

## **AI-Generated Graded Readers**

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### **About This Edition**

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.

The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

### **Source Text**

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Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

## Part 1

There was no chance of going for a walk that day. In the morning we had walked for a short time among the bare bushes, but after dinner the cold winter wind grew stronger. Dark clouds covered the sky, and hard rain fell without stopping. Because of this, no one could go outside again.

I was glad. I never liked long walks in cold weather. It was painful to come home at evening with frozen hands and feet, while Bessie scolded me and reminded me that I was weaker than Eliza, John, and Georgiana Reed. They were stronger, prettier, and more loved than I was.

Eliza, John, and Georgiana sat near their mother in the drawing room. Mrs. Reed rested on a sofa beside the fire. Her children gathered around her, quiet and pleased, and she looked happy. She had told me that I must stay away. She said, “Jane, until you learn to behave like a pleasant and cheerful child, you cannot join us. I must keep you apart.”

I asked, “What have I done?”

She answered coldly, “Jane, I dislike children who question their elders. Sit somewhere and remain silent until you can speak politely.”

Next to the drawing room was a small breakfast room. I slipped inside quietly. A bookcase stood there, and I chose a book filled with pictures. Then I climbed into the window seat. I drew the red curtain almost closed and sat with my feet tucked under me, hidden from view.

The curtain covered me on one side, while the cold window showed the gray afternoon on the other. Rain swept across the lawn, and the wind bent the dark bushes again and again. The sky looked empty and pale.

I opened my book, *The History of British Birds*. I cared little for most of the words, but some pages held my attention. They spoke about lonely rocks by the sea and wild northern lands filled with snow and ice. As a child, I imagined those

distant places clearly. I saw cold oceans, broken ships, and silent shores under a pale moon.

The pictures seemed full of mystery. One showed a rock rising alone from a stormy sea. Another showed a wrecked boat on a lonely coast. Each image told a story I could not fully understand, yet I felt drawn to them. They reminded me of the tales Bessie sometimes told on winter evenings when she was in a good mood.

With the book on my knees, I felt happy in my own quiet way. I feared only interruption, and soon it came.

The breakfast-room door opened suddenly.

“Boh! Madam Mope!” cried John Reed’s voice. He stopped and looked around. “Where is she?” he shouted. “Lizzy! Georgy! She has run outside into the rain!”

I held my breath behind the curtain. I hoped he would not find me. John was not quick to notice things, but Eliza appeared at the door and said at once, “She is in the window seat, Jack.”

I came out immediately. I feared being dragged out more than anything.

“What do you want?” I asked quietly.

He replied, “Say, ‘What do you want, Master Reed?’ Come here.” He sat in an armchair and pointed for me to stand before him.

John Reed was fourteen years old, four years older than I was. He was large and heavy, with a pale face and dull eyes. He ate too much and moved slowly, yet he ruled everyone in the house. He disliked me deeply and punished me whenever he wished. No one defended me. Mrs. Reed never seemed to see his cruelty.

I obeyed and stood before him. He stared at me and suddenly struck me hard.

“That is for your rude answer to Mama,” he said. “And for hiding behind curtains. And for the look you gave me, you rat!”

I stepped back, holding my balance. I knew another blow would follow.

“What were you doing behind the curtain?” he demanded.

“I was reading.”

“Bring the book here.”

I fetched it and handed it to him.

“You have no right to our books,” he said. “You are a dependent. Mama says

you have no money. You should beg, not live here with us. Everything in this house belongs to me. Stand by the door.”

I moved as he ordered, still not understanding his purpose. Then he lifted the book high in his hands. I saw he meant to throw it. I cried out and tried to move aside, but too late. The book struck my head, and I fell against the door. Pain burned sharply, and warm blood ran down my neck.

Anger replaced fear.

“Wicked boy!” I cried. “You are cruel! You are like a murderer!”

He stared in shock. “What did you say?” he shouted. “Did you hear her?” he called to his sisters. “I will tell Mama!”

He rushed at me and grabbed my hair and shoulder. I fought back wildly. I hardly knew what I did, but he shouted, “Rat! Rat!” and screamed loudly.

His sisters ran to fetch Mrs. Reed. Soon she entered with Bessie and another servant. They pulled us apart.

“What fury!” cried the maid.

Mrs. Reed said sharply, “Take her to the red-room and lock her there.”

Hands seized me at once, and I was carried upstairs.

I struggled all the way. I had never resisted before, and my anger frightened the servants.

“Hold her arms!” said Abbot. “She is like a wild cat!”

“For shame, Miss Eyre,” she added. “How dare you strike your young master?”

“Master? How is he my master?” I cried.

“You are less than a servant,” she replied. “You do nothing for your keep.”

They pushed me into the red-room and forced me onto a stool. I tried to rise, but they held me down.

“If you move again, we will tie you,” said Bessie.

When I promised to sit still, they released me. They stood watching me with doubt.

“You should be thankful to Mrs. Reed,” Bessie said. “She keeps you. Without her, you would go to the poorhouse.”

I said nothing. I had heard these words many times before.

“You must be humble,” added Abbot. “The young ladies will have money. You will have none.”

They left at last, locking the door behind them.

The red-room was large and silent. A great bed stood in the center with deep red curtains. The carpet was red, the furniture dark, and the room felt cold because no fire burned there. Few people entered it. Mr. Reed had died in that room many years before, and since then it remained almost unused.

I sat alone, surrounded by stillness. The air felt heavy, and the pale bed looked like a throne. When I looked into the mirror, I saw a small white face staring back at me with frightened eyes. For a moment I thought it was a spirit.

My anger slowly faded. Sad thoughts filled my mind. Why was I always blamed? Why could I never please anyone? John was cruel yet loved. Georgiana was selfish yet praised. I tried to behave well, yet everyone called me bad.

“Unjust,” I whispered to myself.

Darkness began to fall outside. The rain beat against the windows, and the wind cried through the trees. I grew cold and afraid. I remembered that Mr. Reed had died here. I imagined his spirit rising to protect me from wrong.

A sudden light moved across the wall. It trembled near the ceiling. My heart raced. I believed it was a ghost coming toward me. Terror overcame me completely. I ran to the door and shook it wildly.

Footsteps hurried outside. The key turned, and Bessie and Abbot entered.

“Miss Eyre, what is wrong?” Bessie asked.

“Take me out!” I cried. “I saw a light! I thought a ghost was coming!”

Before they could answer, Mrs. Reed arrived.

“I ordered her to remain here,” she said coldly. “Leave her.”

“O Aunt, please forgive me!” I begged. “I cannot bear it!”

“Silence,” she replied. “You will stay another hour.”

She pushed me back into the room and locked the door again.

Soon after, my fear and grief became too strong. The world spun around me, and darkness closed over everything.

## Part 2

The next thing I remember is waking as if from a terrible dream. A red light shone before my eyes, crossed by dark shadows. Voices sounded near me, low and distant, like sounds heard through water. At first I could not understand where I was. Someone lifted me gently and supported my head. The touch was kinder than any I had known before, and I felt calm for a moment.

Slowly my thoughts became clear. I lay in my own bed in the nursery. The red light came from the fire burning low in the grate. Night had fallen. A candle stood on the table. Bessie waited at the foot of the bed holding a basin, and beside me sat a gentleman leaning forward and watching me closely.

When I saw that he was a stranger and not one of the Reeds, a deep feeling of safety came over me. I looked carefully at his face and recognized him. It was Mr. Lloyd, the apothecary who sometimes came to the house when servants were ill.

“Well, who am I?” he asked kindly.

“Mr. Lloyd,” I said, and held out my hand.

He smiled and took it. “That is right. You will soon be well again.”

He laid me back upon the pillow and spoke quietly to Bessie, giving instructions that I must not be disturbed during the night. After a few more words, he left the room. When the door closed behind him, the sense of protection faded, and sadness returned heavily to my heart.

“Do you think you can sleep, Miss?” Bessie asked softly.

I feared she might soon speak harshly again, so I answered carefully. “I will try.”

“Would you like something to drink or eat?”

“No, thank you.”

“Then I will go to bed. Call me if you need anything.”

Her gentleness surprised me. I gathered courage to ask, “Bessie, what is the matter with me? Am I ill?”

“You cried too much in the red-room and made yourself sick,” she replied. “You will be better soon.”

She went into the next room, where another servant slept. I heard her whisper, "Come sleep with me tonight. I do not want to stay alone with that poor child. She might die. It was a strange fit. Perhaps she saw something."

The other maid came, and they spoke together for some time before sleeping. I heard broken pieces of their talk: stories of ghosts, lights in churchyards, and strange sights seen at night. Their words filled me with fear.

At last they slept, and the candle burned out. I remained awake through the long dark hours, listening to every sound and imagining dangers in every shadow. Children feel fear deeply, and that night my fear seemed endless.

I did not become seriously ill after this event, yet it left a mark upon my nerves that I felt long afterward. The next day, near noon, I sat dressed beside the nursery fire, wrapped in a shawl. My body felt weak, but my mind felt far worse. Sadness pressed upon me so strongly that tears came without stopping.

The Reed family had gone out in the carriage, and Abbot worked in another room. Bessie moved quietly about, putting toys away and arranging drawers. She spoke to me more kindly than usual. Under other circumstances I might have felt peaceful, but my spirit was too troubled to enjoy calm.

After a while Bessie returned from the kitchen carrying a tart placed on a bright painted plate decorated with a beautiful bird among flowers. I had often admired that plate but had never been allowed to touch it. Now she set it on my lap and told me to eat.

The favor came too late. I could not eat. The colors of the plate seemed faded, and I pushed it away.

"Would you like a book?" Bessie asked.

The word gave me sudden interest. I asked for *Gulliver's Travels*. I had loved it before and believed its stories were true accounts of real lands. I imagined that one day I might travel far and see those places myself.

Yet when I opened the book now, the pictures frightened me. The giants appeared cruel, the tiny people strange and unfriendly, and Gulliver seemed lonely and lost. I closed the book quickly and placed it beside the untouched tart.

Bessie began sewing a new bonnet for Georgiana's doll. While she worked, she

sang softly. Her voice was sweet, but the song sounded sad to me. When she sang about a poor orphan child wandering alone, my tears fell again.

“Come, Miss Jane, do not cry,” she said.

Soon Mr. Lloyd returned.

“Already up?” he said. “How is she today?”

Bessie replied that I was better.

He looked at me carefully. “You have been crying again. Does something hurt?”

“No, sir.”

“She cries because she could not ride in the carriage,” said Bessie.

