD - THE FIRESIDE.**

At the sound of the scream, Mrs Reed, slumbering, almost jumps out of her skin.

**INT. DUSK. GATESHEAD - THE KITCHEN.**

Miss Abbott almost drops the tea tray she is carrying.

**INT. DUSK. GATESHEAD - A CORRIDOR.**

Jane is banging on the door, screaming, hysterical with terror. Bessie rushes to the door and unlocks it. Jane flies into her arms.

**BESSIE**

Miss Eyre what is it?

**JANE**

Bessie!

**BESSIE**

Have you seen something?

**JANE**

There was a light.

We see Bessie's own fear as she glances into the dark room. Mrs Reed is storming towards them, furious.

**MRS REED**

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

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 10.

**BESSIE**

But she screamed so loud ma'am.

**MRS REED**

It is play-acting. Let her go. I know your tricks Jane Eyre and I abhor such artifice. Loose

Bessie's hands, child.

Mrs Reed prises Jane away from Bessie as she speaks.

**MRS REED (CONT'D)**

You will now stay here an hour longer.

**JANE**

No - Aunt, have pity -

**MRS REED**

And only when you are perfectly submissive will I let you out.

**JANE**

Please - I cannot bear it -

**MRS REED**

Silence. This violence is repulsive.

**JANE**

I shall be killed -

**MRS REED**

Get back!

**JANE**

Have mercy, have mercy I beg you -

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

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

**INT. DUSK. GATESHEAD - THE RED ROOM.**

We see Jane in her distress, hitting her head on the door. She falls back. On the floor, her arms and legs move beyond her control. She is having a fit. When it is over, we see Jane unconscious. She is lying in a pool of ghostly light.

**INT. DAY. MOOR HOUSE - A BEDROOM.**

Through the light, Jane sees Mary and Diana Rivers at her side.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 11.

**MARY**

She's awake.

St John approaches in his parson's collar, blocking out the light as he looks down. Jane gazes at him remotely.

**ST JOHN**

I'm sure we'll find she's simply had a misunderstanding with her people. I hope she's not done anything deplorable; there's nothing so sad as a fallen young woman.

**MARY**

Look at the suffering in her eyes. They're like dark pools -

Diana smiles at Mary's tendency to over-dramatise.

**DIANA**

She has a peculiar face; I rather like it.

**ST JOHN**

She's not at all handsome.

**DIANA**

She's so ill, St John.

**ST JOHN**

Ill or well, she'll always be plain.

Jane's eyes slide away from him and close.

**INT. DAY. GATESHEAD - THE MORNING ROOM.**

A bright morning. A huge clergyman dressed in black is staring down at Jane, blocking out the sun. We see him from her POV; his expansive chest, dramatic facial hair, huge flared nostrils, frowning brows. He is Brockelhurst, the epitome of grim.

**BROCKLEHURST**

There is no sight so sad and so deplorable as that of a wicked little girl. Do you know, Jane Eyre, where the wicked go after

death?

**JANE**

They go to hell.

**BROCKLEHURST**

And what is hell, can you tell me that?

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 12.

**JANE**

A pit full of fire.

**BROCKLEHURST**

And should you like to fall into that pit and be burning there forever?

**JANE**

No sir.

**BROCKLEHURST**

What must you do to avoid it?

**JANE**

I must keep in good health and not die.

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

**MRS REED**

I've been her sole benefactress and her kindest friend. But she shows no gratitude and brings nothing but discord into my house.

**BROCKLEHURST**

What is her parentage?

**MRS REED**

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

Jane silently revolts against this lie.

**MRS REED (CONT'D)**

If you accept her at Lowood school  
Mr Brocklehurst, keep a strict eye  
on her. Her worst fault is a  
tendency to deceit. I'm sorry to  
tell you that Jane Eyre is a liar.

Jane's eyes flash with outrage.

**BROCKLEHURST**

All liars will have their portion  
in the lake burning with fire and  
brimstone. She shall be watched,  
Mrs Reed.

**MRS REED**

I wish her to be made useful, to  
be kept humble.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 13.

**BROCKLEHURST**

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

A passion of resentment is forming in Jane.

**BROCKLEHURST (CONT'D)**

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

Mrs Reed smiles sweetly.

**MRS REED**

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

**INT. DAY. GATESHEAD - THE ENTRANCE HALL.**

Jane is climbing the staircase. John Reed blocks her way.

**JOHN**

So, Rat, you're being sent away.  
It's as I thought; you're not fit  
to associate with me.

Jane snaps. She cries out:

**JANE**

You are not fit to associate with me!

**INT. DAY. GATESHEAD - THE MORNING ROOM.**

Mrs Reed is at her desk. Jane appears in front of her.

**JANE**

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

**MRS REED**

How dare you speak in this manner.

**JANE**

I'll never call you Aunt again as long as I live and if anyone asks how I liked you I'll say that the very thought of you makes me sick.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 14.

**MRS REED**

You wouldn't dare.

**JANE**

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

**MRS REED**

Children must be corrected for their faults.

**JANE**

Deceit is not my fault!

**MRS REED**

But you are passionate.

**JANE**

My Uncle Reed is in heaven and can



see all that you do and think; so  
can my mother and father. They know  
how you hate me and wish me dead.  
They can see. They see everything  
you do and they will judge you, Mrs  
Reed.

Mrs Reed has turned quite pale. Jane blazes with victory.

**EXT. DAY. GATESHEAD - THE GATE HOUSE.**

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

**BESSIE**

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

**JANE**

Don't scold me Bessie. I know you  
dislike me -

**BESSIE**

I don't dislike you Miss; I'm  
fonder of you than of anyone.

**JANE**

You don't show it.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 15.

**BESSIE**

Miss Jane -

Jane throws her arms around Bessie and embraces her with  
great force. Bessie returns the embrace, surprised, moved.  
Jane gets into the coach. Bessie looks up at the driver.

**BESSIE (CONT'D)**

You take good care of her.

Jane's small, pale face peers out of the coach window,  
watching Gateshead recede. She doesn't cry. But Bessie  
can't stave off her tears.

**INT. NIGHT. LOWOOD - THE HALL.**

Jane, half asleep is carried out of a coach and into a howling gale. She is taken under a stone inscription: 'Lowood Institution'. She is set down in front of a woman with striking features and intelligent eyes; Miss Temple. She bends down and looks into Jane's face.

**MISS TEMPLE**

What's your name, child?

**JANE**

Jane Eyre.

**MISS TEMPLE**

You are very young to be sent alone, Jane Eyre.

She gently touches Jane's cheek with her finger. Jane manages the ghost of a smile.

**INT. DAY. MOOR HOUSE - A BEDROOM.**

Jane is lying back against clean white pillows. Her hair brushed and neatly plaited. Diana and Mary are full of kindness but St John's face is cold, dispassionate.

**JANE**

My name is Jane Elliott...

**MARY**

Jane Elliot.

**DIANA**

Where do you come from, Miss Elliott?

Jane gives no answer.

**ST JOHN**

Who can we send for to help you?  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 16.

**JANE**

No one.

There is an intake of breath from Mary.

**ST JOHN**

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

without friends?

**JANE**

Yes sir.

**ST JOHN**

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

**DIANA**

Don't upset her, St John. She  
must not be interrogated so.

**JANE**

Mr Rivers, you and you sisters  
have done me a great service, the  
greatest man can do - you have  
rescued me from death.

**ST JOHN**

How are we to help you if we know  
nothing about you?

**JANE**

I'll tell you as much as I can. I  
am an orphan; brought up a  
dependent; educated in a charity  
school where I passed six years  
as a pupil and two as a teacher.  
I left a year since to become a  
private governess -

**MARY**

**YES -**

**JANE**

A good situation, where I  
remained until...

**MARY**

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

**DIANA**

We did wonder. We mean no offence  
but you have a certain look. Mary  
and I work as governesses too.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 17.

**JANE**

(with great interest)

Do you?

**MARY**

We are currently trying to teach ourselves German, so we may find better positions.

**JANE**

You're not working at present?

**DIANA**

We came home only for our father's funeral.

**MARY**

He died three weeks ago.

**JANE**

I am very sorry to hear it.

St John has no patience with the change of subject.

**ST JOHN**

Why did you leave your place of employment?

Jane sinks back in the pillows.

**JANE**

I... It was a catastrophe.

**ST JOHN**

What did you do?

**JANE**

I am free from any blame, sir. I was happy.

Jane is deeply distressed.

**DIANA**

That's enough for now, St John.

**MARY**

You must rest, Miss Elliott.

The name sounds strange to Jane.

**ST JOHN**

Why did you start?

**JANE**

Because that is not my name.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 18.

**DIANA**

You haven't given us your real name?

Jane shakes her head.

**ST JOHN**

Why not?

**JANE**

Because I must not ever be found.

Diana and Mary glance at each other, fascinated.

**INT. EVENING. MOOR HOUSE - THE BEDROOM**

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

**ST JOHN (V.O.)**

Merciful Jesus, enlighten thou me  
with the brightness of thine  
inward light...

**INT. EVENING. MOOR HOUSE - THE STAIRS**

Diana is helping Jane down the stairs.

**ST JOHN (V.O.)**

And take away all darkness from  
the habitation of my heart...

**INT. EVENING. MOOR HOUSE - THE PARLOUR**

St John is praying over Jane, Diana and Mary as they sit at the table. Mary catches Jane's eye, gives her shy smile.

**ST JOHN**

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

Jane finds herself staring at St John, who prays ardently.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**

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

St John opens his eyes and looks searchingly at Jane. She  
immediately looks down.

**JANE, MARY, DIANA**

Amen.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 19.

**DIANA**

Welcome to our table, Miss  
Elliott.

**JANE**

I'd appreciate it if you called  
me Jane. It is my own name.

**MARY**

It's wonderful to see you on your  
feet, Miss Jane.

Jane turns her attention to St John.

**JANE**

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

**ST JOHN**

You wish to be independent of my  
charity?

**JANE**

I wish to work, sir. Show me how  
to work or how to seek work;  
that's all I ask.

**DIANA**

You're not fit enough to work.

**ST JOHN**

My sisters have always taken  
pleasure in keeping injured birds  
but I'm more inclined to put you  
in a way of keeping yourself -  
and shall endeavour to do so, if  
that's what you wish.

**JANE**

With all my heart, sir.

**DIANA**

It's a shame she has no choice of helpers, St John, and must put up with such crusty people as you.

**ST JOHN**

This school you were at, Miss Elliot, this charitable institution; what did it prepare you for?

**CUT TO:**

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

**CUT TO:**

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 20.

Jane flinches at the memory.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**

Was it a thorough education?

**JANE**

Most thorough.

**INT. DAY. LOWOOD - THE HALL.**

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

**MISS SCATCHERD**

Burns, Helen Burns!

Jane, aged ten, looks up. She is wearing a brown stuff frock with a puritanical cap like all the other girls. Silence reigns in the school hall.

A red haired girl of about thirteen stands up; Helen Burns. Miss Scatcherd holds up an apron in which a hole has been mistakenly cut.

**MISS SCATCHERD (CONT'D)**

You're a slattern and a disgrace!

Helen Burns undoes the back of her dress. The punishment is given; a dozen sharp, stinging whacks with the birch twigs.

Jane is appalled. But to her astonishment and awe, Helen Burns doesn't cry; she barely changes her expression. As the strokes go on - seven, eight, nine - Helen seems like one in a trance. Jane is deeply affected.

On the eleventh stroke, the door bursts open and a visiting party walks in: the Brocklehurst family. Miss Temple escorts two young girls dressed in peacock finery and two smart, bombastic ladies. Mr Brocklehurst follows. Helen's punishment is forgotten as the students rush to their feet.

Jane, in a panic, drops her slate and breaks it. Brocklehurst's eyes sweep the room. They land on her.

**BROCKLEHURST**

I might have known. The new girl.  
Step forward, Jane Eyre.

Filled with dread, Jane steps forward.

**BROCKLEHURST (CONT'D)**

It is my duty dear children, to  
warn you that this girl is not  
one of God's own lambs.

We see the look of frustration on Miss Temple's face.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 21.

**BROCKLEHURST (CONT'D)**

She is a castaway and an alien in  
his flock and you must be on your  
guard against her. For this  
child... is a liar!

He points to a tall stool. Jane stands on it.

**BROCKLEHURST (CONT'D)**

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

**INT. DAY. LOWOOD - THE HALL - LATER.**



The hall is empty but for the small figure of Jane, high on her stool, feeling her isolation like pain. Across the room is the slightly bigger figure of Helen, hunched, the back of her dress still open, the skin on her neck raw. The sun is setting. At last Jane starts to sob.

**HELEN**

Come now, don't cry.

**JANE**

You're not allowed to speak to me. I must be shunned.

**HELEN**

Mr Brocklehurst is not a God.  
He's not liked or admired here -

**JANE**

He said I was a liar.

**HELEN**

**JANE -**

**JANE**

I am not a liar!

**HELEN**

If your own conscience approves  
you, then so will I.

Jane is deeply gratified.

**JANE**

How do you bear it?  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 22.

**HELEN**

Bear what?

**JANE**

Being struck.

**HELEN**

I'm a trial to Miss Scatcherd.  
She hits me to improve me.

**JANE**

If she hit me I would get that  
birch from her hand and break it  
under her nose.

**HELEN**

You'd just be punished even more.  
It's part of life here.

**JANE**

I have always been excluded and  
alone and hated. Miss Abbott used  
to call me an ugly little toad.

Helen approaches Jane.

**HELEN**

You're not ugly. Do you know what  
is inside you?

**JANE**

What?

**HELEN**

The spark of your spirit, the  
principle of light and thought,  
pure and bright, as perfect as  
anything created.

**JANE**

What do you mean?

**HELEN**

Your soul. Your soul is beautiful,  
your soul has value - more value  
than anything on earth.

**JANE**

Is that true?

**HELEN**

Yes. God sees your beauty. Even  
as you stand on that stool, there  
is an invisible world around you,  
a kingdom of spirits. It is  
everywhere. Angels see your pain.  
Angels know your innocence.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 23.

**JANE**

Angels?

Helen smiles a wide smile.

**HELEN**

Do you not believe in angels?

They hear the door. Helen runs back to her place; cowers.  
Miss Temple appears in a shaft of light at the door.

**MISS TEMPLE**

Come here, Girls.

The girls approach, dreading more punishment.

**MISS TEMPLE (CONT'D)**

I shall investigate Mr  
Brocklehurst's claims against  
you, Jane. And unless they are  
proved, you will be exonerated.

Miss Temple looks over her shoulder.

**MISS TEMPLE (CONT'D)**

Also, I understand you girls  
have had no food today.

She quickly presses a slice of hard cake into each girl's  
hand and walks away. Jane and Helen look at one another,  
deeply moved by her kindness.

