

CHAPTER XXVII

SOME time in the afternoon I raised my head, and looking round and seeing the western sun gilding the sign of its decline on the wall, I asked, 'What am I to do?'

But the answer my mind gave- 'Leave Thornfield at once'- was so prompt, so dread, that I stopped my ears. I said I could not bear such words now. 'That I am not Edward Rochester's bride is the least part of my woe,' I alleged: 'that I have wakened out of most glorious dreams, and found them all void and vain, is a horror I could bear and master; but that I must leave him decidedly, instantly, entirely, is intolerable. I cannot do it.'

But, then, a voice within me averred that I could do it and foretold that I should do it. I wrestled with my own resolution: I wanted to be weak that I might avoid the awful passage of further suffering I saw laid out for me; and Conscience, turned tyrant, held Passion by the throat, told her tauntingly, she had yet but dipped her dainty foot in the slough, and swore that with that arm of iron he would thrust her down to unsounded depths of agony.

'Let me be torn away, then!' I cried. 'Let another help me!'

'No; you shall tear yourself away, none shall help you: you shall yourself pluck out your right eye; yourself cut off your right hand: your heart shall be the victim, and you the priest to transfix it.'

I rose up suddenly, terror-struck at the solitude which so ruthless a judge haunted,- at the silence which so awful a voice filled. My head swam as I stood erect. I perceived that I was sickening from excitement and inanition; neither meat nor drink had passed my lips that day, for I had taken no breakfast. And, with a strange pang, I now reflected that, long as I had been shut up here, no message had been sent to ask how I was, or to invite me to come down: not even little Adele had tapped at the door; not even Mrs. Fairfax had sought me. 'Friends always forget those whom fortune forsakes,' I murmured, as I undrew the bolt and passed out. I stumbled over an obstacle: my head was still dizzy, my sight was dim, and my limbs were feeble. I could not soon recover myself. I fell, but not on to the ground; an outstretched arm caught me. I looked up- I was supported by Mr. Rochester, who sat in a chair across my chamber threshold.

'You come out at last,' he said. 'Well, I have been waiting for you long, and listening: yet not one movement have I heard, nor one sob: five minutes more of that death-like hush, and I should have forced the lock like a burglar. So you shun me?- you shut yourself up and grieve alone! I would rather you had come and upbraided me with vehemence. You are passionate: I expected a scene of some kind. I was prepared for the hot rain of tears; only I wanted them to be shed on my breast: now a senseless floor has received them, or your drenched handkerchief. But I err: you have not wept at all! I see a white cheek and a faded eye, but no trace of tears. I suppose, then, your heart has been weeping blood?'

'Well, Jane! not a word of reproach? Nothing bitter - nothing poignant? Nothing to cut a feeling or sting a passion? You sit quietly where I have placed you, and regard me with a weary, passive look.'

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'Jane, I never meant to wound you thus. If the man who had but one little ewe lamb that was dear to him as a daughter, that ate of his bread and drank of his cup, and lay in his bosom, had by some mistake slaughtered it at the shambles, he would not have rued his bloody blunder more than I now rue mine. Will you ever forgive me?'

Reader, I forgave him at the moment and on the spot. There was such deep remorse in his eye, such true pity in his tone, such manly energy in his manner; and besides, there was such unchanged love in his whole look and mien- I forgave him all: yet not in words, not outwardly; only at my heart's core.

'You know I am a scoundrel, Jane?' ere long he inquired wistfully- wondering, I suppose, at my continued silence and tameness, the result rather of weakness than of will.

'Yes, sir.'

'Then tell me so roundly and sharply- don't spare me.'

'I cannot: I am tired and sick. I want some water.' He heaved a sort of shuddering sigh, and taking me in his arms, carried me downstairs. At first I did not know to what room he had borne me; all was cloudy to my glazed sight: presently I felt the reviving warmth of a fire; for, summer as it was, I had become icy cold in my chamber. He put wine to my lips; I tasted it and revived; then I ate something he offered me, and was soon myself. I was in the library- sitting in his chair- he was quite near. 'If I could go out of life now, without too sharp a pang, it would be well for me,' I thought;

'then I should not have to make the effort of cracking my heart-strings in rending them from among Mr. Rochester's. I must leave him, it appears. I do not want to leave him- I cannot leave him.'

'How are you now, Jane?'

'Much better, sir; I shall be well soon.'

'Taste the wine again, Jane.'

I obeyed him; then he put the glass on the table, stood before me, and looked at me attentively. Suddenly he turned away, with an inarticulate exclamation, full of passionate emotion of some kind; he walked fast through the room and came back; he stooped towards me as if to kiss me; but I remembered caresses were now forbidden. I turned my face away and put his aside.