I felt ashamed and spoke quickly. “No, sir. I hate riding in the carriage. I cry because I am miserable.”

Mr. Lloyd looked thoughtful. When the dinner bell rang for the servants, he told Bessie to go eat and said he would speak with me alone.

When she left, he asked gently, “What made you ill yesterday?”

“I was locked in a room where there is a ghost,” I answered.

He smiled slightly. “Are you afraid of ghosts?”

“Of Mr. Reed’s ghost I am. He died there. It was cruel to shut me in alone without a candle. I shall never forget it.”

“Are you afraid now?”

“No, sir. But night will come again. And I am unhappy for other reasons.”

“What reasons?”

I struggled to explain feelings I barely understood. At last I said, “I have no father or mother.”

“But you have an aunt and cousins.”

“John Reed knocked me down, and my aunt locked me in the red-room.”

He took a pinch of snuff and asked, “Do you not like this house? It is very fine.”

“It is not my house,” I said. “They say I have less right here than a servant.”

“Would you like to leave?”

“If I had somewhere else to go, yes. But I cannot leave until I grow up.”

He asked whether I had other relatives. I said I did not know, except that Mrs. Reed believed any relations of mine must be poor. When he asked if I would like

to live with poor people, I shook my head. Poverty frightened me because I imagined hunger and rough living.

Then he asked, "Would you like to go to school?"

I thought carefully. School sounded both frightening and exciting. It meant learning new things and leaving Gateshead behind. After a moment I answered, "Yes, sir. I should like it very much."

He nodded slowly. "Change of place might do you good," he murmured.

Soon Bessie returned, and the sound of the carriage outside announced Mrs. Reed's arrival. Mr. Lloyd asked to speak with her before leaving. They went downstairs together.

From later events I understood that he advised sending me to school. Mrs. Reed must have agreed easily, for one evening I heard Abbot say to Bessie, "Mistress will be glad enough to get rid of such a troublesome child."

That same night I learned more about my parents. My father had been a poor clergyman. My mother married him against her family's wishes and was cut off from her fortune. Both died of illness when I was a baby. When Bessie heard this, she sighed and said, "Poor Miss Jane is to be pitied."

Abbot replied, "Perhaps—but she is not a pleasant child."

Their words hurt me, though I lay still and pretended to sleep.

From that day forward, hope entered my heart. I waited quietly for the promised change, believing that one day I would leave Gateshead and begin a different life.

### Part 3

After my talk with Mr. Lloyd, hope began to grow inside me. I believed a change would soon come, and this belief helped me endure each day. Still, many weeks passed without any mention of school. My health returned, yet nothing outward changed. Mrs. Reed rarely spoke to me, though she often looked at me with cold dislike. Since my illness she kept me more separate than ever from her children.

I now slept alone in a small closet-like room. I ate my meals apart and spent

nearly all my time in the nursery, while my cousins enjoyed the drawing room below. Though Mrs. Reed said nothing about sending me away, I felt certain she wished to be rid of me. Her eyes, when they rested on me, showed strong and settled aversion.

Eliza and Georgiana hardly spoke to me at all. John avoided me after our last quarrel. Once he tried to strike me again, but when I turned toward him boldly, anger rising in me, he hesitated and ran to complain to his mother.

I heard him crying, "That nasty Jane Eyre attacked me like a wild cat!"

Mrs. Reed answered sharply, "Do not speak to me about her. I told you not to go near her. She is not worthy of notice."

These words burned within me. Leaning over the banister, I cried out without thinking, "They are not fit to associate with me!"

Mrs. Reed hurried upstairs at once. She seized me firmly and forced me into the nursery.

"Sit there," she commanded, pushing me onto my bed. "You will not move or speak for the rest of the day."

The words came from me before I could stop them. "What would Uncle Reed say if he were alive?"

Mrs. Reed froze. Her face changed, and she stared at me strangely.

I continued, driven by emotion stronger than fear. "Uncle Reed can see you from heaven. Papa and Mama can see you too. They know how you shut me away and how you wish me dead."

She shook me violently and struck my ears, then left without another word. Soon afterward Bessie scolded me for nearly an hour, telling me I was the worst child ever raised in the house. I almost believed her, for my heart felt filled with anger and misery.

Winter passed slowly. November, December, and part of January went by. Christmas and New Year were celebrated with parties and gifts, but I shared none of the joy. My pleasure came only from watching my cousins dress for guests and hearing music and laughter from below.

When tired of listening, I returned to the quiet nursery. Though lonely, I

preferred solitude to company where I felt unwanted. If Bessie had always been kind, I might have been content, but after dressing the young ladies she usually went downstairs to the lively kitchen, taking the candle with her.

I then sat alone with my doll beside the fading fire. I often looked around to be sure nothing moved in the shadows. When the fire burned low, I undressed quickly and climbed into bed, carrying my doll with me. I loved that small toy deeply. Having no one else to love, I imagined it alive and comforted myself by holding it close.

Sometimes Bessie returned before I slept. She brought a small cake or bun and sat beside me while I ate. On those evenings she kissed me and said gently, "Good night, Miss Jane." When she behaved so kindly, I believed her the best person in the world.

One cold morning in January, I sat in the nursery while my cousins prepared for the day. Eliza dressed to feed her chickens, a task she loved because she sold the eggs and carefully saved the money. Georgiana arranged her curls before the mirror, decorating them with artificial flowers.

I finished making my bed and went to the window seat to tidy some toys. Georgiana ordered me sharply to leave her things alone. Having nothing else to do, I breathed upon the frosted window to clear a small space and looked outside.

The ground lay hard and white under frost. As I watched, the gates opened and a carriage entered the drive. Visitors often came, so I paid little attention. Instead, I noticed a small robin hopping on the branches of a bare tree near the window. I crumbled some bread from my breakfast and struggled to open the sash so I could feed it.

Just then Bessie rushed into the room.

"Miss Jane! What are you doing? Have you washed your face?" she asked quickly.

She pulled me to the washstand and scrubbed my face and hands briskly, brushed my hair roughly, removed my pinafore, and hurried me toward the stairs.

"Go down to the breakfast room at once. You are wanted."

I wished to ask who wanted me, but she had already gone. Slowly I descended

the stairs. For nearly three months I had not entered the main rooms of the house. They now seemed strange and frightening.

I paused before the breakfast-room door, trembling. At last the bell rang loudly inside, forcing me to enter.

I opened the door and curtseyed. At first I saw only a tall dark shape standing by the fire like a black pillar. Mrs. Reed sat in her usual chair and motioned for me to come forward.

“This is the child about whom I wrote to you,” she said.

The stranger turned toward me. He was tall and thin, dressed in black, with a hard face and sharp gray eyes beneath heavy brows.

“Her size is small,” he said slowly. “What is her age?”

“Ten years,” replied Mrs. Reed.

“So much?” he murmured, studying me closely.

After a moment he spoke directly to me. “Your name?”

“Jane Eyre, sir.”

“Are you a good child?”

I could not answer. Mrs. Reed shook her head instead.

“I regret to say she is not,” she added.

The gentleman frowned. “A sad thing, a naughty child. Come here.”

I stepped closer. His large face seemed severe and strange.

“Do you know where wicked people go after death?” he asked.

“To hell,” I answered.

“And what is hell?”

“A pit full of fire.”

“Would you like to fall into it?”

“No, sir.”

“Then what must you do to avoid it?”

I thought carefully and replied, “I must keep in good health and not die.”

He looked displeased. “Children younger than you die every day,” he said. “A good child who died recently now rests in heaven. It is doubtful the same could be said of you.”

I lowered my eyes and remained silent.

“Do you say your prayers?” he continued.

“Yes, sir.”

“Do you read the Bible?”

“Sometimes.”

“Do you enjoy it?”

“I like some parts,” I said honestly.

“And the Psalms?”

“No, sir.”

He looked shocked. “My little boy prefers learning Psalms to eating sweets,” he declared.

I stood quietly, wishing only to escape his questions, while Mrs. Reed watched with calm satisfaction. I sensed that this meeting would decide my future, though I did not yet understand how greatly it would change my life.

#### Part 4

The tall gentleman continued to look at me with grave attention. His eyes seemed to search for faults, and I felt smaller each moment I stood before him. Mrs. Reed watched silently, as if pleased that I should be judged in such a manner.

“This child,” she said at last, “requires careful watching. I should wish her to be formed in a manner suited to her position. Above all, I desire humility to be taught to her.”

“Humility is indeed a Christian duty,” replied the gentleman. “Pride must be crushed.”

I felt my cheeks grow hot, though I tried not to move.

“Her character,” Mrs. Reed continued, “is deceitful. I mention this early so that you may guard against it.”

The words struck me deeply. I wanted to speak, yet fear held me silent.

The gentleman turned again toward me. “Little girl,” he said, “you must understand that falsehood is a great sin. God sees everything. Even the smallest

untruth leads the soul toward destruction.”

I whispered, “I am not deceitful.”

Mrs. Reed raised her hand slightly. “Jane, be silent.”

The gentleman nodded toward her. “Children must learn obedience,” he said. Then he addressed me again. “Do you know what happens to liars?”

“They are punished,” I answered quietly.

“Yes. They are cast away from heaven. Remember that.”

His voice was slow and heavy, like a sermon. I felt frightened, though also confused. I knew I had spoken truth, yet I was treated as if guilty.

After a pause he asked, “Would you like to become a useful and obedient child?”

“Yes, sir,” I said.

“Good. Then you must pray for a new heart.”

I did not fully understand his meaning, but I nodded.

He rose from his chair and walked toward Mrs. Reed. “I believe Lowood Institution would suit her,” he said. “There she will receive proper instruction and discipline.”

My heart beat quickly. The word *school* filled me with both fear and hope.

Mrs. Reed answered calmly, “I shall be grateful if you will admit her there as soon as possible.”

“She may be received shortly,” he said. “I will inform the superintendent.”

Then he turned back to me once more.

“You will soon leave this house,” he said. “At school you must be humble, grateful, and truthful. If you are not, punishment will follow.”

“Yes, sir,” I replied.

He placed on my head a hand that felt cold and heavy, then withdrew it as if the duty were finished. After speaking briefly again with Mrs. Reed, he prepared to leave.

When the door closed behind him, silence filled the room.

Mrs. Reed looked at me steadily. “You heard what was said,” she declared. “You will go to school. I trust you will remember what I have told Mr. Brocklehurst about your character.”

I gathered courage and spoke. "I am not deceitful."

Her eyes hardened. "You are less than a servant here, Jane. Remember your place."