**EXT. DAY. MOOR HOUSE - THE GARDEN / MOORS.**

Jane stands between Diana and Mary high above Moor House.  
They are dressed similarly in bonnets and cloaks. They  
watch a hawk dive, their heads moving in unison. Their eyes  
land upon Moor House.

**MARY**

We've lived here all our lives but  
the house must be shut up now.

**JANE**

Why?

**MARY**

We can't afford to keep it on.  
Diana and I will return to our  
charges in a few days and St John  
will go to his parsonage.

Down below them, St John leaves Moor House and walks  
towards the village. Jane watches him.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 24.

**DIANA**

It'll be a hard parting for us. We may not see him again for years.

**JANE**

Why ever not?

**MARY**

He means to be a missionary. He's going to India to do Gods's work.

**JANE**

Can he not do God's work here?

**MARY**

This quiet parish will never do for him; he almost raves in his restlessness. It breaks our hearts.

**DIANA**

St John burns with talents and ambition. But he lacks the means for advancement here. Our poverty thwarts him at every turn and so he has chosen to lay all his gifts on God's altar.

**MARY**

We've tried to persuade him to stay but in some things our brother is - he is -

**DIANA**

Inexorable as death.

**MARY**

We are now without father. We'll soon be without home and brother.

Jane feels a powerful compassion for them.

**JANE**

In one thing you are fortunate.

She looks over at the horizon.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

You have each other.

**EXT. DAY. LOWOOD - THE GROUNDS. SPRING.**

Jane is looking at the high wall which is the horizon of her world at Lowood. Her eyes come to rest on the main door. Two men are carrying a small coffin out of the school. Brocklehurst follows it with a menthol-soaked cloth over his mouth and nose. He becomes aware of Jane's eyes on him. He looks away.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 25.

**INT. NIGHT. LOWOOD - THE DORMITORY.**

Jane is creeping down a corridor in her night dress. She peers in through the dormitory door. It has been turned into a sanitarium. Camphor and vinegar are being burnt. Jane can hardly look at the sick girls.

Miss Temple, pale with exhaustion, is speaking intimately to Madame Pierrot, the French mistress. Jane overhears.

**MISS TEMPLE**

This is the result of semi-starvation and neglected colds; Brockelhurst's idea of mortifying their bodies to save their souls.

**TYPHUS -**

Miss Temple can't say more.

**MADAME PIERROT**

Write to the governors. You must.

Jane creeps on.

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

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

**JANE**

Helen.

**HELEN**

Is it you, Jane? Have you come to say goodbye?

**JANE**

You're cold.

**HELEN**

I'm very happy. I am going home.

**JANE**

Back to your father?

**HELEN**

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

**JANE**

Then where?

**HELEN**

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

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 26.

**JANE**

No...

Jane is devastated. She climbs into bed next to Helen. For a moment, they hold each other. Jane's tears silently fall.

**HELEN**

Don't be sad. I will escape great suffering by dying young.

**JANE**

No...

**HELEN**

I don't have any talent to make my way in life. I should be always at fault. But God is my friend. He loves me.

**JANE**

Then he must save you.

**HELEN**

He is saving me.

Jane cannot articulate her distress at Helen's words.

**HELEN (CONT'D)**

I feel like I could sleep now. I like to have you near -

**JANE**

I won't leave you.

**HELEN**

You're so warm and alive. Jane,  
you have a passion for living.

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

We see Miss Temple looking down at the bed in the dazzling, morning light. Jane, waking, has her small arms around Helen, as if fiercely protecting her. Helen is ashen, her eyes open, staring at some unseen thing. She is dead. Miss Temple lifts Jane away.

**MISS TEMPLE**

Jane...

Jane realises what has happened. We hear the sound of her distress begin. She is inconsolable.

**JANE**

No, no, no -

**MARY (V.O.)**

Jane?

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 27.

**INT. DAY. MOOR HOUSE - THE PARLOUR.**

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

**JANE**

Have you something for me to do?

**MARY**

You are doing something already.  
May I see?

Jane hands her a book. She has drawn a bride.

**JANE**

That's Miss Temple on her wedding day. She was my teacher; a great influence on me. Under her guidance I became a teacher too.

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

**MARY**

St John -

**JANE**

No, Mary, please -

**MARY**

See how skilled Jane is.

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

**MARY (CONT'D)**

She is better than any drawing master we have ever had.

For a moment, St John seems to be weighing up whether to be insulted or not.

**ST JOHN**

How fierce I am, Miss Elliott.

**JANE**

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

**ST JOHN**

I found you a situation some days ago but I've delayed telling you because the work is lowly and I fear you'll scorn it.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 28.

**JANE**

I shan't mind what I do.

**ST JOHN**

As I am poor and obscure, the help I can offer is of the meanest sort.

**DIANA**

St John, what are you going to offer her? Not washerwoman, I hope?

**ST JOHN**

When I took over the parish two years ago it had no school. I opened one for boys; I now intend to open one for girls. The school mistress will have a two-roomed cottage paid for by local



benefactors and she will receive fifteen pounds a year. You can see how humble, how ignoble it is.

On the contrary, Jane is deeply gratified.

**JANE**

Mr Rivers, I thank you heartily and I accept with all my heart.

**ST JOHN**

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

**JANE**

I will save them until they are wanted. They will keep.

Jane smiles at him. St John is impressed.

**INT. DAY. MORTON - THE SCHOOL ROOM.**

Jane is at the blackboard in a freshly painted school room. In front of her are about twenty village girls, aged from six to sixteen. They are hanging on her every word.

Jane is writing a neat line of 'a's.

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

Jane's first home is like a doll's house. She walks through it from the whitewashed bedroom with its little single bed, through the parlour with its tiny fireplace into the scullery kitchen. She retraces her steps back into the parlour. She turns round and surveys it.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 29.

Silence but for the crackling of the fire and the blowing of the wind. She feels glad, grateful, but very, very alone. She hears Brocklehurst's voice.

**BROCKLEHURST**

I hear you are to leave us, Miss Eyre.

She spins around as if he is there.

**EXT. DAY. A CHURCHYARD.**

Brocklehurst is at the church door; Jane looking at him coldly. She holds a bunch of wild flowers.

**JANE**

Yes. Excuse me.

She walks into the graveyard. There are over forty small graves marked with wooden crosses, each bearing a child's name. One of them says Helen Burns. Jane lays down her flowers.

She looks up at Brocklehurst. He cannot meet her eye.

We hear the voice of Mrs Fairfax.

**MRS FAIRFAX (V.O.)**

If Jane Eyre of Lowood School...

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

Jane tries to quell her great unhappiness. She springs into action, straightening her furniture, stoking her fire.

**MRS FAIRFAX (V.O.)**

...Who advertised in the Yorkshire Herald, possesses the acquirements mentioned...

**EXT. DAY. A ROADSIDE.**

Jane, younger and more hopeful, with her belongings in a small trunk, awaits an approaching public coach.

**MRS FAIRFAX (V.O.)**

...And if she is in a position to give satisfactory references, a situation can be offered where there is but one pupil, a little girl under ten years of age and where the salary is thirty pounds a year.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 30.

**EXT. DAY. MORTON - JANE'S COTTAGE.**

Jane is in her scullery putting all her energy into scrubbing dishes.

**MRS FAIRFAX (V.O.)**

Jane Eyre is requested to send references and all particulars to Mrs Fairfax at Thornfield Hall.

Jane closes her eyes, trying to banish her thoughts. It is no good. The memories crowd in.

**INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE GROUND FLOOR.**

A smiling lady dressed in black approaches her through the darkness - Mrs Alice Fairfax.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

How do you do, my dear? What a long and tedious journey you must have had of it. John is quite the slowest driver in the county. You must be cold to the bone.

**JANE**

Are you Mrs Fairfax?

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Indeed I am; come and warm yourself in here.

Mrs Fairfax leads Jane up the dark corridor and into a cosy parlour. Leah, a young maidservant, follows.

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

Your poor hands must be quite numb; here, let me help you.

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

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

Leah, make a little hot port and cut a sandwich or two.

Leah eyes Jane with great curiosity. She hurries away.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

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

Knitting apparatus lies abandoned on a fireside chair. Mrs Fairfax moves it and gestures for Jane to sit.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 31.

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

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

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

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

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

**JANE**

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

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Who?

**JANE**

Miss Fairfax - my pupil?

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Oh you mean Miss Varens; Mr Rochester's ward. She is to be your pupil.

**JANE**

Who is Mr Rochester?

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Why, the owner of Thornfield.

**JANE**

I thought Thornfield Hall belonged to you.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

(bursting into laughter)

Oh bless you child, what an idea.  
To me? I am only the housekeeper.

**JANE**

Forgive me -  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 32.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

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

She continues to laugh. A bashful smile is playing on  
Jane's lips. Mrs Fairfax is beginning to thaw her.

**INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE HALL / STAIRCASE.**

Mrs Fairfax is carrying a lamp across the great hall; the  
only light. Jane can perceive grandeur looming out of the  
darkness; Jacobean fireplace, coat of arms, head of a stag.  
Very gloomy, eerie. Her breath is vaporising in the cold.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

We shall have a cheerful house  
this winter...

As Jane follows Mrs Fairfax up the stairs, light is thrown  
on portraits of dour, craggy, long dead ancestors.

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

With Miss Varens here - and with  
you - we'll have quite a merry  
time of it.

**INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - A LONG GALLERY.**

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

**MRS FAIRFAX**

I'm sure that last winter - and  
what a severe one - if it didn't  
rain it snowed and if it didn't  
snow it blew a gale - last winter  
I declare that not a soul came to

the house from November to  
February.

Mrs Fairfax leads Jane through the wood-panelled darkness.

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

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

She opens the door to a small but delightful room.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 33.

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

Here.

Jane looks in: a fire burning, a lamp lit by her bed, a  
soft quilt, pale chintz curtains.

**JANE**  
**OH -**

She is utterly speechless. Her eight years of physical  
discomfort and hardship are over.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Good night, my dear. I hope  
you'll be comfy.

**JANE**

Thank you.

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

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

Jane opens the curtains. She draws her breath in at the  
sight of the grounds. They are beautiful.

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE DRAWING ROOM.**

Jane enters a magnificent room. Mrs Fairfax is dusting.

**JANE**

What a beautiful house.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

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

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE LIBRARY.**

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

**ADELE**

**(IN FRENCH)**

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

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 34.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

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

**JANE**

**(IN FRENCH)**

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

**ADELE**

**(IN FRENCH)**

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

**JANE**

Her mother has passed away.

**ADELE**

**(IN FRENCH)**

Maman used to teach me to dance and say verses. When gentlemen came to see her I used to dance for them or sit on their knees and sing. May I sing for you now?

**JANE**

**(IN FRENCH)**

Well - that would be lovely.  
(To Mrs Fairfax)  
Adele is going to show us her  
accomplishments.

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

**MRS FAIRFAX**

How very French...

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

Adele's song continues as a voiceover. Mrs Fairfax is finishing a shawl. Jane is showing Adele pictures of little objects that she has sketched. Adele names them in English.

The song ends. Jane gives Adele a sketch of herself.

**ADELE**

Me! It is me!

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

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Here. For you.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 35.

Jane is delighted at the kindness of the gift.

**INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE LONG GALLERY**

Jane holds a candle, the shawl around her; the moaning sound of a gale outside. She holds her candle up to the portrait of the voluptuous woman.

She stares at it curious, both as a girl and as an artist. She brings the candle close, to see how the brushwork has achieved the effect of flesh. She hears a low, knowing laugh in the darkness behind her. She is startled.

**JANE**

Who's there?

Her own huge shadow is the only thing that moves. She hears



the laugh again. She follows it through the darkness, alert with fear. A door clicks shut at the end of the corridor.

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

**JANE (CONT'D)**

Who sleeps up here?

**MRS FAIRFAX**

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

**JANE**

I heard someone.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

You can't have done.

**JANE**

A laugh. Someone laughed.

Mrs Fairfax flounders for a second.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Oh - that must be Grace Poole.  
She likes to sit up here with her sewing. Rather an eccentric soul.  
(She shouts sharply)  
Grace? Grace!

A door opens. Jane sees a broad-faced woman with slow, intelligent eyes. She looks as if she has just woken up.

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

Miss Eyre has heard a laugh.

Grace looks at Jane with sly curiosity. She leaves the sewing room and opens a door through which a flight of steep steps are revealed. Grace climbs them and disappears.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 36.

**EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE LEADS.**

Jane is on the turreted roof, looking up at the cawing rooks - and down at the view; a white, frosted wilderness.

Jane senses a presence behind her. She quickly turns. Mrs Fairfax is coming through the rooftop door.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

I thought I might find you up here.

I've been waiting to pour our tea.

**JANE**

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

Mrs Fairfax approaches, concerned.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

What is it, child? You've been here three months now and I'm worried that the position is not enough / to occupy your -

**JANE**

Oh, Mrs Fairfax, no. I'm so thankful to be at Thornfield. Please don't think I'm so ungrateful as to be discontented.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

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

Jane looks out at the view once more.

**JANE**

I wish a woman could have action in her life, like a man. It agitates me to pain that the skyline over there is ever our limit. I long sometimes for a power of vision that would overpass it. If I could behold all I imagine... I've never seen a city, never spoken with men. I've never even seen a town of any size. And I fear my whole life will pass, without ever having...

Mrs Fairfax's troubled look makes Jane fall silent. Mrs Fairfax looks as if she is about to say something - then puts on her practical face, the moment of intimacy gone.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Well now - exercise is a great cure for anything, they say.

**(MORE)**

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 37.

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

I have some letters to post; will  
you take them?

**EXT. DAY. A FROZEN MEADOW.**

Jane is walking with purpose, carrying a bundle of letters. The exercise is lifting her spirits. The sun is sinking, turning the frost gold.

**EXT. DAY. A FROZEN WOOD.**

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

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

She gazes at a huddle of snowdrops, their heads bowed. A crystal drop of water runs to the end of a snowdrop and begins to freeze as she watches. It is held suspended as if the whole winter is contained in it.

The moon is mounting the sky. Jane hears a sound like the beating of wings. The blood is rushing through her ears.

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

**ROCHESTER**

What the deuce -

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

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Hellfire.

Jane is confounded.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Pilot, get down! GET DOWN I SAY!

**JANE**

Can I do anything, sir?

Rochester stares at her; a tiny black figure, surrounded by darkening frost, the low moon behind her.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 38.

**ROCHESTER**

Get back.

Jane doesn't move. Rochester turns to his horse.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Mesrour. Mesrour.

With much stamping and clattering, the horse clammers to its feet. Rochester seems relieved.

He tries to stand himself. His ankle will bear no weight. He lets out an involuntary cry. It echoes:

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Damnation.