'What!- How is this?' he exclaimed hastily. 'Oh, I know! you won't kiss the husband of Bertha Mason? You consider my arms filled and my embraces appropriated?'

'At any rate, there is neither room nor claim for me, sir.'

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'Why, Jane? I will spare you the trouble of much talking; I will answer for you- Because I have a wife already, you would reply.- I guess rightly?'

'Yes.'

'If you think so, you must have a strange opinion of me; you must regard me as a plotting profligate- a base and low rake who has been simulating disinterested love in order to draw you into a snare deliberately laid, and strip you of honour and rob you of self-respect. What do you say to that? I see you can say nothing: in the first place, you are faint still, and have enough to do to draw your breath; in the second place, you cannot yet accustom yourself to accuse and revile me, and besides, the flood-gates of tears are opened, and they would rush out if you spoke much; and you have no desire to expostulate, to upbraid, to make a scene: you are thinking how to act- talking you consider is of no use. I know you- I am on my guard.'

'Sir, I do not wish to act against you,' I said; and my unsteady voice warned me to curtail my sentence.

'Not in your sense of the word, but in mine you are scheming to destroy me. You have as good as said that I am a married man- as a married man you will shun me, keep out of my way: just now you have refused to kiss me. You intend to make yourself a complete stranger to me: to live under this roof only as Adele's governess; if ever I say a friendly word to you, if ever a friendly feeling inclines you again to me, you will say,- "That man had nearly made me his mistress: I must be ice and rock to him"; and ice and rock you will accordingly become.'

I cleared and steadied my voice to reply: 'All is changed about me, sir; I must change too- there is no doubt of that; and to avoid fluctuations of feeling, and continual combats with recollections and associations, there is only one way- Adele must have a new governess, sir.'

'Oh, Adele will go to school- I have settled that already; nor do I mean to torment you with the hideous associations and recollections of Thornfield Hall- this accursed place- this tent of Achan- this insolent vault, offering the ghastliness of living death to the light of the open sky- this narrow stone hell, with its one real fiend, worse than a legion of such as we imagine. Jane, you shall not stay here, nor will I. I was wrong ever to bring you to Thornfield Hall, knowing as I did how it was haunted. I charged them to conceal from you, before I ever saw you, all knowledge of the curse of the place; merely because I feared Adele never would have a governess to stay if she knew with what inmate she was housed, and my plans would not permit me to remove the maniac elsewhere- though I possess an old house, Ferndean Manor, even more retired and hidden than this, where I could have lodged her safely enough, had not a scruple about the unhealthiness of the situation, in the heart of a wood, made my conscience recoil from the arrangement. Probably those damp walls would soon have eased me of her charge: but to each villain his own vice; and mine is not a tendency to indirect assassination, even of what I most hate.

'Concealing the mad-woman's neighbourhood from you, however, was something like covering a child with a cloak and laying it down near a upas-tree: that demon's vicinage is poisoned, and

always was. But I'll shut up Thornfield Hall: I'll nail up the front door and board the lower windows: I'll give Mrs. Poole two hundred a year to live here with my wife, as you term that fearful hag: Grace will do much for money, and she shall have her son, the keeper at Grimsby Retreat, to bear her company and be at hand to give her aid in the paroxysms, when my wife is prompted by her familiar to burn people in their beds at night, to stab them, to bite their flesh from their bones, and so on-'

'Sir,' I interrupted him, 'you are inexorable for that unfortunate lady: you speak of her with hate-with vindictive antipathy. It is cruel- she cannot help being mad.'

'Jane, my little darling (so I will call you, for so you are), you don't know what you are talking about; you misjudge me again: it is not because she is mad I hate her. If you were mad, do you think I should hate you?'

'I do indeed, sir.'

'Then you are mistaken, and you know nothing about me, and nothing about the sort of love of which I am capable. Every atom of your flesh is as dear to me as my own: in pain and sickness it would still be dear. Your mind is my treasure, and if it were broken, it would be my treasure still: if you raved, my arms should confine you, and not a strait waistcoat- your grasp, even in fury, would have a charm for me: if you flew at me as wildly as that woman did this morning, I should receive you in an embrace, at least as fond as it would be restrictive. I should not shrink from you with disgust as I did from her: in your quiet moments you should have no watcher and no nurse but me; and I could hang over you with untiring tenderness, though you gave me no smile in return; and never weary of gazing into your eyes, though they had no longer a ray of recognition for me. - But why do I follow that train of ideas? I was talking of removing you from Thornfield. All, you know, is prepared for prompt departure: to-morrow you shall go. I only ask you to endure one more night under this roof, Jane; and then, farewell to its miseries and terrors for ever! I have a place to repair to, which will be a secure sanctuary from hateful reminiscences, from unwelcome intrusion- even from falsehood and slander.'