Tears rose, but I forced them back. I would not cry before her.

"You may go," she said.

I curtsied and left the room. Once outside, I breathed deeply, as if escaping from a heavy weight. School—though unknown—meant leaving Gateshead. The thought gave me secret comfort.

In the nursery, Bessie waited with curiosity.

"Well, Miss Jane, what did the gentleman want?"

"I am to go to school," I answered.

"Indeed!" she exclaimed. "That will be a great change."

She examined my face closely. "You must behave well there, or you will be unhappy."

I nodded, though inside I felt both excitement and fear. I imagined long journeys, new faces, and lessons yet unknown.

During the following days I thought constantly about school. Every sound of carriage wheels made me wonder if the time had come. Yet days passed slowly. Mrs. Reed spoke little to me, and my cousins ignored me as before.

One afternoon Bessie told me, "You must learn to be brave, Miss Jane. School girls must work hard."

"Will they be kind?" I asked.

She hesitated. "Some will. Some may not. But you must try to please your teachers."

That evening she allowed me to sit beside her while she sewed. She told stories of young ladies she had known who learned music, drawing, and languages at school. Listening, I felt eager to begin a new life where learning might give me worth.

Still, nights remained lonely. I lay awake imagining what awaited me. Sometimes fear returned, but hope always followed. Anything seemed better than remaining at Gateshead.

A few days later Mrs. Reed called me again to the breakfast room. She informed me that arrangements were nearly complete. I would leave soon.

“You will remember,” she said coldly, “that you owe gratitude to those who have supported you.”

I answered quietly, “Yes, ma’am.”

Yet in my heart I felt not gratitude but relief. The house that had always seemed a prison would soon be behind me.

That night, as I held my doll before sleeping, I whispered to it about the journey ahead. I imagined friends, lessons, and perhaps kindness. For the first time since I could remember, the future appeared open rather than closed.

Thus I waited for the day when the carriage would come to carry me away from Gateshead Hall and toward the unknown world of school.

## Part 5

The days before my departure passed slowly, yet each morning I woke with the same thought: soon I would leave Gateshead. Though I knew little about school, the idea of change gave me strength. Even the cold winter air seemed easier to bear when I believed my life would soon begin anew.

Mrs. Reed rarely spoke to me now except to give brief orders. Her manner remained distant and severe. My cousins behaved as if I were already gone. Eliza ignored me completely, busy with her careful saving of money and her small trades with the servants. Georgiana spent long hours admiring herself before the mirror, arranging her curls and ribbons. John avoided me, though sometimes he glared at me from afar with angry eyes.

I felt myself becoming invisible within the house. Yet this no longer hurt me as it once had. I watched everything quietly, like a traveler already separated from the place she was leaving.

One afternoon Bessie began to prepare my clothes for the journey. She opened drawers and trunks, folding my few garments neatly.

“You must look tidy when you arrive,” she said. “School teachers notice such

things.”

“Will it be very far?” I asked.

“A long journey for a little girl,” she answered. “You must travel by coach.”

The thought filled me with wonder. I had never traveled alone before.

While she packed, Bessie grew more talkative than usual. “You must remember your lessons,” she said. “Be polite, and do not answer back. If you behave well, perhaps you will make friends.”

“Do you think they will like me?” I asked quietly.

She paused before replying. “If you try to be gentle and steady, they may.”

Her answer was not fully comforting, yet her voice sounded kinder than before. That evening she brushed my hair carefully and even smiled at me.

“You are not a bad child, Miss Jane,” she said suddenly. “You are only too thoughtful for your age.”

These words surprised me deeply. I treasured them in silence.

During the final week, snow fell lightly over the grounds. I often stood at the window watching white flakes settle on the trees. Each falling snowflake seemed to mark time moving forward. I imagined the road stretching far beyond the gates, leading toward places I had never seen.

One night Bessie allowed me to sit beside the fire longer than usual. She told stories from her childhood and sang softly while sewing. I listened closely, wishing to remember her voice. Though she sometimes scolded me, she had shown me more kindness than anyone else in the house.

“Will you forget us when you go away?” she asked suddenly.

I shook my head. “No, Bessie.”

She nodded and returned to her sewing, though I thought her eyes looked thoughtful.

At last the evening before my departure arrived. My small trunk stood ready near the door. I felt restless and could not sleep. Holding my doll, I thought about the unknown girls I would soon meet and wondered whether any of them might become my friend.

Before dawn Bessie woke me.

“Come, Miss Jane,” she whispered. “It is time.”

The house lay silent and dark. A candle flickered as she helped me dress warmly. The cold air touched my face when we stepped into the corridor. Everything looked strange at that early hour, as if the house itself slept while I alone moved through it.

In the kitchen she gave me warm milk and bread. I tried to eat but felt too excited and anxious. Soon the sound of wheels came from outside.

“The coach has arrived,” said Bessie.

She wrapped my cloak tightly around me and led me to the front door. The sky remained dark blue, and frost covered the ground. A large coach waited near the gate, the horses breathing clouds into the cold air.

The driver lifted me up beside him. I turned to look back. Bessie stood below, holding the candle. For a moment I felt a sudden sadness.

“Good-bye, Bessie,” I called.

“Good-bye, Miss Jane,” she answered. “Be a good girl.”

The coach began to move. Gateshead Hall slowly disappeared behind the trees. I watched until it could no longer be seen.

As the wheels rolled steadily along the frozen road, fear and hope mixed within me. I was leaving the only home I had known, yet I felt free for the first time. The cold morning air touched my cheeks, and I looked ahead toward the long road stretching into the distance.

The journey lasted many hours. Villages passed, fields lay silent under winter light, and strangers came and went at stopping places. I sat quietly, observing everything with wide eyes. No one knew me, and no one judged me. This alone felt like relief.

At last evening approached, and the coach turned toward a large building surrounded by bare trees. The driver helped me down.

“Here you are,” he said. “Lowood School.”

I stood before the tall dark structure, uncertain yet determined. A servant opened the door and led me inside. Warm air met me, and distant voices echoed through long passages.

My life at Gateshead had ended. A new chapter was beginning, filled with unknown trials and unknown hopes. I followed the servant forward, carrying with me fear, curiosity, and a quiet wish that somewhere in this new place I might finally belong.

## Part 6

The servant who opened the door took my cloak and asked me to follow her. I entered a long passage dimly lit by lamps. The air inside felt warmer than outside, yet the building seemed quiet and severe. My footsteps sounded small upon the floor as I walked behind her.

She led me into a large room where several girls sat together. Some worked with books, others whispered softly. All wore plain brown dresses and looked serious. A tall lady stood near a table, writing. When she saw me, she came forward at once.

“Is this the new pupil?” she asked.

“Yes, miss,” replied the servant.

The lady examined me kindly but carefully. Her face was pale, yet gentle, and her voice calm.

“You must be tired after your journey,” she said. “My name is Miss Miller. Come closer to the fire.”

I moved toward the warmth, feeling both shy and relieved. The girls looked at me with curiosity, but none spoke. Their quiet behavior surprised me; they seemed far more orderly than the children at Gateshead.

Miss Miller asked, “Have you eaten?”

“Only a little bread this morning,” I answered.

She nodded and told another girl to bring me some food. Soon a small piece of bread and a cup of warm drink were placed in my hands. Though simple, it tasted better than anything I remembered eating recently, perhaps because I felt welcome for the first time.

Afterward Miss Miller said, “You shall stay with us this evening. Later you will

meet the superintendent.”

I did not yet know what that meant, but I obeyed quietly.

The evening lesson soon began again. The girls read aloud one by one. Their voices sounded clear and steady. I watched closely, wishing to understand the rules of this new place. No one laughed loudly or moved without permission. Everything followed order.

After lessons, prayers were said. All the girls knelt together. I knelt also, though my thoughts wandered. I wondered whether life here would truly be better than at Gateshead.

Soon we were led to a large sleeping room filled with many narrow beds arranged in rows. The air felt cold, and the light from the candles flickered across the walls. Each girl prepared for sleep quickly and silently.

A bed was shown to me. I undressed and lay down, listening to the quiet breathing around me. Though surrounded by strangers, I did not feel as lonely as before. The long journey and the newness of everything soon made me fall asleep.

The bell rang early the next morning while it was still dark. The sound startled me awake. All the girls rose at once and dressed quickly. I hurried to follow them, afraid of doing something wrong.

We went downstairs to wash. The water in the basin was icy cold. Many girls tried to wash at once, and there was little water for each. I shivered but said nothing.

Breakfast followed in a large hall. Long tables filled the room. We sat together, and food was served. The porridge tasted burnt and unpleasant, yet most girls ate silently. I forced myself to swallow a little, though hunger remained.

After breakfast we gathered for prayers and reading. A tall figure entered the room. I recognized him at once—Mr. Brocklehurst, the same gentleman who had examined me at Gateshead.

All the girls stood immediately. His presence filled the hall with strict silence.

He walked slowly among the rows, observing everything. When his eyes fell upon me, recognition appeared in his face.

“Ah,” he said loudly, “this is the new girl.”

My heart beat quickly.

He turned to the teachers. “This child must be watched carefully. She has tendencies toward deceit. Let her companions avoid her example.”

His words echoed through the room. Every girl looked toward me. Shame burned in my face, and I wished the floor would open beneath me.

Miss Miller placed a gentle hand on my shoulder, guiding me back to my seat. Though she said nothing, her touch comforted me.

Lessons continued through the morning. Reading, writing, and sewing filled the hours. The work felt difficult but interesting. For the first time, learning seemed to offer escape from unhappy thoughts.

During a short break I noticed a girl sitting quietly with a book. Her face looked calm and thoughtful. She smiled slightly when our eyes met.

“You are new,” she said softly.

“Yes.”

“My name is Helen Burns.”

“I am Jane Eyre.”

Her voice held kindness without curiosity or judgment. We spoke only briefly before lessons resumed, yet I felt drawn to her peaceful manner.

The day passed with strict order: lessons, meals, and prayers followed one another without pause. Life at Lowood proved hard and plain, yet different from Gateshead. Here rules applied to everyone alike. No child was singled out for cruelty as I had been before.

That evening, as I lay in my narrow bed, I thought about the day. I had been shamed before all, yet I had also met kindness—from Miss Miller’s gentle care and Helen’s quiet friendship.

Outside, the winter wind moved through the trees, but inside the dormitory many girls slept peacefully. I closed my eyes feeling tired yet strangely hopeful. Though trials had already begun, I sensed that this new place might shape my future in ways I could not yet understand.