**JANE**

Are you injured, sir?

Rochester looks at her once more. He manages to get himself off the ice. He sits on a nearby stile. Jane approaches him. She now has the moon on her face. She begins to look less like a phantom and more like a girl.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

If you are hurt and want help I can fetch someone from the village. I'm on my way there to post a letter.

Rochester looks as if he doesn't believe her.

**ROCHESTER**

Where do you come from?

**JANE**

Thornfield Hall.

**ROCHESTER**

Whose house is that?

**JANE**

Mr Rochester's.

**ROCHESTER**

Do you know Mr Rochester?

**JANE**

No, I've never seen him.

Rochester is trying to place her. She is a puzzle to him.

**ROCHESTER**

You're not a servant there...

**JANE**

I am the governess, sir.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 39.

**ROCHESTER**

The governess.

(A slow smile)

Deuce take me, I had forgotten.

Examining Jane once more, he laughs a low laugh.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

The governess.

Jane does not like to be laughed at.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Have you got an umbrella I can  
use as a stick?

**JANE**

No.

**ROCHESTER**

Then try to get hold of his  
bridle and lead him to me.

Jane doesn't like his imperious tone. She looks at the  
horse; huge, trampling, nervous. Rochester is amused.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

If you would be so kind...

Jane obeys. She endeavours to catch the bridle but the  
horse rears away. Jane falls on the ice. Rochester bursts  
out laughing. Jane picks herself up.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Perhaps it would be easier to  
bring me to the horse. Come here.

Jane resists.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Forgive me. I must beg of you to  
come here.

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

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Mesrour.

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

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Thank you.  
(He bows.)

Now, make haste with your letter.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 40.

Rochester's spurred heel makes the horse start and rear.  
Jane steps back. The horse bounds away, the dog rushing in  
its traces. All three disappear.

Jane doesn't move until the sound of hooves has faded away.  
Her face is flushed, her eyes glitter in the dark.

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

Jane runs up to the front door. She pushes it open. To her  
amazement, there is a fire burning in the stone fireplace.  
The whole hall is lit. The double doors are open into the  
library. Mrs Fairfax is hurriedly approaching.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Mr Rochester is here.

**JANE**

Oh?

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Go and change your frock; he wishes  
to meet you.

**JANE**

I have to change?

**MRS FAIRFAX**

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

**JANE**

But all my dresses are the same.

**MRS FAIRFAX  
(DESPERATELY)**

You must have one that is better? He's in a terrible humour; the doctor has been. His horse fell in Hay lane and his ankle is sprained.

Mrs Fairfax anxiously hurries back into the library. A large dog wanders out. Jane finds herself looking at Pilot. She smiles.

**INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE LIBRARY.**

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

Rochester is looking through Jane's portfolio of sketches and watercolours. Jane feels utterly exposed - as if her diary is being read. Mrs Fairfax timidly interrupts. Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 41.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Here is Miss Eyre, Sir.

**ROCHESTER**

(Without looking up)  
Let her sit.

Jane sits. Rochester continues to study her work.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

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

Adele is gazing at him uncomprehending, her face radiant.

**JANE**

Thank you.

**ROCHESTER**

You've been resident here three months?

**JANE**

Yes, sir.

**ROCHESTER**

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

**JANE**

Pardon?

**ROCHESTER**

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

**JANE**

**(SLIGHTLY INSULTED)**

I was brought up by my Aunt, Mrs Reed of Gateshead, in a house far finer than this. At ten years old I went to Lowood school where I received as good an education as I could hope for. I have no tale of woe, sir.

**ROCHESTER**

Where are your parents?

**JANE**

Dead.

**ROCHESTER**

Do you remember them?

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 42.

**JANE**

No.

**ROCHESTER**

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

**JANE**

She cast me off, sir.



**ROCHESTER**

Why?

**JANE**

Because I was burdensome and she disliked me.

**ROCHESTER**

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

**JANE**

Yes.

**ROCHESTER**

How long did you survive there?

**JANE**

Eight years.

**ROCHESTER**

No tale of woe...

**MRS FAIRFAX**

I daily thank providence for sending us Miss Eyre. She's a kind and patient teacher and an invaluable / companion -

**ROCHESTER**

Don't trouble yourself to give her a character. I'll judge for myself. She began by felling my horse.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Sir?

**ROCHESTER**

I have her to thank for this sprain.

Mrs Fairfax looks at Jane, bewildered. Rochester lifts one of her watercolours.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Adele has brought me these; are they yours?

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 43.

**JANE**

Yes sir.

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

**ROCHESTER**

Where did you get your copies?

**JANE**

Out of my head.

**ROCHESTER**

That head I now see on your shoulders?

**JANE**

Yes sir.

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

**ROCHESTER**

Who's this?

**JANE**

The evening star.

Rochester gives her a direct gaze.

**ROCHESTER**

Why did you bewitch my horse?

Jane cannot reply.

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE NURSERY.**

Jane is by the blackboard, where she is writing sums.

**ADELE**

Tonight I will have my cadeaux.  
He always bring me a cadeaux.

Mrs Fairfax breathlessly enters.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Sorry to disturb. He's asked for your art.

Jane looks at her in disbelief.

**JANE**

What for?

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 44.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

He wishes to have it.

**JANE**

Why?

**MRS FAIRFAX**

To show to his company, I should think. Is this it here? Thank you.

Jane watches helplessly as Mrs Fairfax takes her portfolio.

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE HALL/LANDING.**

Jane is crossing the landing holding Adele's hand. Downstairs, the library doors swing wide open. The sound of male laughter can be heard; gentlemen walk out into the hall. Rochester follows, walking with a stick.

**ADELE**

Monsieur!

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

**ROCHESTER**

Ah, there she is...

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

**INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE DRAWING ROOM.**

A box tied with ribbons sits on the table.

**ADELE**

Ma boîte, ma boîte!

Rochester is leaning against the mantelpiece, drinking.

**ROCHESTER**

Take it away you genuine daughter

of Paris and amuse yourself with disembowelling it.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

We'll open it together, shall we?

Mrs Fairfax kindly leads Adele away. Jane is about to cross the room with them.

**ROCHESTER**

Miss Eyre. Sit there.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 45.

He gestures to a chair by the fire. Jane obeys. She studies Rochester. He is intent on Adele, who is pulling a pink satin dress out of the box.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

I'm not fond of children.

**ADELE**

Oh Ciel! Que c'est beau!

**ROCHESTER**

Nor do I particularly enjoy simple-minded old ladies. But you might suit me - if you would.

**JANE**

How, sir?

**ROCHESTER**

By distracting me from the mire of my thoughts.

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

**ADELE**

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

She looks up, seeking his approval.

**ADELE (CONT'D)**

That is how Maman used to say, is it not?

**ROCHESTER**

Precisely.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Let's try it on, shall we?

Adele skips off with Mrs Fairfax.

**ROCHESTER  
(TO HIMSELF)**

And that is how she charmed my  
English gold out of my English  
breeches pocket.

Rochester notices how keenly Jane is observing him.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

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

**JANE**

No sir.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 46.

Rochester laughs.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

I was too plain; I beg your pardon.

**ROCHESTER**

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

**JANE**

Mr Rochester, it was a blunder.  
I ought to have replied that  
beauty is of little consequence -

**ROCHESTER**

Now you stick a knife under my  
**EAR -**

**JANE**

You have other qualities, sir.

**ROCHESTER**

Just so; other qualities... When  
I was your age I was a felling  
enough fellow. I might have been  
insulted then. You're blushing  
Miss Eyre.

**JANE**

Not at all.

**ROCHESTER**

And though you're not pretty any more than I am handsome, I must say it becomes you.

**(HE LAUGHS)**

And now I see you're fascinated by the flowers on the rug.

Jane senses his mockery.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

I'd like to draw you out. Come, speak to me.

**JANE**

What about, sir?

**ROCHESTER**

The choice of subject is entirely yours.

**JANE**

How can I introduce a subject when I don't know what'll interest you?

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 47.

**ROCHESTER**

The fact is, Miss Eyre, I don't wish to treat you like an inferior.

**JANE**

Yet you'd command me to speak?

**ROCHESTER**

Well I probably have a right to be a little abrupt and exacting on the grounds of my superiority in age. There must be twenty years between us and a century's advance in experience.

**JANE**

I don't think you have a right to command me just because you're older. Your claim to superiority depends on the use you've made of your time and experience.

**ROCHESTER**

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

Jane smiles.

**JANE**

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

**ROCHESTER**

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

**JANE**

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

**ROCHESTER**

Humbug. Most free-born things would submit to anything for a salary. But I mentally shake hands with you for your answer.

**(MORE)**

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 48.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Not three in three thousand schoolgirl governesses would have answered me as you've just done.

**JANE**

You've clearly not spent much time in the company of schoolgirl governesses. I'm the same plain kind of bird as all the rest, with my couple of accomplishments and my common tale of woe.

**ROCHESTER**

I envy you.

**JANE**

How?

**ROCHESTER**

Your openness, your clear conscience, your unpolluted mind. If I were eighteen I think we truly would be equals. Nature meant me to be a good man, one of the better kind and as you see, I am not so.

**JANE**

Are you a villain then, sir?

**ROCHESTER**

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

**(HE SIGHS)**

When I was your age, fate dealt me a blow. I was - cursed with a burden to carry through life. I lacked the wisdom to remain cool and I turned desperate. Dread remorse, Miss Eyre. It is the poison of life.

Rochester takes in her open, compassionate face.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

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

**JANE**

Then you'll degenerate still more.

**ROCHESTER**

Are you preaching to me?  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 49.

**JANE**

I'm reminding you of your own words; remorse is the poison of life.



**ROCHESTER**

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

**JANE**

I don't know. To speak truth, I don't understand you at all.

**ROCHESTER**

My heart has long been a charnel house. Perhaps it'll transform into a shrine.

**JANE**

Sir, I find the conversation has got out of my depth.

**ROCHESTER**

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

**JANE**

I'm not afraid.

**ROCHESTER**

Yes you are.

**JANE**

I've simply no wish to talk nonsense.

**ROCHESTER**

If you did it would be in such a grave, quiet manner that I would mistake it for sense. Do you never laugh, Miss Eyre?

This question cuts Jane to the quick.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

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

Jane opens her mouth to speak - but she cannot.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 50.

**EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GROUNDS. SPRING.**

Jane is playing battledore and shuttlecock with Adele. Her playing is full of energy, very free. Her cheeks look almost rosy. It is spring.

**JANE**

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

Adele serves. The game continues apace. Rochester wanders out of the open double doors of the library. He watches.

Something lands at his feet. A rook's feather. He looks up at the battlements. A shape disappears, too fast to see. Rochester's features cloud over with an expression of shame and detestation. He stands in a terrible inner conflict.

Jane notices him - she misses her shot.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

Mademoiselle has got to rest.

**ADELE**

Because I start to win!

**JANE**

Have mercy, Adele. Play with  
Pilot for a while.

Rochester is leaning over the balustrade, his head bowed.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

Is our game disturbing you, sir?

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

**ROCHESTER**

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

Rochester picks up the black feather. He starts to walk across the grounds at a fast pace. Jane follows.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

I've been arranging a point with

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

He turns, the whole house now in his sights. He shouts:  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 51.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

But Thornfield is my home and I shall like it!

Adele is running after them.

**ADELE**

Mademoiselle - Il faut jouer -

Rochester snaps at her with shocking ferocity.

**ROCHESTER**

Get back! Keep at a distance child, or go in!

Adele's face crumples into tears. Rochester sees Jane's shock at his outburst. He walks away.

Jane isn't sure whether she has been dismissed or not. Adele has run back to Pilot. Jane watches her. She suddenly finds Rochester is back at her side. He walks her along.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

She's the daughter of an opera dancer, Celine Varens. Celine was a beauty and she professed to love me. Her ardour was so great that, ugly as I am, I believed myself her idol. So I installed in her in a hotel, gave her servants, gowns cashmeres, diamonds - in short, I was an idiot.

**JANE**

To fall in love, sir?

**ROCHESTER**

You've never felt love, have you Miss Eyre? Your soul still sleeps.

**JANE**

Does it?

**ROCHESTER**

You're still floating gently in the stream of life, unaware of the rocks ahead waiting to dash you to pieces.

**JANE**

Were you dashed to pieces, Mr Rochester?

**ROCHESTER**

Not by Celine. How can one ever truly love a woman one has paid for?

**(MORE)**

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 52.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

It ended when I visited her unexpectedly one night and caught her with her handsome, charmless lover. I overheard her waxing lyrical on all my defects - she was mercenary, heartless, senseless. The whole intoxication fell away like a dream. I left her money to support the little French floweret over there, whom she swore blind was mine. I see no proof of my grim paternity in her features; I think Pilot is more like me than she.

**JANE**

But you took her on?

Adele is curled up, seeking comfort from the dog.

**ROCHESTER**

Some years later, I heard that Celine had abandoned the brat, disappeared to Italy and left it destitute. So I lifted it from the mud and slime of Paris and brought it here, to grow up clean in the wholesome soil of an English country garden. My one good work in a sea of countless sins.

Jane is looking at Adele full of compassion.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

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

Adele looks up. Rochester speaks graciously.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Forgive me; for keeping Miss Eyre from your game for so long.

Adele is immensely gratified by his apology.

**INT. DUSK. THORNFIELD / THE RED ROOM.**

Jane, aged ten, is walking along the long gallery. She opens a door and finds herself in the Red Room.

She stares into the mirror, searching the pale face of her reflection, as if trying to find an answer. A murmur seems to come down the gaping chimney; a woman's deep sigh. Jane's throat tightens with fear. Something moves in the shadows behind her.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 53.

She scans them, her eyes full of terror. Jane knows beyond all doubt that something is there. She hears a low laugh. It seems to be right next to her. She tries to scream -

**INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - SECOND FLOOR.**

Jane wakes. Her curtains are open; moonlight spilling in. She hears it again; the laugh from her dream, right outside her door - low and deep.

**JANE**

Who's there?

Footsteps run away. Jane springs out of bed and pulls the door open. A door shuts at the end of the corridor.

There is a single candle burning in its holder on the rush matting, flickering in the draft. Jane picks it up. She notices something else - a curling wreath of grey smoke. She follows its trail through the pitch darkness. It is coming thickly from a half-open door at the front of the

house - Rochester's.

Jane rushes in. Rochester's bed is on fire; the hangings, the curtains, all are alight. The flames are leaping. Rochester is asleep. She shakes him.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

Wake up! Wake up! Sir!

Rochester only stirs. The smoke has stupefied him. Jane pulls the burning sheets off - then stops; he is naked. She takes his basin and douses the bed - soaking him.

**ROCHESTER**

Who's there?

**JANE**

It is I, Jane Eyre, sir.