'And take Adele with you, sir,' I interrupted; 'she will be a companion for you.'

'What do you mean, Jane? I told you I would send Adele to school; and what do I want with a child for a companion, and not my own child,- a French dancer's bastard? Why do you importune me about her! I say, why do you assign Adele to me for a companion?'

'You spoke of a retirement, sir; and retirement and solitude are dull: too dull for you.'

'Solitude! solitude!' he reiterated with irritation. 'I see I must come to an explanation. I don't know what sphynx-like expression is forming in your countenance. You are to share my solitude. Do you understand?'

I shook my head: it required a degree of courage, excited as he was becoming, even to risk that

mute sign of dissent. He had been walking fast about the room, and he stopped, as if suddenly rooted to one spot. He looked at me long and hard: I turned my eyes from him, fixed them on the fire, and tried to assume and maintain a quiet, collected aspect.

'Now for the hitch in Jane's character,' he said at last, speaking more calmly than from his look I had expected him to speak.

'The reel of silk has run smoothly enough so far; but I always knew there would come a knot and a puzzle: here it is. Now for vexation, and exasperation, and endless trouble! By God! I long to exert a fraction of Samson's strength, and break the entanglement like tow!'

He recommenced his walk, but soon again stopped, and this time just before me.

'Jane! will you hear reason?' (he stooped and approached his lips to my ear); 'because, if you won't, I'll try violence. His voice was hoarse; his look that of a man who is just about to burst an insufferable bond and plunge headlong into wild license. I saw that in another moment, and with one impetus of frenzy more, I should be able to do nothing with him. The present- the passing second of time- was all I had in which to control and restrain him: a movement of repulsion, flight, fear would have sealed my doom,- and his. But I was not afraid: not in the least. I felt an inward power; a sense of influence, which supported me. The crisis was perilous; but not without its charm: such as the Indian, perhaps, feels when he slips over the rapid in his canoe. I took hold of his clenched hand, loosened the contorted fingers, and said to him, soothingly-

'Sit down; I'll talk to you as long as you like, and hear all you have to say, whether reasonable or unreasonable.'

He sat down: but he did not get leave to speak directly. I had been struggling with tears for some time: I had taken great pains to repress them, because I knew he would not like to see me weep. Now, however, I considered it well to let them flow as freely and as long as they liked. If the flood annoyed him, so much the better. So I gave way and cried heartily.

Soon I heard him earnestly entreating me to be composed. I said I could not while he was in such a passion.

'But I am not angry, Jane: I only love you too well; and you had steeled your little pale face with such a resolute, frozen look, I could not endure it. Hush, now, and wipe your eyes.'

His softened voice announced that he was subdued; so I, in my turn, became calm. Now he made an effort to rest his head on my shoulder, but I would not permit it. Then he would draw me to him: no.

'Jane! Jane!' he said, in such an accent of bitter sadness it thrilled along every nerve I had; 'you don't love me, then? It was only my station, and the rank of my wife, that you valued? Now that you think me disqualified to become your husband, you recoil from my touch as if I were some toad or ape.'

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These words cut me: yet what could I do or say? I ought probably to have done or said nothing; but I was so tortured by a sense of remorse at thus hurting his feelings, I could not control the wish to drop balm where I had wounded.

'I do love you,' I said, 'more than ever: but I must not show or indulge the feeling: and this is the last time I must express it.'

'The last time, Jane! What! do you think you can live with me, and see me daily, and yet, if you still love me, be always cold and distant?'

'No, sir; that I am certain I could not; and therefore I see there is but one way: but you will be furious if I mention it.'

'Oh, mention it! If I storm, you have the art of weeping.'

'Mr. Rochester, I must leave you.'

'For how long, Jane? For a few minutes, while you smooth your hair- which is somewhat dishevelled; and bathe your face- which looks feverish?'

'I must leave Adele and Thornfield. I must part with you for my whole life: I must begin a new existence among strange faces and strange scenes.'

'Of course: I told you you should. I pass over the madness about parting from me. You mean you must become a part of me. As to the new existence, it is all right: you shall yet be my wife: I am not married. You shall be Mrs. Rochester- both virtually and nominally.

I shall keep only to you so long as you and I live. You shall go to a place I have in the south of France: a whitewashed villa on the shores of the Mediterranean. There you shall live a happy, and guarded, and most innocent life. Never fear that I wish to lure you into error- to make you my mistress. Why did you shake your head?