Part 7

Life at Lowood soon settled into a strict routine. Each morning the bell rang before daylight, calling us from sleep. We dressed quickly in the cold air and went downstairs together. The water for washing was often frozen during winter, and many girls could only touch it briefly before hurrying away. No one complained aloud, though I saw pale faces and trembling hands.

After washing came prayers, then breakfast. The food was plain and sometimes poorly prepared. Often the porridge tasted burnt, and hunger followed us through the morning lessons. Still, the girls endured quietly, as if hardship were expected.

Lessons filled most of the day. We read, wrote, learned spelling, and practiced sewing. I worked hard, eager to succeed. Study gave me purpose, and I soon discovered that learning came easily to me. When I understood a lesson quickly, a small feeling of pride warmed me, though I tried to hide it.

The teachers varied in manner. Some were strict but fair, others tired and impatient. Miss Miller remained kind and steady. Yet the person who interested me most was Helen Burns.

Helen sat near me during lessons. She was older than I, tall and thin, with gentle eyes and a calm expression. She often appeared lost in thought. Though she tried to obey every rule, she was frequently corrected by one teacher, Miss Scatcherd, who seemed displeased with her.

One morning Helen dropped her slate while working. The noise drew Miss Scatcherd's attention.

"Burns!" she said sharply. "You are careless again."

Helen stood quietly while she was scolded. Later she was ordered to stand in the middle of the room as punishment. I watched with anger rising inside me. Helen's face remained peaceful, and she did not protest.

During the afternoon break I whispered, "Why do you let her treat you so?"

Helen answered gently, "It is better to bear injustice patiently than to return anger with anger."

"But she is wrong," I insisted. "You did nothing bad."

Helen smiled faintly. "Life is too short to hate, Jane. We must forgive."

Her words puzzled me. I could not understand such calm acceptance. My own heart still burned with memories of Gateshead, and I longed to resist unfairness, not endure it.

That evening we sat together near the fire for a short time before bed.

“Do you miss your home?” she asked.

I hesitated. “I do not think of Gateshead as home.”

She looked at me kindly but did not question further. Instead she spoke about books and ideas. She loved reading and spoke of thoughts beyond daily troubles. Listening to her, I felt my mind opening to new ways of thinking.

Days passed, and winter grew harsher. The cold entered the classrooms, and many girls coughed or looked weak. Meals remained small, and hunger became familiar. Yet I felt stronger inside than before, because I had purpose and companionship.

One afternoon Mr. Brocklehurst returned to inspect the school. His arrival caused immediate silence. Teachers straightened their posture, and the girls sat rigidly.

He walked slowly through the room, observing everything. Suddenly he stopped beside me.

“This is the child I warned you about,” he announced loudly. “She must be kept apart as an example.”

My heart sank.

He ordered a stool to be placed in the center of the room and commanded me to stand upon it. Trembling, I obeyed.

“Let all see this girl,” he said. “She is deceitful. Avoid her company.”

Every face turned toward me. Shame overwhelmed me, and tears filled my eyes, though I struggled not to cry.

After what felt like endless time, I was allowed to step down. I returned to my seat unable to look at anyone.

When lessons ended, I hid behind a bench, certain that all the girls now despised me. But Helen came quietly and sat beside me.

“Do not grieve,” she said softly.

“Everyone thinks I am bad,” I whispered.

“They will learn the truth,” she replied. “Time reveals character better than words.”

Her calm faith comforted me more than any defense could have done.

Later that evening Miss Temple, the superintendent, called me to her room. She spoke gently and asked me to tell the truth about my life at Gateshead. I described John’s cruelty and the red-room punishment. She listened carefully without interruption.

When I finished, she said, “I believe you, Jane. You shall have a chance to prove yourself here.”

Relief filled me so strongly that I nearly cried. For the first time an adult had trusted my words.

She then invited Helen to join us, and we shared tea together. The warmth of the fire, the kind conversation, and the simple food created a moment of happiness I had never known before.

That night, returning to the dormitory, I felt lighter. Though hardship remained, I sensed that Lowood might become a place where I could grow and be understood.

As I lay in bed, I thought about Helen’s patience and Miss Temple’s kindness. These new influences began to shape my thoughts, slowly softening the bitterness left by my early years.

Outside the wind moved through the dark trees, but inside my heart a quiet strength began to form—a belief that suffering might lead not only to pain, but also to understanding.

## Part 8

After the day when I was made to stand before the whole school, a great change came over my feelings. Miss Temple’s kindness restored my courage, and Helen’s friendship gave me comfort. Though Mr. Brocklehurst’s harsh words still troubled me, I no longer felt completely alone.

The next morning Miss Temple spoke to the class. She explained calmly that

misunderstandings sometimes occurred and that each girl must judge others by their daily conduct. She did not mention my name directly, yet I understood her meaning. From that day the girls no longer avoided me. Some even spoke to me kindly, and my shame slowly faded.

Lessons continued with steady regularity. I applied myself with great effort, determined to prove worthy of trust. Reading and writing delighted me, and I soon advanced faster than many others. Praise from the teachers, though quiet, filled me with new confidence.

Winter remained severe. Snow lay deep around the school, and cold wind entered through cracks in the windows. Our clothing was thin, and many girls suffered from cold hands and feet. Still we followed the daily routine without complaint.

Food remained scarce. At times hunger distracted me during lessons, yet I learned to endure it. Occasionally an unexpected treat appeared—a piece of bread or a warmer meal—and such moments felt like celebrations.

Helen and I spent much time together whenever rules allowed conversation. She often read books beyond our lessons and spoke about patience, faith, and forgiveness.

One evening I asked her, “Do you never feel angry?”

She thought for a moment before answering. “I feel pain, but I try not to let anger remain. Anger harms the heart more than the wrong itself.”

I considered her words carefully. My own nature still resisted such calm acceptance, yet I admired her peace.

Helen’s health, however, seemed fragile. She coughed often and tired easily. When I asked if she was ill, she smiled gently.

“I am often tired,” she admitted, “but it does not trouble me greatly.”

Spring slowly approached. The snow melted, and pale sunlight entered the classrooms. With warmer weather came illness among many students. A sickness spread through the school, and several girls were confined to bed.

Lessons grew irregular as teachers cared for the sick. The dormitories felt restless, and whispers filled the halls. Some girls were sent home, others moved

to different rooms. Though confusion surrounded us, Miss Temple worked tirelessly to keep order and comfort the students.

During this time Helen's cough worsened. She was moved to a separate room where the weaker girls rested. I missed her greatly and worried constantly.

One evening, unable to bear uncertainty, I asked permission to visit her. After hesitation, I was allowed to go quietly to the sickroom.

The room was dim and warm. Several beds stood along the walls. Helen lay propped against pillows, her face pale yet peaceful. When she saw me, her eyes brightened.

"Jane, you came," she said softly.

I sat beside her and took her hand. It felt warm but weak.

"Are you better?" I asked.

She smiled faintly. "I shall soon be well—in another way."

I did not understand at first. Fear touched my heart.

"You must not speak so," I said quickly. "You will recover."

She shook her head gently. "My illness will not leave me. But I am not afraid."

Tears filled my eyes. "I do not want you to go."

Helen looked at me with deep kindness. "We shall meet again someday. Life here is only a small part of existence."

Her calmness amazed me even then. She spoke of peace and rest as if describing a familiar place.

The nurse soon told me I must return to bed, but Helen asked softly, "May she stay a little longer?"

Permission was given.

I climbed carefully into her bed and lay beside her, holding her hand. The room grew quiet. I felt safe near her, as if her serenity protected me from fear.

"Jane," she whispered, "remember to be good and brave."

"I will," I promised.

She smiled once more. Soon her breathing grew slower. I fell asleep beside her, comforted by her presence.

When morning came, I woke in my own bed. Someone had carried me back

during the night. I learned that Helen Burns had died peacefully before dawn.

The news filled me with deep sorrow unlike anything I had known. Yet along with grief came a strange calm. Helen's words remained with me, guiding my thoughts even after she was gone.

Life at Lowood continued. The sickness gradually passed, and changes were made to improve the school. Food and clothing became better, and discipline grew kinder under Miss Temple's guidance.

As months turned into years, I studied diligently and advanced through the classes. The suffering of my early days slowly transformed into strength. Helen's memory remained a quiet light within me, reminding me to seek patience and understanding even in hardship.

Thus my life at Lowood entered a new stage—one shaped not only by struggle, but by learning, friendship, and the steady growth of hope within my heart.

## Part 9

After the illness passed and spring fully arrived, life at Lowood changed greatly. New rules were introduced, and the conditions improved. Food became more sufficient, clothing warmer, and the teachers less burdened. The school no longer felt like a place of constant hardship but rather one of steady work and quiet progress.

Miss Temple's influence guided everything. Her fairness created peace among the students, and her kindness encouraged effort instead of fear. Under her care I began to feel truly settled. Though I still remembered Helen Burns with sadness, her memory strengthened me rather than caused despair.

The seasons passed in regular order. Summer brought long hours of study and walks outdoors when lessons ended. For the first time I enjoyed nature freely. The fields around Lowood seemed wide and welcoming. I often walked slowly, thinking about the future and imagining what life beyond school might be like.

I devoted myself completely to learning. Reading became my greatest pleasure. Writing improved quickly, and drawing soon interested me deeply. When I

succeeded in a task, I felt a quiet pride that replaced the insecurity of my childhood.

Years passed almost unnoticed. I grew taller and stronger. The timid child who had arrived from Gateshead slowly disappeared. In her place stood a thoughtful young girl determined to build her own place in the world.

After six years as a student, I was offered a new role at Lowood. Miss Temple called me into her room one afternoon.

“Jane,” she said warmly, “your progress has been excellent. Would you wish to remain here as a teacher?”

The offer surprised me. Lowood had become familiar and safe, and the thought of staying pleased me.

“Yes, miss,” I answered. “I should be grateful.”

Thus I began my life as a teacher at the same school where I had once been a frightened child. Teaching younger girls gave me purpose. I tried to treat them with patience, remembering my own loneliness. When I saw shy or unhappy students, I spoke gently, hoping to give them the kindness I had once needed.

Two years passed in this manner. My life was orderly and calm. Yet change came again when Miss Temple announced her marriage.

The news filled the school with excitement, but it affected me deeply. Miss Temple had been the guiding spirit of Lowood. Without her, the place felt different even before she departed.

After her marriage she left the school. With her absence the atmosphere changed. The strict routines remained, but warmth seemed reduced. I realized that much of my happiness had depended upon her presence.