Jane takes the ewer and throws water on the curtains. She pulls the soggy fabric from its rail and smothers the burning couch. When all the flames are out, she rushes to the windows and opens them. Smoke billows out. She stands in the moonlight, coughing.

Rochester is sitting up, staring at her.

**ROCHESTER**

What in the name of all the elves in Christendom have you done with me?

**JANE**

For heaven's sake get up. Somebody has plotted something; you must find out who. I'll light the lamp -  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 54.

**ROCHESTER**

Light the lamp at your peril.

Rochester is springing out of bed. Jane turns away, mortified - having caught sight of his silhouetted shape.

**JANE**

I heard a laugh outside my door loud enough to wake me. I opened it. Someone was running towards the third floor.

Rochester is putting on a dressing gown, lighting the lamp.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

And a candle was left burning in the middle of the floor. Shall I fetch Mrs Fairfax, sir?

**ROCHESTER**

What the deuce can she do?

**JANE**

Then I'll wake John and Martha.

**ROCHESTER**

Not at all. Stay here. You're shivering.

Rochester gets his coat and puts it round her.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

I have to go to the third floor. Don't make a sound. Sit there. I shan't be long.

He goes. Jane looks at his ruined chamber; The blackened drapes on the four poster bed, the fireplace, the huge wardrobe. It is not unlike the red room.

**INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - ROCHESTER'S ROOM.**

Half an hour later. First light. Jane is in an armchair. She has snuggled up in the coat. She takes in a breath, smelling its owner. She nuzzles her head against it. She closes her eyes, running her fingers down the lining.

She looks up. Rochester is watching her. His expression is peculiar. She holds the coat closely around her.

**ROCHESTER**

Did you see anything when you opened your chamber door?

**JANE**

Only the candle on the ground.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 55.

**ROCHESTER**

But you heard a laugh?

**JANE**

Yes.

**ROCHESTER**

Have you heard that laugh before?

**JANE**

There's a woman who sews here;  
Grace Poole - She laughs in that  
way, I think.

**ROCHESTER**

Just so. Grace Poole - you have  
guessed it. Well, you're no  
talking fool; please say nothing  
about this.

**JANE**

**BUT -**

**ROCHESTER**

I will account for this state of  
affairs. Go back to your room and  
say nothing.

**JANE**

Yes, sir.  
(She takes off his coat)  
Good-night.

**ROCHESTER**

Is that how you're going to leave  
me?

**JANE**

You said I should go.

Rochester approaches her.

**ROCHESTER**

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

**JANE**

What am I to do then, sir?

**ROCHESTER**

At least... shake hands.

Rochester holds out his hand. Jane takes it. They shake.  
Rochester wraps Jane's hand in both of his.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 56.



**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

I have a pleasure in owing you my life.

**JANE**

There is no debt.

**ROCHESTER**

I knew you would do me good in some way. I saw it in your eyes when I first beheld you. Their expression did not - did not strike delight into my very inmost being so, for nothing. People talk of natural sympathies... You.

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

**JANE**

Good night then, sir.

**ROCHESTER**

So you will leave me?

**JANE**

I'm cold.

**ROCHESTER**

Go.

At last, he relaxes his grip. She backs away. She goes.

**INT. DAWN. THORNFIELD. JANE'S ROOM.**

Jane is keeling on the windowsill, looking out at the rising sun. She is lit by its glowing rays; inspired. It's a rare feeling that prompts her mood, as new and unfolding as the day itself - happiness.

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

Jane looks in to see Leah and Martha cleaning the soot from the woodwork and windowpanes. To her amazement, Grace Poole is there, calmly sewing rings to new curtains.

**GRACE**

Good day to you, miss.

**JANE**

What's happened here?

**GRACE**  
**(CANNILY)**

Only master reading in his bed  
last night.

**(MORE)**

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 57.

**GRACE (CONT'D)**

Fell asleep with his candle lit  
and the curtains got on fire.  
Managed to put it out with the  
water from his stand.  
Did you not hear anything, miss?

**JANE**

I did. I heard a strange laugh.

**GRACE**

It's hardly likely the master  
would laugh when he was in such  
danger. Perhaps you were dreaming.

**JANE**

I was not.

**GRACE**

Then you didn't think of opening  
your door and looking out?

Jane is infuriated. She turns on her heel.

**INT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - MRS FAIRFAX'S PARLOUR.**

Jane walks in. Their meal is laid out.

**JANE**

Has Mr Rochester not sent for us  
today?

**MRS FAIRFAX**

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

Jane takes this piece of news like an invisible shock.

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

He's gone to The Leas, Mr  
Eshton's place, about ten miles  
from here. I believe Blanche

Ingram is there. She's a great favourite of his.

**JANE**

Oh?

**MRS FAIRFAX**

I saw her two years ago when Mr Rochester had a party here. Oh, she was a beauty; I daresay the most elegant girl I've ever seen. So tall, with raven hair cascading down her back; I don't know how she'd had it done. She sang a duet with Mr Rochester. They made a lovely harmony.

**(MORE)**

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 58.

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

I was quite surprised he didn't make a proposal. Perhaps that is his intention now.

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE NURSERY.**

Jane is at the window, brooding. Outside the rain is pouring. Adele, dressed in yellow frills, is concerned.

**ADELE**

Qu'avez vous mademoiselle?

**JANE**

(without looking at her)  
Nothing. Speak in English, please.

Jane turns, expecting to see Adele.

**INT. DAY. MORTON - THE SCHOOL ROOM.**

Jane finds herself in front of her class. They are looking at her expectantly. She looks back at them curiously. Eager faces, plain rural clothes. She has quite lost her place.

**JANE**

Thank you, girls. You may go.

**INT. EVENING. MORTON - THE SCHOOL ROOM.**

Jane is tidying up at the end of the day. The classroom is empty. Her life is bare. It shows on her face. She looks up. St John Rivers is watching her from the door.

**ST JOHN**

Do you find the work too hard?

Jane immediately puts on a sprightly face and continues clearing up.

**JANE**

Not at all. I'm getting on very well.

**ST JOHN**

Do you feel the solitude an oppression?

**JANE**

I hardly have time to notice it.

**ST JOHN**

Then perhaps your accommodations have disappointed you. They are in truth scanty enough -  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 59.

**JANE**

A few months ago I had nothing. I was wretched. Now I have a home and work; free and honest. I wonder at the goodness of God and at the generosity of my friends.

St John approaches her; speaks intimately.

**ST JOHN**

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

**JANE**

It's what I mean to do.

**ST JOHN**

We can overcome every kind of human weakness. A year ago I was myself intensely miserable. I considered my life was so wretched that it

must be changed - or I would die.  
After a season of darkness and  
struggling, light broke. I heard my  
call from God. Put your trust in  
him, Jane. Let him lead you to your  
future.

**JANE**

Thank you.

St John is turning to go.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

Why were you intensely miserable?

**ST JOHN**

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

Jane moves involuntarily towards him.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**

Don't pity me; I have no compassion  
whatsoever for you. I regarded this  
love as a fever of the flesh; not a  
thing that would ever touch my  
soul. I scorned the weakness,  
fought hard against it - and won.

Jane is incredulous. St John is at her desk. It is covered  
in her drawings. He glances through them.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 60.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**

I could have listened to  
temptation, sunk down in the silken  
snare and known a feverish and  
delusive bliss. I could have  
squandered my future upon it.

**JANE**

You could have been happy.

**ST JOHN**

A slave in a fool's paradise? I'd  
rather my life had purpose -

St John suddenly snatches up a piece of paper.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**

Is this yours?

**JANE**

Yes.

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

**JANE (CONT'D)**

What's the matter?

**ST JOHN**

Nothing in the world.

He folds the paper and takes it.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**

Good night.

He goes. Jane looks after him, puzzled.

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE HALL.**

Mrs Fairfax approaches Jane with a letter in her hand.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

He's back in three days he says - heavens that's Thursday - and not alone. He gives directions to prepare all the best rooms. I'm to get more staff from the George Inn. The ladies will bring their maids, the gentlemen, valets. We must accommodate them all. Supplies to be got; linen, the

**MATTRESSES -**

Mrs Fairfax has worked herself up into quite a panic. Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 61.

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

I'll get started. I'll go to the George. No, I'll tell Martha...

Jane can sense that the old lady is overwhelmed.

**JANE**

May I assist you, Mrs Fairfax?

We see Mrs Fairfax approach Jane in a rush of gratitude.

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE SECOND FLOOR.**

Jane wears a housekeeper's apron over her dress. She enters Rochester's room with an armful of bed linen. It has been returned to its former glory. Adele is jumping up and down on the bed. Sophie is trying to coax her off it. Jane gives Sophie the sheets.

Adele leaves the room with Jane and skids all the way down the newly polished gallery in her stockinged feet. Jane can't help smiling.

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE KITCHENS.**

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

**UNDER COOK**

She gets good wages, I'd guess?

**LEAH**

Wish I had as good; not one fifth what Mrs Poole receives.

Jane affects not to listen, but is keenly interested.

**LEAH (CONT'D)**

And she's laying it all by. I shouldn't wonder if she's saved enough to keep her independent.

**UNDER COOK**

She's a good hand, I daresay.

**LEAH**

Not everyone could do it, that's for sure, not even for the money.

**UNDER COOK**

No wonder the master relies on

**HER -**

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 62.

Leah notices Jane's curious glance. She nudges the under cook. Jane, picks up the bottles and carries them away. As she passes she hears:

**UNDER COOK (CONT'D)**

Doesn't she know?

At that moment, Adele rushes in.

**ADELE**

They're here! They're here!

Mrs Fairfax tries to get her apron off. She becomes flustered. Jane helps her.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Thank you.

Mrs Fairfax and Adele go. Jane looks out of the window.

Her attention is focussed on two equestrians who lead the arriving party; Rochester and Blanche, the dark beauty at his side. She is laughing at something. The sun shines behind her. Jane is dazzled. She turns away.

**INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE SECOND FLOOR.**

Jane comes up the back stairs and on to the gallery, just as the ladies start to issue from their rooms. She stands back in a dark corner.

There is an approach of chatter; a subdued vivacity. A flurry of multicoloured silks, lace and velvets go by. They descend the staircase as noiselessly as a bright mist.

Jane steps out. She walks right into the path of Blanche Ingram, who is dressed in white. They both startle.

**JANE**

Excuse me, miss.

Blanche gives her a look of ice. Rochester is at the top of the stairs.

**ROCHESTER**

Good evening.

They both turn. Rochester has seen Blanche, not Jane. He offers her his arm, his gaze full of admiration. Jane sinks back into the shadows.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

May I?



Blanche lays her gloved hand on Rochester's arm, barely touching him. They glide away.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 63.

**INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE HALL.**

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

Adele leans into Jane. She is crying.

**JANE**

What is it, darling?

**ADELE**

She sing like Maman.

Jane, full of compassion, takes Adele back to her room.

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE SCHOOLROOM.**

Mrs Fairfax enters in a great hurry.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

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

Adele leaps up, delighted. Jane is crestfallen.

**JANE**

Not me, surely.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

It's his particular wish.

**JANE**

He was being polite.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

I'm instructed to tell you that if you resist, he'll come up and get you himself. You needn't stay long. Just let him see you and then slip away. Don't worry; no one'll look at you.

**INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE DRAWING ROOM/HALL**

Jane is delivering Adele into the centre of the company.

**JANE**

May I present Miss Adele Varens?

**ADELE**

Bon jour, mesdames, monsieurs.

Jane finds it hard to get a proper impression of the guests, as she cannot raise her eyes to look at them.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 64.

Adele makes a dainty curtsy - pink frock, hair in ringlets, little lace gloves. In the midst of the crowd is Blanche.

**BLANCHE**

Why, what a little puppet.

**LADY INGRAM**

(mutton dressed as lamb)  
Is this your ward, Mr Rochester?

**ROCHESTER**

Yes.

**LOUISA ESHTON**

(English rose; nineteen)  
What a love of a child.

Adele blissfully disappears into a moving sea of dresses. Only one guest is still looking in Jane's direction; Blanche. Her lip curls in distaste.

Jane backs into a nearby window seat; always her place of refuge. She closes her eyes. A great Atlantic wave hits the sash window behind her, drenching it with foam and brine.

When she opens her eyes, Rochester is in her line of vision, standing out in a crowd of unmanly men. He senses her gaze; glances at her. Jane looks down, pulling her work on to her lap; a beaded purse. She does not lift her eyes from the beads, fully feeling the humiliation of her class - and of her love. Blanche sidles up to Rochester.

**BLANCHE**

I thought you weren't fond of children?

**ROCHESTER**

You're right; I'm not.

**BLANCHE**

Then what induced you to take charge of that little doll?

Rochester turns away from Jane.

**ROCHESTER**

She was left on my hands.

**BLANCHE**

Why don't you send her to school?

**ROCHESTER**

She has a governess.

Jane glances up; sees Rochester's back to her, throws her eyes down, once more.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 65.

**BLANCHE**

You should hear mamma on the chapter of governesses. I had half a dozen in my day - all detestable, ridiculous incubi - were they not, mamma?

**LADY INGRAM**

Did you speak, my lily flower?

**BLANCHE**

I said governesses.

The reaction is instant.

**LADY INGRAM**

Oh, don't mention them; the very word makes me nervous! I've suffered a martyrdom from their incompetence and caprice. I thank heaven we're now done with them.

**BLANCHE**

I have just one word to say of the whole tribe; nuisance.

Jane's fingers sew. Only the briefest flash of her eyes towards the company shows her mortification. Blanche has started playing a brilliant prelude on the piano.

**BLANCHE (CONT'D)**

We shall have music - and new subject, if you please. Signor Eduardo, what shall it be?

**ROCHESTER**

Donna Bianca, I give you beauty.

**BLANCHE**

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

**LADY INGRAM**

My son, of course.

**LORD INGRAM**

Hear hear.

**BLANCHE**

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

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 66.

**LORD INGRAM**

I say -

**BLANCHE**

A woman who neglects herself is a blot on humanity. But a man should pay no heed to his looks. (Glancing at Rochester)

A man should possess only strength and valour. He could be a gentleman or a highwayman. His beauty lies in his power.

**ROCHESTER**

So a Levantine pirate would do for you?

**BLANCHE  
(QUIETLY)**

As long as he resembled you.

Rochester laughs loudly. Jane is heading for the door.

**BLANCHE (CONT'D)**

I am serious. To my mind, a man is nothing without a spice of the devil in him.

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

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

**ROCHESTER**

Why did you leave the room?

**JANE**

I am tired, sir.

**ROCHESTER**

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

**JANE**

You seemed engaged, sir.

**ROCHESTER**

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

**JANE**

Teaching Adele.

**ROCHESTER**

You look pale.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 67.

**JANE**

I am well.