A restless feeling grew within me. For eight years Lowood had been my entire world. I had arrived as a child and grown into adulthood within its walls. Now I felt a strong desire to see life beyond them.

One evening I sat alone by the window, watching the sun set behind the hills. A thought came suddenly and clearly: I must seek a new path.

“I wish for liberty,” I whispered to myself.

The idea both excited and frightened me. I had never lived independently. Yet remaining forever at Lowood seemed impossible now that my protector had gone.

After much reflection, I decided to seek employment elsewhere. The next morning I wrote a small advertisement requesting a position as a governess. Writing those words felt like opening a door toward the unknown.

Days passed before a reply arrived. When at last a letter came, my hands trembled as I opened it. A lady named Mrs. Fairfax wrote that a position was available at Thornfield Hall and asked me to come.

I accepted at once.

Preparing to leave Lowood stirred many emotions. I walked through the classrooms and grounds, remembering years of effort, sorrow, and growth. Though I longed for change, gratitude filled me for the place that had shaped my character.

On my final evening several students gathered to say farewell. Their simple kindness touched me deeply. I realized that I was no longer the lonely child who believed herself unloved.

The next morning I departed quietly. As the carriage carried me away, I looked back at Lowood School standing among trees and fields. It had been a place of suffering and learning, loss and strength. Within its walls I had discovered independence of mind and the courage to seek my own future.

Ahead lay Thornfield Hall and a life entirely unknown. I faced it with calm determination, ready to meet whatever trials or happiness awaited beyond the road before me.

## Part 10

My journey from Lowood to Thornfield Hall lasted an entire day. The coach moved steadily along country roads bordered by fields and small villages. I watched the changing landscape with deep interest. Every mile carried me farther from the only life I had known since childhood. Though I felt some anxiety, curiosity and hope guided my thoughts more strongly.

Evening had already fallen when the coach finally stopped at a quiet roadside inn. A servant waited there to meet me. He lifted my small trunk and said, "You

are expected at Thornfield.”

We soon continued the journey in a smaller carriage. The road grew darker and more lonely. Trees lined the path, and the sound of the wheels echoed through the still night air. At last the carriage turned through large gates and approached an old stone house standing against the sky.

“Thornfield Hall,” said the driver.

I stepped down and looked at the building. It appeared large but not grand, with narrow windows and strong walls. A sense of calm surrounded it rather than fear. Light shone warmly from several windows, welcoming me after the long journey.

The door opened before I knocked. A cheerful elderly woman greeted me.

“You must be Miss Eyre,” she said kindly. “I am Mrs. Fairfax. Welcome to Thornfield.”

Her friendly manner immediately eased my nervousness. She led me inside to a comfortable room where a fire burned brightly.

“You must be tired,” she said. “Come warm yourself.”

I thanked her and sat near the fire. The room felt pleasant and peaceful. After simple refreshments she showed me my chamber, a small but neat room overlooking the grounds. I slept deeply that night, comforted by the quiet atmosphere of the house.

The next morning Mrs. Fairfax introduced me to my pupil, a young French girl named Adèle. She ran toward me eagerly.

“Are you my new teacher?” she asked.

“Yes,” I replied with a smile.

She spoke quickly and happily, showing curiosity rather than fear. Her lively nature contrasted strongly with the strict girls of Lowood. I soon learned that she enjoyed music, dancing, and stories more than study, yet she possessed a warm heart.

My duties began at once. Each morning I taught her reading, writing, and drawing. Teaching one child felt very different from instructing a large class. Lessons became more personal, and I worked patiently to guide her attention.

Life at Thornfield proved calm and orderly. Mrs. Fairfax managed the house

kindly, and the servants treated me with respect. For the first time I felt neither unwanted nor watched with suspicion. My position as governess placed me between servant and family, yet the balance suited me.

During free hours I explored the house. Thornfield contained many rooms and long corridors. Some parts remained rarely used, filled with old furniture and quiet shadows. From the upper floors I could see wide fields stretching into the distance. The openness of the landscape gave me a sense of freedom.

Evenings often passed peacefully beside the fire with Mrs. Fairfax and Adèle. We spoke of small matters, and sometimes I read aloud. Though the life seemed simple, I felt content. After years of struggle, calm itself felt like happiness.

Yet Thornfield held mysteries I did not yet understand. Occasionally I heard strange laughter echo faintly through the corridors above. When I asked Mrs. Fairfax about it, she answered lightly that a servant named Grace Poole worked in that part of the house and sometimes behaved oddly.

Her explanation satisfied me at the time, though curiosity remained.

Days turned into weeks. I settled into my new duties and began to feel truly independent. I earned my own living and directed my own actions. Often I walked alone in the garden, reflecting on how far my life had changed since the lonely days at Gateshead.

One afternoon Mrs. Fairfax informed me, “Mr. Rochester, the master of Thornfield, will soon return.”

I realized then that I had not yet met the owner of the house. The thought stirred curiosity and slight nervousness. My peaceful routine might soon change again.

That evening I walked along the path near the gate as the sun set behind the hills. The air felt fresh, and the quiet countryside stretched around me. I sensed that another turning point approached, though I could not guess its nature.

As twilight deepened, I turned back toward Thornfield Hall, unaware that the meeting awaiting me would shape the next stage of my life in ways more powerful than anything I had yet experienced.

A few days after Mrs. Fairfax told me that Mr. Rochester would soon return, I went for a walk late in the afternoon. The winter air was cold but clear, and the sky held a pale light as evening approached. I enjoyed these solitary walks greatly. They allowed my thoughts to wander freely, and I often imagined the future while observing the quiet fields around Thornfield.

The road near the house curved between hedges and low hills. Snow still lay in shaded places, though parts of the ground had begun to thaw. I walked slowly, listening to the sound of my own footsteps and the distant call of birds returning to their nests.

Suddenly I heard the sharp sound of a horse approaching behind me. Turning aside to allow passage, I stepped onto the grassy edge of the road. A large dog ran ahead, followed by a horse carrying a rider wrapped in a dark cloak.

As the horse reached a patch of ice, it slipped violently. The rider lost balance and fell heavily to the ground. The horse struggled to rise, and the dog barked loudly.

Without thinking, I hurried forward.

“Sir, are you hurt?” I asked.

The man attempted to stand but winced with pain. He leaned against the horse, breathing sharply.

“Only my ankle,” he said in a deep voice. “The ice betrayed us.”

His tone sounded impatient rather than weak. He looked at me closely, as if surprised by my presence.

“Who are you?” he asked.

“I am the governess at Thornfield Hall.”

“Indeed?” he said. “Then you must be Miss Eyre.”

I felt surprised that he knew my name.

He examined me briefly, then said, “You must help me mount again. I cannot remain here.”

Though uncertain, I obeyed. Supporting him carefully, I helped him climb back onto the horse. He moved with effort but determination.

“Thank you,” he said shortly. “You have done well.”

With that he rode toward Thornfield, the dog following beside him. I watched until he disappeared around the bend, wondering who he might be.

When I returned to the house, Mrs. Fairfax greeted me with excitement.

“Mr. Rochester has arrived,” she announced.

I realized at once that the injured rider must have been him.

That evening I was invited to meet the master of Thornfield. Entering the drawing room, I saw the same man seated near the fire. His expression appeared thoughtful, and one foot rested upon a cushion.

Mrs. Fairfax introduced us formally. “Mr. Rochester, this is Miss Eyre.”

He looked at me with recognition. “We have already met,” he said.

I felt slightly embarrassed but remained calm.

“You helped me when my horse fell,” he continued. “You did not seem frightened.”

“I wished only to assist,” I replied.

He studied my face for a moment, then smiled faintly. “You speak plainly. I like that.”

His manner differed greatly from anyone I had known before. He spoke directly and seemed uninterested in polite formality. Though not handsome, his presence felt strong and commanding.

During the conversation he asked many questions about my education and life at Lowood. I answered honestly, though briefly. He listened attentively, sometimes smiling as if amused by my replies.

Adèle soon entered the room and ran toward him with excitement.

“Monsieur Rochester!” she cried.

He greeted her kindly but with reserved affection. It became clear that he cared for her welfare though he did not behave like a typical parent.

The evening passed in conversation and music. Mr. Rochester asked Adèle to sing, and afterward he requested that I show some of my drawings. I felt nervous presenting them, yet he examined them with serious interest.

“You have talent,” he said. “These were not copied?”

“No, sir.”

“Good. Original thought matters more than imitation.”

His approval pleased me more than I expected.

After that night Mr. Rochester often invited me to join evening conversations. Our talks ranged widely. He asked unusual questions and seemed to enjoy testing my opinions. Sometimes his mood changed quickly—from serious to playful, from quiet to intense—but I found his company stimulating.

Life at Thornfield no longer felt entirely calm. A new energy filled the house whenever he was present. Though I remained aware of my position as governess, I sensed that my mind and character interested him beyond social rank.

Yet strange events continued. At times I heard distant laughter echoing through the upper corridors late at night. Once, while passing near the stairs, I heard a sound like someone moving secretly behind a locked door. When I mentioned this to Mrs. Fairfax, she again attributed it to Grace Poole.

Though uncertain, I accepted the explanation.

As weeks passed, my respect for Mr. Rochester grew. He treated me as an equal in conversation, something I had never experienced before. Gradually I felt my thoughts drawn toward him more often than I wished to admit.

Standing alone one evening by the window, watching the moonlight fall across the grounds, I realized that my quiet life at Thornfield had begun to change once more. Without fully understanding how or why, I sensed that my future had become closely connected with the master of the house whose arrival had altered the rhythm of my days.

## Part 12

After my first meeting with Mr. Rochester, life at Thornfield took on a new character. The house no longer felt silent and still. His presence brought movement, conversation, and unexpected energy. Some evenings he remained absent or occupied with business, yet when he chose to speak with me, our conversations lasted long and wandered across many subjects.

He often questioned me in a direct manner.

“Do you find Thornfield dull, Miss Eyre?” he asked one evening as we sat near the fire.

“No, sir,” I replied. “I am content here.”

“Contentment is a quiet state,” he said. “But do you never wish for something more?”

I considered before answering. “I wish only for useful employment and independence.”

He looked at me thoughtfully. “You speak differently from many young women.”

His words neither praised nor mocked, yet they remained in my thoughts afterward.

Adèle continued her lessons each day. She improved slowly, though she preferred play to study. Mr. Rochester sometimes watched our lessons and laughed at her impatience.

“She has spirit,” he said once. “You must guide it gently.”

Teaching Adèle became easier as weeks passed, and I grew accustomed to Thornfield’s rhythm. Still, the strange laughter in the upper part of the house occasionally disturbed the quiet nights. Once, while walking along the corridor after midnight, I heard it again—low, sudden, and unlike ordinary amusement. It stopped as quickly as it began.

The next morning I mentioned it cautiously to Mrs. Fairfax.

“Grace Poole has a peculiar manner,” she answered. “You need not concern yourself.”

Though reassured outwardly, curiosity remained within me.

One cold evening Mr. Rochester invited several guests to Thornfield. The house filled with voices, music, and light. Ladies and gentlemen arrived dressed elegantly, their conversation lively and confident. I felt uncertain among them and kept mostly to myself, observing from a distance.

Among the visitors was a beautiful lady named Blanche Ingram. She spoke confidently and laughed often. Her appearance and manner attracted much

attention, and I soon noticed that she directed particular interest toward Mr. Rochester.

During the evenings of music and games, I watched their interactions quietly. Miss Ingram sang and played with skill, while Mr. Rochester listened attentively. Seeing them together stirred an unfamiliar feeling within me—a quiet sadness I could not easily explain.

I reminded myself of my position. I was only the governess. Such guests belonged to a world far removed from mine.

One night, after the company retired, Mr. Rochester found me arranging books in the drawing room.

“You avoided the gathering,” he observed.

“I did not wish to intrude,” I replied.

He studied me closely. “You are not fond of society?”

“I am unused to it,” I said honestly.

He seemed thoughtful. “Perhaps simplicity has advantages over display.”

His tone softened, and for a moment I felt again the ease of our earlier conversations. Yet the presence of his guests created distance between us.

During the following days the visitors remained at Thornfield. Laughter and conversation filled every room. I continued my duties quietly, teaching Adèle and avoiding unnecessary attention.

One afternoon Adèle asked eagerly, “Will Monsieur Rochester marry the beautiful lady?”

Her question startled me.

“I do not know,” I answered carefully.

Yet the idea troubled me deeply. I began to believe that such a marriage would be natural and expected. Miss Ingram possessed beauty, wealth, and social position—qualities far beyond my own.

That evening I walked alone in the garden, trying to calm my thoughts. I told myself firmly that I must remain rational. Mr. Rochester was my employer and nothing more. Still, a hidden pain remained, revealing feelings I had not recognized before.

Soon afterward the guests departed, and Thornfield returned to quiet once more. I felt relief, though also confusion. Mr. Rochester's manner toward me grew again familiar and thoughtful, as if the lively days had changed nothing between us.

One evening he spoke suddenly.

"Miss Eyre, do you believe that equality of mind can exist despite difference in rank?"

I answered carefully. "Yes, sir. Minds may understand one another even when circumstances differ."

He looked at me intensely. "That is my belief also."

The conversation ended there, yet its meaning lingered strongly. I sensed that our relationship had entered deeper ground, though neither of us spoke openly of it.

As I returned to my room that night, I felt both unsettled and hopeful. The peaceful life I had known at Thornfield was changing again, shaped by emotions and questions I could no longer ignore. Somewhere ahead, I felt certain, an important turning awaited—one that would test both my heart and my judgment.

## Part 13

After the guests departed, Thornfield returned to its former quiet. The halls no longer echoed with laughter, and evenings once again passed in calm conversation or silent reading. Yet inwardly I felt no longer the same. The presence of Miss Ingram and the thought of Mr. Rochester's possible marriage had awakened feelings I struggled to understand.

I tried to restore my former peace by focusing on my duties. Each morning I taught Adèle with renewed attention. Her cheerful voice and lively questions often distracted me from serious thoughts. Still, whenever Mr. Rochester entered the room, my awareness sharpened despite my efforts to remain composed.

One afternoon he called me to the drawing room.

"Miss Eyre," he said, "I shall soon be absent for several days. During that time you must continue Adèle's lessons as usual."

“Yes, sir.”

He looked at me closely, as though wishing to say more, then turned away. His sudden seriousness troubled me. After he left, I wondered why his departure affected me so strongly.

The days without him felt strangely empty. Thornfield seemed larger and colder. I realized how accustomed I had become to his conversation. When he returned at last, I felt relief I could not hide even from myself.

That evening he appeared unusually thoughtful. After dinner he asked me to sit near the fire.

“Miss Eyre,” he began, “do you believe a person may seek happiness even after making mistakes?”

“Yes, sir,” I answered slowly. “If they act honestly afterward.”

He nodded. “Honesty is the hardest duty.”

His words sounded heavy with meaning, though he did not explain further.

Some nights later, a strange event occurred. I had retired to bed when a faint sound woke me—a low laugh echoing through the corridor. Recognizing it as the same mysterious laughter I had heard before, I rose and opened my door.

Smoke drifted along the hallway.

Alarmed, I followed it toward Mr. Rochester’s chamber. The door stood partly open. Inside, the bed curtains burned slowly, flames climbing upward.

Without hesitation I ran to the washstand, seized a pitcher of water, and threw it upon the fire. Again and again I poured water until the flames died.

Mr. Rochester woke suddenly.

“What is happening?” he cried.

“Fire, sir!” I answered.

He sprang from the bed and quickly ensured the danger had passed. After a moment he looked at me with intense gratitude.

“You have saved my life,” he said quietly.

I felt shaken but relieved. He questioned me closely about what I had heard and seen. When I mentioned the laughter, his expression changed, yet he soon recovered calm.

“You must speak of this to no one,” he said firmly. “I will explain matters later.”

Though puzzled, I agreed.

Standing there in the dim light, we spoke for several minutes. His voice softened.

“Jane,” he said, using my name without formality, “you have shown courage and kindness. I shall not forget it.”

His tone moved me deeply. For a moment neither of us spoke.

At last he dismissed me gently. “Go now. You must rest.”

Returning to my room, I could not sleep. The event and his words filled my thoughts. I sensed that some hidden truth existed within Thornfield, though I did not yet understand it.

The next day everything appeared normal. No mention of the fire was made. Grace Poole continued her work calmly, and Mrs. Fairfax spoke of ordinary matters. I wondered whether I had imagined the seriousness of the night.

Yet Mr. Rochester’s manner toward me changed subtly afterward. He sought my company more often and spoke with unusual openness. Our conversations grew deeper, touching upon loneliness, duty, and the search for happiness.

One evening while walking in the garden, he asked suddenly, “Do you think me handsome, Jane?”

Surprised, I answered honestly, “No, sir.”

He laughed warmly. “You are sincere, at least.”

Then his expression grew thoughtful. “Would you leave Thornfield if a better position were offered?”

The question struck me unexpectedly.

“I should regret leaving,” I admitted.

He looked satisfied yet said nothing more.

As weeks passed, my feelings became clearer to myself. I cared for him deeply—more deeply than I believed proper. Yet I reminded myself constantly that such affection must remain hidden. Difference of rank and circumstance stood firmly between us.

Still, I sensed that events were moving toward some decision neither of us could

avoid. Thornfield, once peaceful and predictable, now seemed filled with quiet tension, as if waiting for a moment that would change everything.

## Part 14

After the night of the fire, my thoughts often returned to Mr. Rochester. His gratitude and the seriousness of his manner created a bond between us that felt stronger than before. Yet I tried carefully to control my feelings. I reminded myself daily that I was only a governess and must remain sensible.

Spring advanced, and the grounds around Thornfield grew green. Adèle and I spent more time outdoors, walking beneath trees newly covered with leaves. The fresh air and sunlight lifted my spirits, though inwardly I remained thoughtful.

Mr. Rochester's mood changed frequently during this period. At times he appeared cheerful and spoke freely; at others he seemed troubled and distant. I sensed that he carried worries he did not share.

One evening he invited me to walk with him in the garden after dinner. The sky glowed softly with the colors of sunset. We walked slowly along the path bordered by flowers.

"Miss Eyre," he said suddenly, "do you believe happiness depends on fortune or on character?"

I answered, "Character, sir. Fortune may change, but character remains."

He nodded. "You speak wisely."

After a pause he added, "I may soon send Adèle away to school."

The thought startled me. "Then my position here would end," I said quietly.

He looked at me closely. "Would that trouble you?"

"Yes," I admitted. "I have grown attached to Thornfield."

He stopped walking and faced me. "And to nothing else here?"

His question made my heart beat quickly. I struggled to answer calmly. "I value the kindness I have received."

He studied my face as though searching for deeper meaning. Then he resumed walking without further explanation.

A few days later he announced that a grand party would again be held at Thornfield. Guests soon arrived, including Miss Ingram. Observing her return revived my earlier fears. I believed more strongly than ever that Mr. Rochester intended to marry her.

During the gatherings I remained mostly apart, watching quietly. Miss Ingram spoke elegantly and displayed confidence in every action. Many assumed she would soon become mistress of Thornfield.

One evening I sat alone while music filled the drawing room. Mr. Rochester approached unexpectedly.

“Why do you sit apart, Jane?” he asked.

“I prefer quiet observation,” I replied.

He looked toward the guests. “Do you admire them?”

“They possess accomplishments beyond mine,” I answered carefully.

“And yet,” he said slowly, “I find greater interest in conversation with you.”

His words stirred hope I tried to resist.

Soon afterward a strange visitor arrived—a woman claiming to tell fortunes. The guests gathered eagerly to hear her predictions. One by one they entered the room where she waited.

At last a servant told me the fortune-teller wished to see me also. Curious and uncertain, I entered the dimly lit chamber. The woman sat wrapped in a shawl, her face partly hidden.

She spoke in a low voice. “You are thoughtful and lonely,” she said. “You fear losing something precious.”

Her words surprised me.

“You watch another woman,” she continued, “and believe she will take happiness from you.”

My heart raced. Before I could answer, she laughed softly. The voice sounded strangely familiar.

Suddenly she removed the disguise. It was Mr. Rochester himself.

“Sir!” I exclaimed in astonishment.

He smiled at my surprise. “I wished to learn your true thoughts,” he admitted.

Though amused, I also felt troubled by the trick.

“You should not deceive people so,” I said quietly.

He looked at me seriously. “Perhaps not. But I wished to understand your heart.”

The conversation ended there, yet the moment deepened the connection between us. I sensed that his feelings toward me differed from his behavior toward the guests.

Days later the visitors departed once more. The house grew peaceful again. Walking together one evening beneath a large chestnut tree, Mr. Rochester spoke with unusual emotion.

“Jane,” he said, “I have searched widely for happiness and found little. Tell me—would you remain at Thornfield if circumstances changed?”