**ROCHESTER**

You're depressed; your eyes are shining with tears. What's the meaning of this?

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

**MRS FAIRFAX**

A gentleman has arrived to see you, sir.

**ROCHESTER**

Who?

**MRS FAIRFAX**

He says he's travelled a long way, from Spanish Town, Jamaica -

Rochester seems winded.

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

And indeed I think he must have come from some hot country because he won't take off his coat.

**ROCHESTER**

Spanish Town...

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Mr Richard Mason. He says you're old friends. I've put him in the morning room.

Rochester cannot speak.

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

Have I done wrong?

**ROCHESTER**

Not at all. Please tell him I'll see him directly.

Mrs Fairfax goes.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Oh Jane - Jane. This is a blow.

**JANE**

Can I help you sir?

In the drawing room, Blanche's prelude finishes to enthusiastic applause. Rochester has Jane's hand. Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 68.

**ROCHESTER**

Jane, if all those people came and spat at me, what would you do?

**JANE**

Turn them out of the room sir, if I could.

**ROCHESTER**

And if they cast you out for  
adhering to me?

**JANE**

I should care nothing about it.

**ROCHESTER**

You'd dare censure for my sake?

Jane is frightened of his passion.

**JANE**

For the sake of any friend who  
deserved it.

Rochester lets her hand go. He steps back. He goes to the  
morning room. Jane peers through the door, worrying how her  
last words have given offence.

She sees a man rising to meet Rochester; handsome but gaunt  
and painfully thin. His smile doesn't reach his eyes - as  
if his soul is not quite his own.

**MASON**

Fairfax...

**ROCHESTER**

Richard. How the devil are you?

They embrace, Rochester doing a fine impression of delight.

**INT. DAY. LOWOOD - THE HALL.**

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

**HELEN**

He is yours.

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

Jane alone with her burden, teeters on the stool. The baby  
starts to cry. Jane panics.

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

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 69.

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

Jane wakes, hearing a savage, sharp shriek of such power and intensity it seems to tear the night in two.

Overhead, the sounds of a struggle begin - a deadly one. Jane hears footsteps rush past her door. She starts to pull on her dress. She hears a man's voice from above:

**MASON (O.S.)**

Help! Rochester, for God's sake  
come!

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

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

**LADY INGRAM**

Oh what is it?

**BLANCHE**

Who is hurt?

**LORD INGRAM**

Where the devil is Rochester?

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

**ROCHESTER**

I'm here, be composed.

Blanche flies towards him like a banshee.

**BLANCHE**

What awful event has taken place?

She embraces him. Rochester patiently removes her.

**ROCHESTER**

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

Jane, the only person behind Rochester, sees by the light



of her candle that his dressing gown is trailing blood.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

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

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 70.

**BLANCHE**

Is there anything I might do?

**ROCHESTER**

Miss Ingram, ladies, please return to your nests like the doves that you are. You'll take cold for certain if you stay in this icy gallery any longer.

The candles flicker and fade as the guests make their way back to their rooms. Rochester sees Jane.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Come this way. Make no noise.

**INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE THIRD FLOOR.**

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

**ROCHESTER**

Be steady. I need you.

He unlocks it. A room hung with tapestries; a four poster bed with its curtains half drawn. One part of the tapestry is hooked up over a hidden door - which lies open to an inner chamber. A dull, sickly light shines out.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Wait.

He goes to the inner chamber. A grim laugh greets him.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Thank you, Mrs Poole.

He locks the door. Jane shudders. He goes to the bed.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Here. Bring the candle.

Jane obeys. Richard Mason is lying, one arm and all the linen soaked in blood. Jane controls her reaction and makes herself useful. Rochester is cleaning the wound.

**MASON**

Am I dying?

**ROCHESTER**

No.

**MASON**

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

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 71.

**ROCHESTER**

It was folly to attempt the  
interview tonight and alone.

**MASON**

I thought I might have done some  
good.

**ROCHESTER**

It makes me impatient to hear  
you.

**MASON**

She sucked the blood. Said she'd  
drain me - like a vampire -

**ROCHESTER**

Think of her as dead, dead and  
buried. Say nothing!

Mason is silenced. Rochester puts the bloody sponge into  
Jane's hand.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

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

Rochester takes the candelabra. He is gone. Mason is  
staring at Jane. There is something about the pupils in his  
eyes that she finds deadly, chilling.

She dips the sponge in the bloody water and wipes away the trickling gore.

She hears a low moan. She looks over at the door to the inner chamber, aching to know the mystery behind it. Mason makes her start by taking her wrist. He is trying to say something. Jane puts her finger to her lips. She is begging him not to speak.

**INT. DAWN. THORNFIELD - THE THIRD FLOOR.**

Rochester and Dr Carter are carrying Mason down the stairs.

**DR CARTER**

I only wish I could have got here sooner. He'd not have bled so much.

**ROCHESTER**

Jane, make sure the way is clear.

Jane looks out on to the gallery. She is pale, drawn.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 72.

**EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GROUNDS.**

A carriage waits. Rochester lifts Mason in to Dr Carter. Jane hands in Mason's great coat. She stands back.

**ROCHESTER**

I'll ride over tomorrow to see how you do. Goodbye, Richard.

**MASON**

Fairfax - Let her treated as tenderly as may be -

**ROCHESTER**

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

The carriage goes. Jane prepares to go inside but Rochester walks her towards the orchard.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Come, Jane. That house is a dungeon, don't you feel it?

**JANE**

It seems to me a splendid mansion, sir.

**ROCHESTER**

It is slime and cobwebs.

**EXT. DAWN. THORNFIELD - THE ORCHARD.**

The orchard is a different world; the dawn light illuminating dewy trees. Rochester is silent. Jane is trying to fathom him.

**JANE**

Will Grace Poole stay here now?

**ROCHESTER**

Oh yes, don't trouble your head about her.

**JANE**

But sir -

**ROCHESTER**

Grace Poole is not the danger.

He walks off, pulling the heads off flowers as he passes.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

You've noticed my tender feelings  
for Miss Ingram?

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 73.

**JANE**

Yes sir.

**ROCHESTER**

Keep vigil with me again, the night  
before I marry. For now you've met  
my lovely one and you know her.  
She's a rare one, isn't she?

**JANE**

Yes sir.

**ROCHESTER**

A strapper, a real strapper; big  
and buxom...

He throws a cankered rose across the orchard. Jane manages to articulate her anxiety.

**JANE**

I'd do anything for you sir,  
anything that was right.

**ROCHESTER**  
**(GENTLY)**

And if I ever bid you do what was  
wrong, you'd turn to me, quiet  
and pale and say 'I cannot do  
it.' And you'd be as immutable as  
a fixed star.

Rochester, gazing at her, seems to have decided something.  
He turns a corner and is gone. Jane is left alone. We hear  
the sound of a blow.

**INT. DAY. GATESHEAD - THE WINDOW SEAT.**

The brutal face of John Reed, aged fourteen, triumphant  
after hitting Jane.

**JOHN**

That's for the look you had on  
your face.

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE BILLIARD ROOM.**

Jane enters as Rochester helps Blanche to line up a shot.  
He is leaning intimately over her. She coyly permits him.

**JANE**

Excuse me, sir.

Jane has ruined Blanche's shot.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 74.

**BLANCHE**

Does that creeping creature want  
you?

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE LONG GALLERY.**

Rochester has followed Jane out of the billiard room.

**JANE**

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

**ROCHESTER**

What to do?

Jane shows him the letter.

**JANE**

This is from my old nurse, Bessie. She says my cousin John Reed is dead. He ruined himself and has committed suicide. The news has so shocked his mother, my Aunt, that it's brought on a stroke.

**ROCHESTER**

What good can you do her?

**JANE**

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

**ROCHESTER**

Promise me you won't stay long.

**JANE**

Sir, it seems you are soon to be married.

**ROCHESTER**

What of it?

**JANE**

Adele should go to school.

**ROCHESTER**

To get her out of my bride's way who might otherwise trample her?

**JANE**

And I must seek another situation. I intend to advertise.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 75.

**ROCHESTER**

At your peril you advertise. Trust it to me. I'll find you a good situation in time.

He is on the point of returning to the billiard room.

**JANE**

And sir? Forgive me but I have had

no wages as yet.

**ROCHESTER**

How much do I owe you?

**JANE**

Fifteen pounds.

Rochester looks in his wallet.

**ROCHESTER**

Here's fifty.

**JANE**

That's too much.

**ROCHESTER**

Take your wages.

**JANE**

I cannot.

**ROCHESTER**

Then I only have a ten.

**JANE**

**(TAKING IT)**

Now you owe me five.

**ROCHESTER**

Just so. Come back for it quickly.  
Meantime, I shall safeguard it in  
here.

He taps the wallet, which is in his breast pocket.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Do you trust me to keep it, Jane?

**JANE**

**(SMILING)**

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

Rochester strides away, grinning. Jane turns.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 76.

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

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

**BESSIE**

Bless you! - I knew you'd come.

They embrace.

**JANE**

Bessie... I'm not too late? How is Mrs Reed?

**BESSIE**

She may linger yet a while. She's spoken of you daily. At first we couldn't tell what she was saying but when her speech came clear we heard 'Jane Eyre, get Jane Eyre.'

**JANE**

Shall I see her now?

**BESSIE**

I'll take you up directly. But look at you. What a lady you've become. Why you're almost pretty.

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

Jane takes her aunt's hand. Mrs Reed looks very near death.

**JANE**

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

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

**MRS REED**

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

**JANE**

Why do you hate her so?

**MRS REED**

Her mother. Reed's sister - his beloved. When news came of her death he wept like a fool. Sent for the baby. Sickly thing - not strong like mine. But Reed loved it. Kept it by his bed. Made me



vow to bring the creature up. Why  
did he not love mine?  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 77.

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

**MRS REED (CONT'D)**

Who are you?

**JANE**

I am Jane Eyre, Aunt.

**MRS REED**

You. Is there no one in the room?

Jane motions Bessie to go.

**JANE**

We are alone.

**MRS REED**

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

**JANE**

Please, don't think of it -

**MRS REED**

I am dying; I must get it out!

Mrs Reed indicates a box on her bedside table.

**MRS REED (CONT'D)**

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

Jane obeys. She reads the letter aloud.

**JANE**

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

Jane is stunned.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

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

**MRS REED**

Because I wrote and told him you  
had died of typhus at Lowood  
school. You fury. You were born to  
be my torment. I'll never forget  
how you turned on me and raged.

**(MORE)**

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 78.

**MRS REED (CONT'D)**

You called the names of the dead  
down upon me. I was afraid.

**JANE**

Forgive me.

**MRS REED**

You cursed me.

**JANE**

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

**MRS REED**

My life has been cursed.

**JANE**

Please, let us be reconciled.

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

**JANE (CONT'D)**

Then love me or hate me as you  
will. You have my full and free  
forgiveness. Now ask for God's -  
and be at peace.

Mrs Reed's eyes close.

**INT. DAY. GATESHEAD - THE RED ROOM.**

The morning sun is pouring in. Jane goes to the bed. She  
puts her hand upon it, gently, as if thanking her uncle for  
all he did. She notices a picture on the wall. A miniature  
of a brown-haired woman with elfin eyes.

Jane takes it off the wall. Bessie comes in.

**JANE**

My mother.

Bessie nods. A tear rolls down Jane's face. She clasps the picture, looking round the room.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

Why ever was I so afraid?

**EXT. DAY. A ROADSIDE.**

A coach pulls up in the lane near Thornfield. Jane gets out. We hear her voice.

**JANE (V.O.)**

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

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 79.

**EXT. EVENING. A SUMMER WOOD.**

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

**JANE (V.O.)**

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

**ROCHESTER (O.S.)**

There you are.

Jane turns. Rochester is sitting on the stile where they first met. For a moment, her every nerve is unstrung.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

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

**JANE**

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

Rochester laughs.

**ROCHESTER**

A true Janian reply. If I dared  
I'd touch you, to see if you were  
real...

Jane puts out her hand. Rochester takes it. He helps Jane  
over the stile.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Go home - stay your wandering  
feet at a friend's threshold.

Jane lets go of his hand.

**JANE**

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

Jane, knowing she has said too much, turns and runs over  
the fields towards Thornfield.

**INT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - MRS FAIRFAX'S PARLOUR**

Jane is on a low seat, Adele nestling close to her.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 80.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

We're expecting the announcement  
very soon. He went down to London  
only last week to buy her a new  
carriage.

**JANE**

Then we must accept it. He'll  
soon bring home his bride.

Mrs Fairfax nods.

**EXT. TWILIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE ORCHARD**

Jane is alone, drinking in the beauty of the evening -  
looking at the gardens as if she may never see them again.  
She turns a corner and sees Rochester staring intently at  
something. His back is to her. She is about to tiptoe away.

**ROCHESTER**

Come and look at this fellow, Jane.

Jane approaches, wondering how he has sensed her presence. Rochester is looking at a huge moth.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Look at his wings. He looks West Indian - I have never seen one like him, here. There; flown.

They watch the moth as it flies towards the house.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

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

**JANE**

I'll be sad to leave it.

**ROCHESTER**

Yes, but it can't be helped. I soon hope to be a bridegroom.

**JANE**

Have you found me a new situation, sir?

**ROCHESTER**

A situation, yes of course. It's the least I can do for a faithful paid subordinate such as yourself. You're to undertake the education of the five daughters of Mrs Dionysus O'Gall of Bitternut Lodge, Connaught.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 81.

**JANE**

Connaught?

**ROCHESTER**

You'll like Ireland. They're such warm-hearted people, they say.

**JANE**

It is a long way away, sir.

**ROCHESTER**

From what?

**JANE**

From here. From you.

**ROCHESTER**

We've been good friends, Jane haven't we? But with the Irish sea between us you'd soon forget me.

Jane's great distress escapes her.

**JANE**

I wish I could. I wish I'd never come here. I love Thornfield - I've lived a full life here. I've not been trampled on or petrified or buried with inferior minds. I've talked face to face with what I reverence, with what I delight in. I've known you Mr Rochester -

**ROCHESTER**

Then why must you be torn from me?

**JANE**

Because of your bride.

**ROCHESTER**

I have no bride.

**JANE**

But you will have.

**ROCHESTER**

Yes, I will.

**JANE**

Then I must go.

**ROCHESTER**

You must stay.

**JANE**

Do you think I could stay to become nothing to you? Am I an automaton, a machine without feelings?

**(MORE)**

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 82.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

Do you think that because I am poor, obscure, plain and little that I am soulless and heartless?

**ROCHESTER**

**JANE -**

**JANE**

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

Rochester takes Jane in his arms.

**ROCHESTER**

As we are.

Jane struggles away from him.

**JANE**

Let me go.

**ROCHESTER**

**NO -**

**JANE**

I'm a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you.