I answered honestly, though my voice trembled. “I would remain gladly, if allowed.”

He seemed satisfied yet thoughtful, as if preparing to reveal something important. The air felt still around us, and the fading light cast long shadows across the garden.

I sensed that a decisive moment approached—one that would soon reveal the true direction of my life and the meaning behind his recent actions.

## Part 15

The evening beneath the chestnut tree remained clear and calm. The air felt warm, and the last light of day rested softly upon the garden. Mr. Rochester walked beside me in silence for several moments before speaking again.

“Jane,” he said at last, “I must tell you something. Soon you will hear that I am to be married.”

My heart seemed to stop, though I tried to remain composed.

“Very well, sir,” I answered quietly.

He continued, watching me closely. “You will think me happy. Everyone believes the match suitable.”

I struggled to speak calmly. “I hope you will be happy.”

The words cost me great effort. I turned slightly away so he would not see the pain in my face.

He went on, "When I am married, you must leave Thornfield. I will find you a new position far away."

The thought struck me deeply. Leaving Thornfield—and him—felt unbearable. Yet I forced myself to answer.

"Yes, sir. That would be proper."

My voice trembled despite my effort to control it.

He suddenly stepped closer. "Why must you leave?"

I replied, "Because I would have nothing to do here. I must seek another home."

Emotion rose within me, stronger than restraint. Words escaped before I could stop them.

"Do you think I am without feeling?" I cried. "Do you believe I can live easily away from you? I am not an object without a heart. I have as much soul as you—and full as much heart!"

Tears filled my eyes, yet I continued speaking honestly. "I must leave because it is right, not because I wish it."

For a moment silence surrounded us. Then his expression changed completely.

"Jane," he said softly, "you misunderstand me."

He took my hand.

"I ask you to stay—not as a governess, but as my wife."

I stared at him, unable to believe his words.

"My wife?" I repeated.

"Yes," he said firmly. "I love you. I value your mind, your spirit, your honesty. Will you marry me?"

Joy and disbelief filled me together. I searched his face to be certain he spoke truth.

"Do not mock me," I whispered.

"I speak sincerely," he replied. "It is you I wish to marry—not Miss Ingram. That was only a mistake meant to test my own feelings."

Relief overcame me so strongly that I could hardly stand. The sorrow I had

carried vanished suddenly, replaced by happiness brighter than anything I had known.

“Yes,” I said at last. “I will marry you.”

He drew me closer, smiling with deep warmth. At that moment thunder sounded in the distance, and a strong wind moved through the trees. Rain soon began to fall, forcing us to return to the house.

That night I slept little, filled with excitement and wonder. My future seemed transformed completely. From lonely orphan to beloved companion—the change felt almost unreal.

The following days passed in preparation for the wedding. Mr. Rochester appeared happier than I had ever seen him. He spoke eagerly of our future together and wished to provide me with fine clothing and jewels.

Yet I resisted excessive gifts.

“I wish to remain myself,” I told him. “Do not dress me like someone I am not.”

He laughed but agreed, though reluctantly.

Mrs. Fairfax received the news with surprise. She treated me kindly but with new formality, as if uncertain how to address my changed position. Adèle rejoiced openly, delighted by the idea of celebration.

Despite my happiness, small feelings of unease sometimes appeared. The strange laughter in the house continued at times, though less often. Once I woke during the night and sensed movement near my room, yet when I looked, nothing remained.

I dismissed these fears as imagination, unwilling to allow doubt to disturb my joy.

The wedding day approached quickly. Everything seemed ready. I believed my long search for belonging had finally ended.

On the morning of the ceremony we traveled to the church. The sky stood clear, and the world appeared calm and bright. Standing beside Mr. Rochester at the altar, I felt peaceful certainty.

The minister began the service. All seemed to proceed normally—until a voice suddenly spoke from behind us.

“The marriage cannot continue.”

Shock spread through the church. I turned, confused and frightened, sensing at once that the happiness I had just grasped stood suddenly in danger.

## Part 16

The words spoken in the church seemed to stop time itself. Everyone turned toward the back, where two strangers stood near the door. One stepped forward calmly while the other remained silent.

“This marriage must not take place,” the man repeated.

Mr. Rochester’s face grew dark with anger. “Who speaks?” he demanded. “And what reason do you give for interrupting this ceremony?”

The stranger answered firmly, “I speak because there exists a legal obstacle. Mr. Rochester is already married.”

A deep silence filled the church. I felt the ground beneath me weaken. The words sounded impossible, yet their seriousness left no room for doubt.

“Produce your proof,” Mr. Rochester said sharply.

The man introduced himself as Mr. Briggs, a lawyer. He explained that Mr. Rochester had a wife still living. Another man stepped forward and confirmed the statement, declaring he had known the woman personally.

I stood motionless, unable to think clearly. The minister lowered his book, waiting.

Mr. Rochester spoke again, his voice controlled but intense. “Very well. Come all of you to Thornfield, and you shall see the truth for yourselves.”

The wedding party returned to the house in silence. My thoughts felt distant, as though I watched events from outside myself. Fear and confusion replaced the happiness of only moments before.

Upon arrival, Mr. Rochester led everyone upstairs to a remote part of the house I had never entered. The corridor felt dark and unfamiliar. He unlocked a heavy door and guided us inside.

Another door stood beyond it, guarded carefully. When it opened, I saw a

woman moving wildly within the room. Her hair hung loose, and her eyes shone with restless energy. She laughed loudly—a sound I recognized at once as the strange laughter that had echoed through Thornfield.

Mr. Rochester spoke quietly but firmly. “This is my wife, Bertha Mason.”

Shock filled me completely. The mystery of the house stood revealed.

He explained that many years earlier he had married her in another country, unaware of her illness. Soon after, her mind had become unstable. For safety she had been kept under care at Thornfield, watched by Grace Poole.

The woman suddenly rushed forward with violent motion. Grace Poole restrained her carefully, guiding her back.

I could hardly breathe. The truth destroyed everything I had believed about my future.

Mr. Rochester turned toward me, his expression filled with pain. “Jane,” he said, “you see the situation. I meant no deception of the heart. I believed happiness possible again.”

I could not answer. My thoughts struggled between love and duty. Though I pitied him deeply, the reality remained unchanged: he was already married.

The visitors soon departed, leaving the house heavy with silence. I returned to my room alone, feeling as though my life had been broken in a single moment.

That night Mr. Rochester came to speak with me. His voice carried urgency.

“Jane,” he said, “you must understand. My marriage exists only in name. She cannot share my life. Come away with me. We shall live elsewhere and begin anew.”

His words tempted my heart strongly. I loved him still, and the thought of leaving him caused deep pain.

Yet another voice within me spoke of right and wrong.

“I cannot,” I answered at last. “It would be wrong.”

He pleaded earnestly. “Do not abandon me to misery.”

Tears filled my eyes. “I must respect myself,” I said softly. “If I stay, I lose that.”

The struggle tore at me, but my decision grew firm. I knew I must leave Thornfield despite my love.

The night passed without sleep. Before dawn I rose quietly, packed a few belongings, and prepared to depart. Every object in the room reminded me of happiness now lost.

I paused once, looking back toward the house. My heart ached deeply, yet I knew I could not remain.

Without waking anyone, I left Thornfield Hall and walked toward the road alone. The sky slowly brightened as morning approached. Each step carried me away from the man I loved and toward an uncertain future.

Though sorrow weighed heavily upon me, a quiet strength guided my actions. I chose hardship rather than betrayal of conscience. With little money and no clear destination, I began once more as I had long ago—alone, yet determined to remain true to myself.

## Part 17

I walked away from Thornfield before sunrise, carrying only a small bundle of clothes and the little money I possessed. The morning air felt cold and empty. Each step forward required effort, yet I did not look back. I feared that if I turned even once, my courage would fail and I would return.

After walking several miles, I reached a road where a passing coach agreed to take me as far as my money allowed. I entered without knowing where I wished to go. My only thought was distance—distance from Thornfield and from temptation.

The journey lasted many hours. At last the driver stopped in a small town and told me I must leave. My money was nearly gone. I stepped down, alone among strangers, unsure of what to do next.

I walked through the village searching for work or shelter, but no one knew me. My appearance, plain and tired from travel, drew little kindness. I asked at several houses whether they needed a teacher or servant, yet each answer was refusal.

Hunger soon troubled me. Having eaten little since leaving Thornfield, I felt weak. At one small shop I offered my handkerchief in exchange for bread, but the

woman refused.

“We do not trade like that,” she said firmly.

Shame and exhaustion overwhelmed me. I continued walking beyond the village into open countryside. The road stretched endlessly before me, bordered by fields and low hills. Evening approached, and I realized I had nowhere to sleep.

At last my strength failed. I sank onto the grass beside the road, unable to continue. Rain began to fall lightly. For the first time since leaving Thornfield, despair touched me deeply.

“Where shall I go?” I whispered.

Darkness came quickly. With great effort I rose and walked again until I saw a small house standing alone near the road. A faint light shone from the window. Gathering my remaining courage, I knocked at the door.

A servant answered but shook her head when I asked for food or shelter.

“We cannot admit strangers,” she said.

The door closed, leaving me outside once more.

I moved away slowly and found a sheltered place near a wall. There I lay down, too tired to think. Hunger and cold pressed upon me, and sleep came only in short troubled moments.

Morning returned with pale light. Weak and faint, I walked again toward another house visible across the fields. With difficulty I reached the door and knocked softly.

This time a young woman opened it. Her expression showed surprise but also concern when she saw my condition.

“You look ill,” she said gently. “Please come inside.”

I could barely answer. She supported me as I entered. Warmth surrounded me, and voices spoke nearby. A young man soon appeared and asked questions kindly.

“You are safe here,” he said. “Sit and rest.”

Exhaustion overcame me completely, and I lost awareness for a time.

When I awoke, I lay in a clean bed. The room felt simple but peaceful. The young woman sat nearby.

“You are better now,” she said. “My name is Diana Rivers. My brother St. John

found you near the house.”

I thanked her weakly.

She explained that she and her sister Mary lived there with their brother, a clergyman. They had taken me in despite knowing nothing about me.

During the following days they cared for me patiently while my strength returned. Their kindness touched me deeply after the hardship I had endured. Unlike the Reeds or strangers in the village, they asked no questions until I felt ready to speak.

At last St. John Rivers spoke gently. “When you are strong enough, you may tell us your story if you wish. Until then, you are welcome here.”

Grateful beyond words, I accepted their generosity. I gave only a simple name—Jane Elliott—wishing to hide my past for a time.