Rochester releases her. She stands in front of him.

**ROCHESTER**

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

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

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

I ask you to pass through life at my side. Jane, you are my equal and my likeness. It is you I intend to marry.

**JANE**

Are you mocking me?

**ROCHESTER**

Do you doubt me?

**JANE**

Entirely.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 83.

**ROCHESTER**

You have no faith in me?

**JANE**

Not a whit.

**ROCHESTER**

You little sceptic.

**JANE**

Your bride is Miss Ingram -

**ROCHESTER**

What love have I for Miss Ingram?  
What love has she for me? I  
caused a rumour to reach her that  
my fortune was lost and got  
instant coldness. I wanted to  
make you jealous, to move you to  
love me. It's you - you strange,  
unearthly thing. I love you as my  
own flesh. You - poor and obscure  
as you are - please accept me as  
your husband.

Jane begins to believe him.

**JANE**

Are you in earnest?

**ROCHESTER**

I must have you for my own.

**JANE**

You wish me to be your wife?

**ROCHESTER**

I swear it.

**JANE**

You love me.

**ROCHESTER**

I do.

**JANE**

Then sir, I will marry you.



They embrace.

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

**ROCHESTER**

It will atone. It will atone.

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

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 84.

**I/E. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE FRONT HALL**

It is teeming with rain. Rochester and Jane run to the front entrance. He holds his jacket around her. Lightning. They reach the dry hearth inside. Thunder. They are both euphoric, breathless, laughing.

**JANE**

I must go.

**ROCHESTER**

Good night. Good night.

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

**JANE**

Good night.

As Jane runs upstairs she sees Mrs Fairfax, deeply shocked.

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

Jane wears a lilac gown. Mrs Fairfax is very concerned.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Have you accepted him?

**JANE**

Yes.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Well I never would have thought.

Jane is hurt.

**JANE**

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

should love me?

**MRS FAIRFAX**

No, I've long noticed that you were a sort of pet of his. But you're so young and so little acquainted with men. I don't want to grieve you child, but let me put you on your guard. Gentlemen in his position... Let's just say they're not accustomed to marry their governesses. Until you are wed, distrust yourself as well as him. Please, keep him at a distance -

Jane has heard enough. She turns away.

**JANE**

Thank you.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 85.

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE HALL**

Jane, walking through, finds herself in Rochester's arms. She laughs as he raises her off the ground.

**ROCHESTER**

Is this my pale elf? This sunny faced girl with the radiant eyes?

**JANE**

It is I, Jane Eyre sir.

**ROCHESTER**

Soon to be Jane Rochester.

**JANE**

It can never be, sir. Human beings were not meant to enjoy complete happiness on this earth. It's too much like a fairy tale.

**ROCHESTER  
(KISSING HER)**

Let the fairy tale begin.

**INT. DAY. A HABERDASHER'S SHOP.**

Rochester is rolling out reams of beautiful silks. Jane gets more uncomfortable as she looks at them.

**ROCHESTER**

This morning I wrote to my banker  
in London to send certain jewels.  
In a day or two I hope to pour  
them into you lap -

**JANE**

Oh, no sir -

**ROCHESTER**

I will put the diamond chain  
around your neck myself -

**JANE**

I don't want jewels -

**ROCHESTER**

I'll dress you in these satins -

**JANE**

Then you won't know me. I'll not  
be Jane Eyre any longer but an  
ape in a harlequin's jacket. Put  
them away.

Jane pushes the silks away.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 86.

**ROCHESTER**

Well for cool native impudence  
and pure innate pride, you  
haven't your equal.

**JANE**

I'm naturally proud. And hard and  
flinty. You ought to know what  
sort of bargain you've made while  
you've still got time to rescind  
it. I want only one thing from  
you, Mr Rochester.

**ROCHESTER**

And what's that?

**JANE**

Your regard.

Jane puts her arm through Rochester's. He smiles.

**ROCHESTER**

It's your time now, little tyrant  
but it'll soon be mine and when I  
have seized you, to have and to  
hold, I'll attach you to a chain,  
like this...

Rochester flicks his watch into the air.

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

A summer gale. The moan of the wind sounds almost human.  
The light is sickly, nightmarish.

A great box sits on the table, which Jane is opening.  
Adele, Sophie and Mrs Fairfax are all looking on. Jane  
pulls out a pearl coloured wedding gown. She is dismayed at  
its opulence.

She holds it up to herself. Adele starts to play with the  
great veil. She wraps it round herself. She becomes caught  
in it, tangled, distressed.

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

**JANE**

Adele?

Jane wakes. There is a candle alight at the end of her bed.  
Her eyes focus. Her wardrobe is open. Jane is unnerved.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

Adele, is that you?  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 87.

A form emerges, a woman, tall and gaunt, with thick, black  
hair hanging down her back. She is dressed in a nightgown -  
like a shroud. Over her head, she wears Jane's bridal veil;  
a phantom bride.

Jane is paralysed with terror.

The form takes the veil and slowly tears it in half;  
bruised arms, dirt, predatory nails, neglect. The last  
thing to be revealed is the woman's face, pale and ghastly.  
Her eyes are glittering with hatred.

The figure takes the candle and bends down to Jane. Her  
intention looks deadly. Jane's breath catches. She cannot  
breathe.

The figure moves closer, then blows out the candle.  
Darkness.

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

Jane wakes, lying half out of the bed. The veil is over her. She flings it away from her face. Jane sits, her terror dawning. Her breath comes in great dry sobs. She is shocked to find herself still alive.

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

Jane is waiting, pale with anxiety. A man on horseback approaches, a great dog at his side; Rochester. He is grinning.

He pulls Jane up on the horse in front of him. She curls into his arms, desperate for his comfort and his strength. Rochester senses something is wrong. He slows the horse.

**ROCHESTER**

What is it?

**JANE**

I'm afraid.

**INT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - JANE'S BEDROOM.**

Rochester holds the torn veil in his hands. He is aghast. He cannot think what to say.

**ROCHESTER**

Jane, this is the only explanation.  
It must have been half-dream, half-reality. A woman did enter your room last night and that woman was - must have been - Grace Poole -  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 88.

**JANE**

It was not Grace Poole.

Rochester keeps talking over her.

**ROCHESTER**

You know how strange she is. What did she do to me? To Mason? In a

state between sleeping and waking -

**JANE**

I was not asleep.

**ROCHESTER**

You noticed her entrance and her actions but you've ascribed to her an appearance different from her own. That was your nightmare -

**JANE**

I know what I saw.

**ROCHESTER**

I see you'd ask why I keep such a woman in my house. When we've been married a year and a day, I promise I'll tell you. Are you satisfied Jane? Do you accept my solution?

Jane clearly doesn't. Rochester takes her in his arms.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Dear God. It was only the veil...

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - ADELE'S ROOM.**

Jane is in an unadorned pearl wedding gown.

**ADELE**

Mademoiselle...

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

**SOPHIE**

Please, you must look.

Jane gazes stupefied at the stranger in the mirror.

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE HALL.**

Rochester is waiting at the bottom of the stairs for Jane. She slows when she sees him. She finds she cannot speak. Neither can he.

Mrs Fairfax is by the door. Jane can't find words for her.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 89.

**ROCHESTER**

Come.

Rochester grips her hand. They quit the house.

**EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GROUNDS.**

Rochester, grimly resolute, is striding at a pace Jane can hardly follow. Her satin shoes are muddy. She is becoming breathless. A rook flies over their heads, cawing.

**EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE CHURCH.**

Rochester is striding purposefully towards a small church of ancient design. Jane stumbles. Rochester is contrite.

Jane tries to collect herself. She looks up to the sky. The rook wheels around the spire. She takes Rochester's hand.

**INT. DAY. THE CHURCH**

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

**WOOD**

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

There is not a sound. Rochester still doesn't look at Jane. The clergyman prepares the rings.

**WOOD (CONT'D)**

Edward Fairfax Rochester, do you

**TAKE -**

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

**BRIGGS**

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

Rochester moves, shaken.

**ROCHESTER**

Proceed.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 90.

**BRIGGS**

The ceremony is quite broken off.  
An insuperable impediment to this  
marriage exists.

**ROCHESTER**

Proceed.

**BRIGGS**

Mr Rochester has a wife now  
living.

Wood is utterly dismayed.

**ROCHESTER  
(SHOUTS)**

Where is your proof?

Briggs starts to read out a document.

**BRIGGS (O.S.)**

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.

Jane looks at Rochester. She forces him to look at her. He  
denies nothing; defies everything.

**BRIGGS (CONT'D)**

The record of the marriage will be  
found in the register of that  
church - a copy of it is now in my  
possession. Signed, Richard Mason.

Rochester turns to Briggs.

**ROCHESTER**

That does not prove that my wife  
is still living.

**BRIGGS**

She was living two months ago.



**ROCHESTER**

How do you know?

**BRIGGS**

I have a witness to the fact.

**ROCHESTER**

Produce him or go to hell.

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

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 91.

**MASON**

Good God -

**WOOD**

Sir, you are in a sacred place -

Mason flinches away. Rochester swallows his rage.

**ROCHESTER**

What have you to say?

**MASON**

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

A grim smile contorts Rochester's lips. He turns towards Jane. She remains where she was abandoned - at the altar - tiny, under the vaulted arch. The bouquet falls from her hand. Rochester walks to her.

**ROCHESTER**

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

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

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Come, Jane, come all of you and meet Mrs Poole's charming patient. Come and meet my wife.

The sun outside is blinding. Jane closes her eyes.

**I/E. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE ENTRANCE / HALL**

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

Mrs Fairfax, Adele, Sophie, Martha and Leah are waiting. Adele runs forward. Rochester stops her in her tracks.

**ROCHESTER**

Get back! Do not come near! Go,  
all of you - keep your  
congratulations - they come  
fifteen years too late!

Adele has crumpled into frightened tears. Mrs Fairfax has her hand over her mouth, pale with shock. Jane meets her eye as Rochester pulls her up the stairs. A revelation. Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 92.

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE THIRD FLOOR.**

The tapestried room. Rochester glances at Mason. He unlocks the inner door with one hand; the other won't let go of Jane. Grace Poole sits by a strongly guarded fire, stirring something in a pot.

Rochester leads Jane and the men into the room. There is no window, no furniture except for Grace's chair; only a mattress on the floor.

**GRACE**

Sir, you can't be bringing folk  
in here. It's madness.

Bertha Antoinetta Mason stands, amazed at the sight of her visitors. She wears a white shift. There are black rook feathers twined in her hair; her only ornament.

**ROCHESTER**

This clothed hyena is my wife.

Bertha's pose is dignified, her expression grows triumphant. She approaches Rochester - her eyes locked with Jane's. Jane gazes: fear, disgust, compassion.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

I was duped into marriage with  
this lunatic fifteen years ago.

Briggs and Wood are deeply repelled.

**WOOD**

Let us go. We have seen enough.

Bertha puts her arm through Rochester's; lays her head on his shoulder; smiles at Jane, magnanimous in her victory.

**ROCHESTER**

My own demon, Bertha.

With shocking speed and strength Bertha lays her nails into Rochester's cheek. He struggles with her.

Grace assists Rochester. They do not hit; they subdue. Bertha's attack is effectively contained. They have her on her knees, her arms behind her.

Bertha lifts her head and screams. If a scream could express the agony of a whole soul then this would. Jane turns on her heels. She stumbles, finds the door, exits.

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE SECOND FLOOR.**

Jane is coming down the stairs. Briggs is at her side. Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 93.

**BRIGGS**

You, madam, are clearly not to blame. Your uncle will be glad to hear it.

Jane looks at Briggs, only dimly comprehending him.

**BRIGGS (CONT'D)**

You wrote to your uncle, did you not? To inform him you were going to marry Mr Rochester? Mr Mason was staying with him when your letter came.

Briggs gets only a blank look of puzzlement from Jane.

**BRIGGS (CONT'D)**

Mr John Eyre has been the Madeira correspondent of the Mason trading house for some years. You can imagine his distress when Mason revealed the real state of matters.

Jane starts walking towards the sanctuary of her room.

**BRIGGS (CONT'D)**

He would have come himself but  
I'm sad to tell you that his  
health is in mortal decline. He  
implored Mr Mason to prevent this  
false marriage and referred him  
to me for assistance. I only hope  
that he survives long enough to  
hear that you are safe.

Jane opens her door. She turns to Briggs.

**JANE**

Thank you.

She shuts the door on Briggs and on the world.

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

Jane sits on her bed. She mechanically starts taking off  
the blond square she has worn as a veil.

**CUT TO:**

Jane, standing in stillness with the pearl dress crumpled  
around her feet.

**CUT TO:**

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 94.

Jane has taken a black stuff dress off its hangar. She  
slowly puts her arms around it, as if it is her old self.  
She holds it, her eyes staring at nothing.

**CUT TO:**

Jane in her underclothes, sitting down on the bed. She  
closes her eyes.

**EXT. DAY. A DRY RIVER BED.**

Jane lies curled up on a rock at the bottom of a dried-up  
river bed. All of nature is suspended in stillness.

Far away, we hear the sound of a flood loosened in the  
remote mountains. We hear the sound of the torrent

approach.

Jane doesn't move. She has no will to flee. The sound of rushing water pounds in her ears. She lies, waiting to be dashed away. We see the flood approach and hit. A dazzling whiteness of water and foam.

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

Jane's room is entirely unchanged except for the fact that it is full of river water from floor to ceiling. Her bedding, furniture and belongings all sit in the room as normal - underwater.

The light shines murkily in through the window to reveal Jane floating, suspended. Her hair and her garments trail out. She is alive. But she is drowned.

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

The moon has risen. Jane is lying in an exhausted doze on the bed. She wakes; sits up. She is faint. She recovers herself. She knows what she must do.

**CUT TO:**

Jane, dressed in black in the silver light, putting her brush, comb and brooch in a bag. She looks in her purse. She has some coins.

**INT. DAY. THORNFIELD - SECOND FLOOR.**

Jane unbolts her door, takes a step out of her room, and stumbles into Rochester's arms. He has been keeping guard.

**ROCHESTER**

**JANE -**

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 95.

His cheek has been cut by Bertha's nails.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Five minutes more of that death-like hush and I'd have forced the lock.

He examines her face. He is desperate.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

No tears. Your heart has been  
weeping blood. Forgive me.

Rochester buries his head in Jane's arms. She automatically  
comforts him.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

How could I? I am a worthless  
sinner. Don't spare me. Rain your  
tears up on me.

**JANE**

I cannot.

**ROCHESTER**

I deserve a hail of fire.

Jane extricates herself from his embrace.

**JANE**

I'm tired and sick. I need some  
water.

Rochester perceives Jane's inanition. He carries her down  
the gallery. Jane clings on to her bag of belongings. She  
has nothing else left.

**INT. NIGHT. THORNFIELD - THE LIBRARY.**

Rochester has lain Jane in front of the fire. She forces  
herself to eat. Rochester gives her wine. She sips.

**ROCHESTER**

How are you now?

**JANE**

Much better, sir. I shall be well  
again soon.

Rochester paces away to the fire. He comes back. Stoops his  
head down to Jane to kiss her. She turns her head away.

**ROCHESTER**

I know you. You are thinking.  
Talking is no use; you are  
thinking how to act.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 96.

**JANE**

All is changed, sir. I must change too.

**ROCHESTER**

Yes. There is no doubt that we both must change. I was wrong ever to keep you here; this narrow stone vault with its one real fiend. I'll shut it up. I'll pay Mrs Poole two hundred a year to care for its inmate and then no one will be harmed when she is prompted to burn people, to stab them, to bite the flesh from their bones -

**JANE**

Sir - you speak of her with hate - it is cruel. She cannot help being mad.

**ROCHESTER**

It's not because she's mad that I hate her. If you were mad do you think that I'd hate you?

**JANE**

I do.

**ROCHESTER**

Then you know nothing about me, nothing about the way I love. Your mind is my treasure - and if it were broken it would be my treasure still. You are my sympathy, my better self, my angel. I will wrap my whole existence round you. Let us leave here tomorrow. Come with me - as my wife.

**JANE**

No.

**ROCHESTER**

I'll pledge you my fidelity -

**JANE**

You can't.

**ROCHESTER**

You'll live a happy, most innocent life -

**JANE**

I must leave you, sir.

Rochester cannot take this in.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 97.

**ROCHESTER**

Don't you love me?

**JANE**

I do love you - But I mustn't show it or speak it ever again. I must begin a new existence - strange scenes among strange faces. I must part from you.

**ROCHESTER**

Must be a part of me; that's what you mean. You are my wife, Jane. In truth -

**JANE**

You have a wife already.

**ROCHESTER**

I was tricked, duped into wedlock with that demon-hate, that harlot, that succubus upstairs. My father wanted her money and so I was sent to Spanish Town and the match was made. I hardly spoke with her. I was dazzled, ignorant, raw. My senses were besotted and I married her - gross, grovelling mole-eyed blockhead that I was.

Rochester sits, staring at the fire.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

I lived with her for four years. She dragged me through all the degrading agonies which attend those bound to the intemperate and unchaste. Her excesses developed germs of madness and the doctors shut her up. One night, unable to bear her screaming hate and knowing I could never be rid of her, I put a gun to my head to kill myself.



Jane is both appalled and moved.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

I would have pulled the trigger, died in that tropical place but for a breeze which blew in from the sea and smelt of home. With it, I came to my senses. Bertha Antoinetta Mason had abused my long suffering, sullied my name, outraged my honour and blighted my youth. It was enough. At that moment, as I decided to live, she ceased to be my wife.

**(MORE)**

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 98.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Only my father and brother knew of the marriage and by then they were both dead. I let my connection with her be buried in oblivion and I brought her here. I have seen that she's cared for as her condition demands and that is all that God and humanity asks.

**JANE**

I earnestly pity you, sir.

He sees that Jane is silently crying.

**ROCHESTER**

Jane, it's not pity that I see in your face. It's not pity -

**JANE**

Do not say it -

**ROCHESTER**

It is love.

**JANE**

**STOP -**

They are holding each other.

**ROCHESTER**

I was wrong to deceive you. It was cowardly. I should have appealed to your spirit - as I do now - should have opened my life, described my

hunger for a better existence -  
shown you my chains. I give you my  
life. I give you my pledge. Please,  
be my wife.

**JANE**

I can not.

**ROCHESTER**

You would be my equal.

**JANE**

How?

**ROCHESTER**

I would make it so.

**JANE**

You once told me that hiring a  
mistress is the next worse thing  
to buying a slave.

**ROCHESTER**

Not my mistress -  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 99.

**JANE**

I would not degrade you by having  
you live with a slave.

**ROCHESTER**

I said wife, my wife -

Jane tries to rise. Rochester keeps hold of her hand. He  
gently pulls her down again. Comforts her.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Do you really mean to leave me?

**JANE**

I do.

**ROCHESTER**

Jane...

He kisses her gently, lovingly.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Do you mean it now?

**JANE**

I do.

He runs his hands over her, with great tenderness. Jane offers no resistance.

**ROCHESTER**

And now?

Jane nods.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Oh Jane...

Rochester lays her down.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

What friends would you offend by living with me? Who would be injured? Who would care?

Jane is almost lost. She speaks in a small voice.

**JANE**

I would.

**ROCHESTER**

Jane, it would not be wicked to love me...

**JANE**

It would be to obey you. I care for myself.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 100.

Jane's resolve grows. She resists.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

The more alone, the more friendless, unsustained I am, the more I must respect myself -

**ROCHESTER**

Will you listen to me?

**JANE**

I must listen to myself -

**ROCHESTER**

Will you hear reason?

**JANE**

Let me go -

**ROCHESTER**

Because if you won't I'll try violence.

Jane instantly stops resisting. She looks at him with utter shock. He is above her.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

I could bend you with my finger and thumb; a mere reed you feel in my hands.

Jane neither moves nor speaks.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

But your eye; resolute, free. What ever I do with this cage I cannot get at you. And it is you, soul, that I want. Why don't you come of your own free will here, to my heart? Oh come, Jane, come -

**JANE**

**(CRYING OUT)**

God help me!

All the life seems to go out of Rochester. He lets Jane go. She pulls herself away from him. She stands. He remains, his face buried.

She goes to the door. Rochester turns his eyes to her.

**ROCHESTER**

You have never called me by my name. My name is Edward.

Jane cannot speak it. She turns away.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 101.

**EXT. DAWN. THORNFIELD - THE GROUNDS.**

First light. Jane is running; flushed, breathless, her dress soaked with dew. She has her bag of belongings over her shoulder. She trips; falls to her knees.

She looks back. For a moment she seems paralysed. She returns her gaze to the route ahead. Her need to escape is so great that she crawls forwards until she is able to

raise herself to her feet.

She reaches the stile; lifts herself on to it; puts her arms around the post. She holds it, as if it were beloved. Her eyes close. We hear the sound of a winter blizzard.

**INT. NIGHT. JANE'S COTTAGE.**

Jane opens her eyes. She is sitting at her fireside. Outside, a snowstorm howls. On her knee is a sketchbook. She looks down at it.

Rochester's dark eye is beginning to appear on her paper. She puts a line through it; scribbles it out, blinding him. She stands up, trying to escape her thoughts. She whispers:

**JANE**

Edward.

There is a loud knock on the door. Jane starts.

**CUT TO:**

Jane opening the door. Rochester is there, standing in the frozen hurricane and howling darkness.

**ROCHESTER**

Jane.

Jane pulls him inside. She falls into his arms. They embrace passionately. Jane is actively pulling him towards her, delirious with love and longing.

**CUT TO:**

The exact same shot of Jane opening the door. St John Rivers is there, having waded through the drifting snow.

**JANE**

Mr St John - What on earth brings you away from your hearth on a night like this? Has anything happened? There's no bad news I hope?

**ST JOHN**

How easily alarmed you are.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 102.

He takes off his cloak; stamps the snow off his boots.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**

The snow was up to my waist at one point.

**JANE**

You are recklessly rash about your own health.

**ST JOHN**

Nonsense.

St John's eyes alight on Jane's charcoal drawing. Jane snatches it away too late. There is a moment of silence.

**JANE**

Why are you come?

**ST JOHN**

An inhospitable question.

**JANE**

I mean on a night like this -

**ST JOHN**

I got tired of my mute books and empty rooms. Besides I've been told half a story and I'm most impatient to find out the end.

**JANE**

Please...

Jane motions to St John to sit. He doesn't. She becomes increasingly uneasy as he speaks.

**ST JOHN**

Twenty years ago, a poor curate fell in love with a rich man's daughter and married her. She was disowned by her family and two years later the rash pair were both dead. They left a daughter which charity received into her lap - as cold as that snow drift I almost stuck fast in. Charity carried the friendless thing to the house of its rich maternal relations. It was reared by an aunt-in-law; I come to names now - Mrs Reed of Gateshead.

Jane starts. She is on her feet.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**

Mrs Reed kept the orphan ten years and at the end of that time she was sent to Lowood school.

**(MORE)**

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 103.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**

It seems her career there was very honourable. She became a teacher like yourself, and left it, like yourself, to be a governess. She undertook the education of the ward of a certain Mr Rochester -

**JANE**

Mr Rivers! -

**ST JOHN**

I can guess your feelings but hear me to the end. Of Mr Rochester's character I know nothing but he professed to offer honourable marriage to this young girl and at the very altar she discovered that he had a wife yet alive. His subsequent conduct is a matter of pure conjecture but when the governess was enquired after it was discovered that she had fled Thornfield Hall and no trace of her has since been found. Now isn't that an odd tale?

**JANE**

Since you know so much, perhaps you can tell me how he is.

**ST JOHN**

Who?

**JANE**

Mr Rochester; how is he?

**ST JOHN**

I'm ignorant of all concerning him.

St John opens his pocket book and removes a piece of paper.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**

Well, since you won't ask the

governess's name, I must tell you. I have it written down here in black and white.

He hands her the paper. On it are doodled the heads of some of her pupils. She has absently written Jane Eyre in the margin several times.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**

A solicitor named Briggs wrote to me of a Jane Eyre. I knew a Jane Elliott. This paper resolved my suspicion into certainty.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 104.

**JANE**

The solicitor - Mr Briggs - does he have any news of Mr Rochester?

**ST JOHN**

Are you not going to enquire why he has gone to such lengths to find you?

**JANE**

What does he want with me?

**ST JOHN**

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

**JANE**

What?

**ST JOHN**

You are rich; quite an heiress.

Silence. Jane is flabbergasted.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**

Your fortune is vested in the English funds; Briggs has the will and all the necessary documents. You can enter on immediate possession.

At last, Jane looks questioningly up at him.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**



Your forehead unbends at last; I thought you were turning to stone. Perhaps now you will ask how much you are worth.

**JANE**

How much am I worth?

**ST JOHN**

Oh a trifle. Twenty thousand pounds - but what of that?

The news literally takes Jane's breath away.

**JANE**

Twenty thousand pounds?

St John begins to laugh at Jane's reaction. She has never seen him laugh before.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 105.

**ST JOHN**

If you'd committed a murder and I'd found you out, you could scarcely look more aghast.

**JANE**

There must be some mistake. It's two thousand, surely.

**ST JOHN**

It's twenty. You look desperately miserable about it, I must say.

Jane still cannot take it in. She frowns in disbelief.

**JANE**

Why did Mr Briggs write to you?

**ST JOHN**

You see, that is the strange thing. It makes me wonder what power or providence led you to our door. Your name is Jane Eyre.

**JANE**

Yes.

**ST JOHN**

Then I'm your namesake. I was christened St John Eyre Rivers.

**JANE**

St John Eyre -

**ST JOHN**

My mother had two brothers, one was a clergyman, your father, the other was John Eyre of Madeira. Mr Briggs wrote to inform us that the clergyman's daughter was lost. I have been able to find her out; that is all.

**JANE**

Your mother was my father's sister?

**ST JOHN**

Yes.

**JANE**

My uncle John was your uncle John?

**ST JOHN**

That is correct.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 106.

**JANE**

So you, Diana and Mary -

**ST JOHN**

We are cousins, yes.

Jane is deeply moved.

**JANE**

Oh, I am glad! - I am glad!

She throws her arms around St John. Tears of happiness start to flow. He, finding it peculiar to be held, gently tries to calm her.

**ST JOHN**

Here you are neglecting essential points to pursue trifles. You were utterly downhearted when I told you that you were rich and now, for a matter of no moment, you are deliriously happy.

**JANE**

Of no moment? You have sisters and maybe don't care for a cousin but I have nobody. I have been alone, always. And now three relations are born into my world full grown. Oh, I am glad. You, who saved my life -

**ST JOHN**

You must try to tranquillise your feelings.

Jane finally releases him, still radiant with joy.

**JANE**

Write to Diana and Mary. Tell them to hand in notice and come home. They will have five thousand each and so will you.

**ST JOHN**

I've told you the news too quickly. You're confused.

**JANE**

Don't put me out of patience, cousin. I am rational enough. Twenty thousand divided equally between the nieces and nephews of our uncle, gives five to each.

**ST JOHN**

This is acting on first impulse. You don't know what it is to have

**WEALTH -**

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 107.

**JANE**

And you cannot imagine - family - I never had a home. I never had brothers and sisters -

A terrible thought occurs to her.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

You are not reluctant to own me, are you?

St John takes her hand. She has surprised and moved him. He looks at her, seeing her anew.

**ST JOHN**

Jane, I will be your brother.

**EXT. DAY. SPRING - THE MOORS.**

Jane, Diana and Mary are running over the moors. Mary has a kite. They are as delighted as children.

**INT. DAY. MOOR HOUSE - THE KITCHEN.**

Jane is sitting at the table letting Diana style her hair. They all have new summer dresses on. There is a lightness to all three as if a great weight has been lifted from their shoulders.

Diana is setting Jane's hair into curls like her own. Jane looks at herself in the mirror; softer, gentler, different.

**INT. NIGHT. MOOR HOUSE - THE PARLOUR.**

The girls each have a candle. St John kisses Mary. He kisses Diana.

**ST JOHN**

Good night.

**DIANA**

You call Jane your sister but you don't treat her as such. You should kiss her too.

Jane turns to Diana, embarrassed.

**JANE**

Di, you are very provoking.

As she turns back, she finds St John's face right in front of her. He kisses her. A kiss with no warmth; an experiment. He examines its effect. He is satisfied.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 108.

**ST JOHN**

Good night.

**INT. NIGHT. MOOR HOUSE - JANE'S BEDROOM.**

Jane closes the door. She puts her hand across her lips.

The icy kiss has agonised her with the full force of her loneliness. She curls up in a ball, desperate.

**EXT. EVENING. MOOR HOUSE - THE GARDEN.**

A glorious summer sunset. Jane is digging at a flower bed, putting all her passion into the task. She is flushed with exertion. St John watches.

**ST JOHN**

You are wasted here.

**JANE**

Am I not being useful?

**ST JOHN**

You should look beyond Moor House, beyond the selfish calm and comfort of affluence.

**JANE**

Beyond to what?

**ST JOHN**

I go to India in six weeks.

**JANE**

So soon? -

St John draws Jane away from her work.

**ST JOHN**

I can see what your gifts are and why they were given. Come with me.

Jane is utterly crestfallen.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**

God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife. You are formed for labour not for love. I want to claim you - not for my pleasure but for God's service.

**JANE**

I'm not fit for it. I have no vocation.