Life at Moor House, as their home was called, felt calm and honest. Diana and Mary treated me as a friend rather than a burden. We read together, spoke of books and ideas, and shared quiet walks across the moor.

Though sorrow for Mr. Rochester remained within me, peace slowly returned. I began to understand that leaving Thornfield, though painful, had preserved my self-respect.

One evening, standing outside and watching the wide open landscape, I felt a new sense of strength. I had lost love and comfort, yet I had not lost myself. The future remained uncertain, but hope—quiet and steady—began once more to grow within my heart.

## Part 18

As my strength returned, life at Moor House became peaceful and orderly. Diana and Mary Rivers treated me with warmth and respect. Their conversation was thoughtful, and their education broad. For the first time since leaving Thornfield, my mind felt calm enough to enjoy learning again.

Each morning we shared simple meals together. Afterward the sisters read or worked while I assisted with small household tasks. Though their home lacked

luxury, it possessed comfort created by kindness and mutual respect.

St. John Rivers differed greatly from his sisters. He was calm, serious, and reserved. His manner remained polite but distant. He watched me closely at times, as if trying to understand my character.

One evening he said, "Miss Elliott, you are strong in spirit. Hardship has not broken you."

I answered quietly, "I have been fortunate to receive help."

He nodded but added nothing further.

After several weeks he spoke again. "You must consider how you will support yourself. Would you accept employment if I found a suitable position?"

Grateful for the opportunity, I replied, "Yes. I wish to work."

Soon he arranged for me to become a teacher at a small village school nearby. The building stood simple and plain, and my students were children of local workers. Many knew little reading or writing. At first the task seemed difficult, yet I resolved to perform it faithfully.

Teaching there differed greatly from Lowood or Thornfield. The children arrived tired from labor and unused to discipline. Progress came slowly, but I learned patience. When a child succeeded in reading a sentence or writing a word clearly, I felt quiet satisfaction.

My life became modest but meaningful. Each day brought honest work, and each evening I returned to Moor House welcomed as a friend. Though memories of Mr. Rochester still visited me, they no longer caused overwhelming pain.

Diana and Mary soon left to work as governesses elsewhere, and the house grew quieter. St. John and I remained, sharing meals and conversation. His mind focused strongly on duty and religion. He often spoke of service and sacrifice.

One evening he asked, "Do you find happiness in your present life?"

I thought carefully. "I find peace," I answered.

He regarded me thoughtfully. "Peace is valuable, yet greater purpose may exist beyond comfort."

His words suggested ambitions far different from my own.

Months passed. One day St. John brought surprising news.

“I have learned something concerning your family,” he said.

My heart stirred with sudden curiosity.

He explained that a relative of mine had died and left a considerable inheritance to a woman named Jane Eyre. Through careful inquiry he had discovered that I was that person.

Astonishment filled me. I had lived believing myself poor and alone. Now I possessed independence beyond expectation.

“The fortune is yours,” he said simply.

Gratitude and disbelief mixed within me. Yet another revelation followed. St. John, Diana, and Mary were also my cousins—the children of my mother’s brother.

Joy replaced loneliness at once. I had found family at last.

I insisted that the inheritance be shared equally among us. At first they refused, but I remained firm.

“We are family,” I said. “We must share alike.”

At last they agreed, and our bond grew stronger through mutual affection rather than obligation.

Life changed again. Freed from financial worry, I felt independent for the first time completely. Yet St. John soon presented another proposal.

He planned to travel abroad as a missionary and asked me to marry him and join his work.

“You are suited for duty and endurance,” he said. “Together we could accomplish great service.”

His request surprised me deeply. Though I respected him, my heart remained untouched by love.

“I will help you as a sister,” I answered gently, “but I cannot marry without affection.”

He urged me repeatedly, speaking of duty rather than happiness. His calm persistence troubled me, for I sensed that marriage without love would destroy my spirit.

One evening, feeling torn between obligation and inner truth, I walked alone

across the moor. The wind moved strongly over the open land. Suddenly, through the silence, I seemed to hear a voice calling my name—Mr. Rochester’s voice, distant yet clear.

“Jane! Jane! Jane!”

I stopped, trembling. The sound felt real, not imagined. A powerful certainty filled me: he needed me.

In that moment my decision became clear. My path did not lie beside St. John in distant duty but elsewhere—back toward the man whose memory still lived in my heart.

I returned home resolved. Whatever awaited me, I would seek Mr. Rochester once more and learn his fate.

## Part 19

The strange call I heard upon the moor remained vivid in my mind. Though no one else had heard it, I felt certain the voice belonged to Mr. Rochester. The feeling grew stronger with every passing hour. I could not ignore it. My heart told me that something important had happened and that I must return to Thornfield.

The next morning I informed St. John of my decision to travel.

“I must leave for a time,” I said. “I have personal matters to settle.”

He looked at me steadily. “You follow feeling rather than duty.”

“I follow what I believe is right,” I answered gently.

Though he did not approve, he accepted my choice. Diana and Mary, who had returned briefly to visit, encouraged me warmly.

“You must go where your heart leads,” Diana said.

With their support, I prepared for the journey. Now that I possessed independence and money of my own, travel no longer frightened me. Yet my thoughts remained anxious. I did not know what awaited me at Thornfield—or whether Mr. Rochester still lived there.

The journey felt long, filled with restless anticipation. At last I reached the familiar countryside near Thornfield Hall. My heart beat quickly as I walked along

the final road.

When the house came into view, I stopped suddenly.

Thornfield was no longer the same.

The great building stood blackened and broken. Walls remained, but windows were empty, and part of the roof had fallen. Grass grew where once the garden had been carefully kept. Silence surrounded the ruin.

Shock and fear overwhelmed me. I hurried toward a nearby inn and asked the owner about Thornfield.

“There was a terrible fire some months ago,” he explained. “The house burned during the night.”

My voice trembled. “And Mr. Rochester?”

The man looked at me with sympathy. “He survived, but not without injury. He lost his sight while saving others from the flames.”

My heart filled with both sorrow and relief. He lived—but suffered greatly.

The innkeeper continued, “His wife caused the fire. She escaped her room and set the house ablaze. Later she fell from the roof and died. Mr. Rochester now lives at a smaller house called Ferndean, far from here.”

Hearing this, I felt certain of my purpose. Without delay I arranged to travel to Ferndean.

The road there passed through deep woods. Evening approached as I arrived. The house stood hidden among trees, quiet and isolated. Its appearance reflected solitude rather than comfort.

I paused before knocking, gathering courage. Years of change and suffering had led me back to this moment.

A servant opened the door. I asked softly, “Is Mr. Rochester here?”

“Yes,” the servant answered. “But he receives few visitors.”

I stepped inside. The room felt dim. A figure sat near the fire, motionless.

He appeared older and thinner. His eyes, once sharp and searching, now looked unfocused. One hand rested upon the arm of the chair as if listening for movement.

My heart ached at the sight.

I spoke quietly. “Mr. Rochester.”

He started slightly. "Who is there?"

I moved closer. "It is Jane."

For a moment he remained silent, as though unsure whether to believe.

"Jane?" he repeated softly. "Is this real—or only a dream?"

I took his hand gently. "I have come back."

Emotion filled his voice. "I thought you lost to me forever."

Tears rose in my eyes. "I could not remain away."

He explained slowly how the fire had destroyed Thornfield and taken his sight. Believing himself ruined and unworthy, he had chosen to live quietly at Ferndean.

"You see what I am now," he said. "A blind and broken man."

"I see the same man," I answered firmly.

He tried to withdraw his hand. "You must not pity me."

"I do not pity," I said. "I love."

Silence followed, deep and meaningful. The distance that once separated us no longer existed. Circumstance had changed, yet our hearts understood one another more clearly than before.

In that quiet room, I knew my long journey had reached its true destination—not in wealth or independence alone, but in a union freely chosen and equal in spirit.

## Part 20

Mr. Rochester continued to hold my hand as if afraid I might disappear again. The firelight moved gently across his face, showing both weariness and deep emotion. For a long moment neither of us spoke. The silence felt peaceful rather than painful.

"Jane," he said at last, "tell me truly—why have you returned? You are free now. You have friends and fortune. Why come back to a ruined man?"

I answered calmly, "Because I wished to return. I am independent, and I choose to be here."

He shook his head slightly. "You do not understand. I am no longer the man

you knew. I cannot see you. I cannot guide you. My life is dark.”

“Then I will be your eyes,” I said gently. “We shall share life together.”

My words seemed to move him deeply. He remained silent for several moments before speaking again.

“Do you still love me, Jane?”

“Yes,” I replied simply.

He breathed slowly, as though relief had entered his heart after long suffering.

During the following days I remained at Ferndean. The house stood quiet within thick woods, far from society. At first Mr. Rochester appeared uncertain of my presence, as if fearing happiness might vanish again. Gradually, however, he accepted my return.

We walked together when weather allowed. He leaned upon my arm while I described the trees, the sky, and the changing light. Though he could not see, he listened closely, imagining each scene through my words.

One evening he said softly, “You bring the world back to me.”

I felt then that my decision had been right.

After some time he spoke again of marriage, though hesitantly.

“Jane, would you truly unite your life with mine now? You would bind yourself to blindness and solitude.”

I answered without doubt. “I would marry you gladly.”

This time no obstacle stood between us. His former marriage had ended with his wife’s death, and we were free to choose openly.

Our wedding took place quietly in a small church. No grand celebration followed—only calm happiness. Standing beside him once more, I felt certainty deeper than excitement. Our union rested upon equality, honesty, and shared experience.

Life at Ferndean proved simple yet fulfilling. I managed the household while he regained strength slowly. Over time slight improvement came to his sight. He began to perceive light and shadow again, and eventually he could see faintly with one eye.

When he first distinguished my face, his joy moved me deeply.

“I can see you,” he said, smiling. “Not clearly—but enough.”

Years passed peacefully. Diana and Mary visited often, strengthening our family ties. Adèle later joined us during holidays, growing into a kind and intelligent young woman.

Looking back upon my life, I understood how each stage had shaped me: the loneliness of Gateshead, the discipline of Lowood, the awakening of love at Thornfield, the trial of separation, and the discovery of independence. All had led to this quiet happiness freely chosen.

I learned that true equality exists not in rank or wealth but in mutual respect and affection. Mr. Rochester and I lived not as master and dependent, but as companions sharing strength and weakness alike.

Thus my story, once filled with hardship and uncertainty, reached its peaceful conclusion. I had found both home and belonging—not given by circumstance, but created through courage, conscience, and enduring love.