**ST JOHN**

You're far too humble.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 109.

**JANE**

St John have mercy. I feel my  
mind shrinking -

**ST JOHN**

Don't be afraid. You are diligent,  
faithful, docile, courageous,  
gentle and heroic. Cease to  
mistrust yourself. I trust you  
unreservedly. Let me give you time  
to think. But know this; in you, I  
recognise a fellow soul, a soul  
that would revel in the flame and  
excitement of sacrifice.

Jane is chilled to the bone by his words. St John leaves  
the garden and walks away over the moors.

**CUT TO:**

Jane leaning against the garden wall, trying to think,  
trying to compose herself. The sun is setting.

**INT. NIGHT. MOOR HOUSE - THE PARLOUR.**

Jane carrying a candle, opens the door. St John is at the  
table working by lamp light. The moon shines brightly in.

**JANE**

I used to long for a life of  
action, to overleap the horizon, to  
move in the world of men. Maybe God  
is giving me this. And what is  
there for me here? Pain and longing  
for what can't be. I don't know how  
long I would survive in India. My  
frame isn't strong. But I'll go  
with you, if I may go free.

**ST JOHN**

Free?

**JANE**

You and I had better not marry.

**ST JOHN**

Why not?

**JANE**

Because I am your sister.

**ST JOHN**

But you'll go with me.

**JANE**

Conditionally - as your curate.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 110.

**ST JOHN**

Jane, I don't need a curate; I  
need a wife.

**JANE**

I must have my heart and mind  
free, my own self to turn to. I  
couldn't become part of you -

**ST JOHN**

A part of me you must become or the  
whole bargain is void. How can I, a  
man not yet thirty take out to  
India a girl of nineteen, unless  
she is my wife? Don't offer God  
half a sacrifice. He must have all.  
And undoubtedly enough of love  
would follow to make the union  
right, even in your eyes.

Jane is shocked.

**JANE**

Enough of love?

**ST JOHN**

Yes, quite enough.

**JANE**

St John, I scorn your idea of  
love. I scorn the counterfeit  
sentiment you offer and I scorn  
you when you offer it!

St John is mortified. A slow rage begins to boil in him.

**ST JOHN**

I've uttered nothing that  
deserves scorn.

**JANE**

Forgive me but the very name of

love is an apple of discord  
between us. My dear cousin,  
please abandon your scheme of  
marriage.

**ST JOHN**

No; and if you reject it, it's  
not me you deny but God.

Jane is stung. St John has turned from her. His face is icy  
in the moonlight.

**JANE**

Do not be angry with me please.  
It makes me wretched. I want us  
to be friends.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 111.

**ST JOHN**

We are friends. I hope we can be  
more.

**JANE**

I cannot come as your wife.

**ST JOHN**

Why this refusal? It makes no  
sense!

**JANE**

If I were to marry you, you'd  
kill me. You're killing me now.

**ST JOHN**

**(FURIOUS)**

I'd kill you? I am killing you?  
Your words are violent, unfeminine  
and untrue -

**JANE**

You'd kill me without drawing any  
blood or receiving on your  
conscience any stain of crime.

**ST JOHN**

What nonsense is this?

**JANE**

You'd experience no pain - but I  
tell you it would kill me!



**ST JOHN**

Why?

**JANE**

Because I would inevitably come to conceive love for you, because you are so talented and good, because there is such grandeur in your look. You wouldn't want this strange and torturing love; if I showed it you would find it unbecoming. And my lot would be wretched.

**ST JOHN  
(UNDERSTANDING HER)**

Jane...

**JANE**

You're a good man, but you forget the feelings of little people. We'd better keep out of your way lest you trample us.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 112.

St John's anger has faded. He is compassionate. This is far harder to resist.

**ST JOHN**

I wouldn't trample you. You'd walk at my side towards God's altar. He'd be your solace, heaven your reward. We seek to do the greatest work, to open death's gates, to save souls. Love God Jane, love God.

St John puts his hand on her forehead; Christlike. Jane is falling under his power.

**ST JOHN (CONT'D)**

Give up your heart to Him. He is love.

Jane falls to her knees. St John's face is angelic.

**JANE**

If I were sure; if I were certain -

She suddenly hears a voice: Rochester's; clear, urgent.

**ROCHESTER (O.S.)**

Jane! Jane! Jane!

She springs away from St John, crying:

**JANE**

Oh God, what is it?

She looks wildly about the room; rushes to the window.

**ST JOHN**

What have you heard? What can you see?

Jane glances at him, seeing him for what he is; a cold, controlling man. She shouts:

**JANE**

I am coming!

She runs out, leaving St John aghast, behind her.

**EXT. NIGHT. THE MOOR.**

Jane runs on to the moors.

**JANE**

Wait for me!

She looks all around her at the moonlit landscape.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 113.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

Where are you?

The moors send her question back in an echo. We see Jane's face. Her path is clear.

**EXT. DAY. WHITCROSS MOOR.**

Jane is waiting for the coach at the crossroads where she arrived, almost a year before. It comes pounding towards her. She hails it. This time, the coachman respectfully descends to take her bag and help her on. She is so confident and so changed that he doesn't recognise her.

**EXT. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE GROUNDS.**

Jane is walking through the orchard. It is wild, neglected. Its untended state worries her. She looks up. Rooks are circling, cawing.

**CUT TO:**

Jane finds herself at the side of the house. The ground is pitted with weeds. The windows are dark. She half runs round to the front. What she sees takes her breath away.

The great walls and battlements are blackened with fire. Windows gape on a hollow shell. The inside of the house has collapsed. Through the hanging door, only its charred remains can be seen. Weeds grow through utter devastation. Jane gazes in horror and distress.

**I/E. DAY. MRS FAIRFAX'S COTTAGE**

Jane knocks on the door. Mrs Fairfax opens it.

**JANE**

They sent me from the inn. I've been up at the house -

Jane can say no more.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Come in, come in.

**JANE**

Is he dead?

Mrs Fairfax takes Jane in her arms.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

No, no. Mr Rochester still lives.

Jane is crying tears of relief.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 114.

**JANE**

Tell me - please -

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Why did you run away in the night like that? I would have helped. I would have helped.

**INT. DAY. MRS FAIRFAX'S COTTAGE**

Mrs Fairfax has sat Jane on a settle near the fire.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

He sought you as if you were a lost and precious jewel. He didn't rest. And as days turned into weeks and no word came, he grew quite savage in his disappointment.

**JANE**

He stayed at Thornfield?

**MRS FAIRFAX**

Didn't leave the house...

**I/E. DAY. THORNFIELD - THE FRONT DOOR/GROUNDS.**

Rochester, unshaven and unkempt is standing at his threshold.

**MRS FAIRFAX (V.O.)**

Shut himself up like a hermit. He only went out at night, when he walked like a ghost through the grounds.

We see what he is looking at: an open carriage piled with luggage, into which Mrs Fairfax is helping Adele. Leah and Sophie are already sitting inside, dressed for a journey.

**MRS FAIRFAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)**

He'd have no one near him. Adele was sent off to school. He placed me here. Only John and Martha stayed - and Mrs Poole of course.

Adele looks back at Rochester with tears in her eyes. He walks across the dark hall and slams the library doors.

**EXT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - THE ORCHARD.**

Rochester, in his shirt sleeves, is looking at the tree where Jane promised him her hand - now dying, cleft by lightning. The rising moon inhabits the sky.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 115.

**MRS FAIRFAX (V.O.)**

It was harvest time when it

happened. No one knows how she got out.

Rochester hears a cry from the top floor. He sets off, a look of finality on his face.

**INT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - THE KITCHEN.**

Grace Poole is asleep, her empty jug of gin beside her.

**MRS FAIRFAX (V.O.)**

My theory is that when Mrs Poole was asleep, having taken too much of the gin and water...

Rochester takes Grace's keys.

**INT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - THE THIRD FLOOR**

Rochester opens the door to the inner chamber.

**MRS FAIRFAX (V.O.)**

... The mad lady must have stolen her keys and let herself out.

Bertha Antoinetta Mason, standing in the last patch of daylight thrown down from her skylight, sees that it is Rochester. She calmly walks towards him.

Rochester graciously bows, indicating that she may leave. Bertha glides past him. She is free.

**INT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - THE GALLERY**

Bertha walks past an elegant vase. She tips it to the floor. It smashes. Rochester pays it no heed.

**INT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - THE LIBRARY.**

Rochester has stood Bertha at his desk. A case of jewels is open before her. She has put on a tiara, a diamond necklace, bracelets. She is gazing at a ruby brooch. She turns to Rochester. His expression is calm, resigned. Bertha begins to laugh.

She takes the candelabra from the table. She admires herself in the mirror; her white shift, the black feathers, the jewels. She holds up the candelabra and sets the huge

curtains alight.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 116.

Rochester is impassive; he does nothing to stop her. As she passes, Rochester realises he is bleeding. She has run the brooch pin across him.

**INT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - THE HALL/STAIRS.**

Bertha knocks a lamp onto the floor. The oil springs into flames, licking the tapestries and the paintings. Rochester sees his ancestors begin to burn.

**INT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - THE SECOND FLOOR**

The conflagration is growing. Rochester sees Bertha leaving Jane's room. As he passes, he sees everything inside it being consumed by fire. He can't bear to look.

**EXT. EVENING. THORNFIELD - THE LEADS.**

Bertha is watching the rooks. Rochester goes to the edge of the roof. Bertha looks at him. The invitation is clear. Rochester is ready to die.

Bertha sees the rooks wheeling away. She runs at the edge of the roof. Rochester sees her intention too late. He puts out his arm to stop her.

For the perfect fraction of a second, Bertha flies. Rochester sees her fall; almost falls himself - saves himself.

Life reawakens in him. Behind him, he sees Grace Poole, coughing, crawling up through the door.

**GRACE**

Antoinetta?

Responsibility floods over him. He goes to her side, lifts Grace, helps her down the stairs.

**MRS FAIRFAX (V.O.)**

He didn't leave the house until everyone was out. Some say it was a just judgement on him for having her confined there all those years but for my part, I pity him.

**INT. DAY. MRS FAIRFAX'S COTTAGE**

Jane is deeply affected.

**MRS FAIRFAX**

He's alive child, but many think  
he'd be better off dead.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 117.

**JANE**

Why?

**MRS FAIRFAX**

When he was taken out from under  
the ruins, a beam had fallen in  
such a way as to protect him,  
partly - but his eye was taken  
out and his left hand so crushed  
that he lost it. The other eye  
inflamed and - he is blind. He's  
blind.

Tears fall from Jane's eyes.

**MRS FAIRFAX (CONT'D)**

I know... it's a terrible thing.

**JANE**

I had dreaded worse. I'd dreaded  
he was mad.

A great sense of urgency is coming over her.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

Where is he?

**EXT. DAY. FERNDEN - THE GROUNDS.**

Jane is walking through forest, along a grass grown track.  
Her pace is fast; her journey almost at an end. She comes  
to a pair of rusting iron gates hanging open between  
granite pillars. She walks through them.

She finds herself in front of a decrepit Elizabethan manor  
house; no garden, just a sweeping semi circle of meadow  
grass, which someone has cut at with a scythe. Jane stops.

Standing on the threshold is Edward Fairfax Rochester. He

is in his shirtsleeves. He stands strong, stalwart, brooding. His hair is still raven black. He is looking sightlessly around his domain, with the concentration of a hawk. His strength is undiminished.

He walks fifteen paces from the house. It brings him into the middle of the semicircle of grass. He is close enough for Jane to see his scarred eyes. She walks towards him, silent.

A few drops of rain begin to fall. Rochester puts out his right hand to feel them. He raises his face up to the sky as if he is looking for something from there. He is absolutely still; his expression, serene.

Jane is very close. She steps on a twig. It breaks with a loud crack, shattering the silence. Rochester is immediately on guard, his expression turning wary. Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 118.

He suddenly swipes the air with his left arm; the ruin of it passing an inch from her face. Jane steps back. Rochester swipes again. She holds her breath.

He seems satisfied at last that nothing is there. He turns and walks fifteen paces back to the house. He disappears into the dark interior.

Jane starts to breathe again.

**EXT. DAY. FERNDEAN - THE SIDE ENTRANCE.**

Jane lightly taps on the side door. Martha opens it; she is astonished. Jane puts her finger over her lips.

**INT. EVENING. FERNDEAN - THE DRAWING ROOM.**

Rochester is in an armchair in front of his fire. Pilot is at his feet. Jane carries in a tray with a candelabra and a jug of water.

**ROCHESTER**

I can see the candles, Martha, at your side like a luminous glow. And the fire; a red haze.

Pilot notices Jane. He leaps up with a whine, wagging his tail, madly. Jane spills half the water. She cannot help finding it funny. Her entrance has been ruined by the dog.



**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Martha?

Jane giggles. Rochester's face falls.

**ROCHESTER (CONT'D)**

Martha, is that you?

**JANE**

Martha is in the kitchen, sir.

**ROCHESTER**

Who's there?

**JANE**

Pilot knows me. Will you have some more water? I've spilt half the glass.

Rochester stands, holding out his hand.

**ROCHESTER**

If you are real, touch me.

Jane touches his fingers; puts her hand in his. Rochester pulls her into his arms.

Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 119.

**ROCHESTER,**

Her hand, her shape, her size.

**JANE**

And her voice.

**ROCHESTER**

Jane Eyre - Jane Eyre.

**JANE**

My Edward, I am Jane Eyre: I have found you out. I am come back to you.

For some while neither is able to speak.

**ROCHESTER**

You're not lying dead in some ditch? Not an outcast among strangers?

**JANE**

I've been with good people; far better than you, quite more refined and exalted.

**ROCHESTER**  
**(DELIGHTED)**

She insults me -

**JANE**

And I'm an independent woman. My uncle in Madeira died and left me five thousand pounds -

**ROCHESTER**

This is real. This is practical.

**JANE**

I'm here. I'm home. I am where I love best.

**CUT TO:**

Jane curled on Rochester's knee by the fire. He is running his fingers over her face, feeling its contours.

**ROCHESTER**

You're altogether a human being, Jane?

**JANE**

I conscientiously believe so, sir.

She is running her hands through his hair.  
Jane Eyre adapted by Moira Buffini March 2008 120.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

But I see that you're turning into a lion. It's time someone undertook to rehumanise you.

**ROCHESTER**

I'm a sightless block -

**JANE**

I know.

She kisses his eyes.

**JANE (CONT'D)**

And the worst of it is, I'm in

danger of loving you too well for  
this, and making too much of you.

**ROCHESTER**

Am I hideous, Jane?

**JANE**

Very. But you always were, you  
know.

A smile cracks Rochester's face.

Jane runs her fingers over it, feeling its contours.

He holds her.

Silence falls.

**THE END.**