Jane, you must be reasonable, or in truth I shall again become frantic.'

His voice and hand quivered: his large nostrils dilated; his eye blazing: still I dared to speak.

'Sir, your wife is living: that is a fact acknowledged this morning by yourself. If I lived with you as you desire, I should then be your mistress: to say otherwise is sophistical- is false.'

'Jane, I am not a gentle-tempered man- you forget that: I am not long-enduring; I am not cool and dispassionate. Out of pity to me and yourself, put your finger on my pulse, feel how it throbs, and-beware!'

He bared his wrist, and offered it to me: the blood was forsaking his cheek and lips, they were

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growing livid; I was distressed on all hands. To agitate him thus deeply, by a resistance he so abhorred, was cruel: to yield was out of the question. I did what human beings do instinctively when they are driven to utter extremity- looked for aid to one higher than man: the words 'God help me!' burst involuntarily from my lips.

'I am a fool!' cried Mr. Rochester suddenly. 'I keep telling her I am not married, and do not explain to her why. I forget she knows nothing of the character of that woman, or of the circumstances attending my infernal union with her. Oh, I am certain Jane will agree with me in opinion, when she knows all that I know! Just put your hand in mine, Janet- that I may have the evidence of touch as well as sight, to prove you are near me- and I will in a few words show you the real state of the case. Can you listen to me?'

'Yes, sir; for hours if you will.'

'I ask only minutes. Jane, did you ever hear or know that I was not the eldest son of my house: that I had once a brother older than I?'

'I remember Mrs. Fairfax told me so once.'

'And did you ever hear that my father was an avaricious, grasping man?'

'I have understood something to that effect.'

'Well, Jane, being so, it was his resolution to keep the property together; he could not bear the idea of dividing his estate and leaving me a fair portion: all, he resolved, should go to my brother, Rowland. Yet as little could he endure that a son of his should be a poor man. I must be provided for by a wealthy marriage. He sought me a partner betimes. Mr. Mason, a West India planter and merchant, was his old acquaintance. He was certain his possessions were real and vast: he made inquiries. Mr. Mason, he found, had a son and daughter; and he learned from him that he could and would give the latter a fortune of thirty thousand pounds: that sufficed. When I left college, I was sent out to Jamaica, to espouse a bride already courted for me. My father said nothing about her money; but he told me Miss Mason was the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty: and this was no lie. I found her a fine woman, in the style of Blanche Ingram: tall, dark, and majestic. Her family wished to secure me because I was of a good race; and so did she. They showed her to me in parties, splendidly dressed. I seldom saw her alone, and had very little private conversation with her. She flattered me, and lavishly displayed for my pleasure her charms and accomplishments. All the men in her circle seemed to admire her and envy me. I was dazzled, stimulated: my senses were excited; and being ignorant, raw, and inexperienced, I thought I loved her. There is no folly so besotted that the idiotic rivalries of society, the prudence, the rashness, the blindness of youth, will not hurry a man to its commission. Her relatives encouraged me; competitors piqued me; she allured me: a marriage was achieved almost before I knew where I was. Oh, I have no respect for myself when I think of that act!- an agony of inward contempt masters me. I never loved, I never esteemed, I did not even know her. I was not sure of the existence of one virtue in her nature:

I had marked neither modesty, nor benevolence, nor candour, nor refinement in her mind or manners- and, I married her:- gross, grovelling, mole-eyed blockhead that I was! With less sin I might have- But let me remember to whom I am speaking.

'My bride's mother I had never seen: I understood she was dead. The honeymoon over, I learned my mistake; she was only mad, and shut up in a lunatic asylum. There was a younger brother, too- a complete dumb idiot. The elder one, whom you have seen (and whom I cannot hate, whilst I abhor all his kindred, because he has some grains of affection in his feeble mind, shown in the continued interest he takes in his wretched sister, and also in a dog-like attachment he once bore me), will probably be in the same state one day. My father and my brother Rowland knew all this; but they thought only of the thirty thousand pounds, and joined in the plot against me.

'These were vile discoveries; but except for the treachery of concealment, I should have made them no subject of reproach to my wife, even when I found her nature wholly alien to mine, her tastes obnoxious to me, her cast of mind common, low, narrow, and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher, expanded to anything larger- when I found that I could not pass a single evening, nor even a single hour of the day with her in comfort; that kindly conversation could not be sustained between us, because whatever topic I started, immediately received from her a turn at once coarse and trite, perverse and imbecile- when I perceived that I should never have a quiet or settled household, because no servant would bear the continued outbreaks of her violent and unreasonable temper, or the vexations of her absurd, contradictory, exacting orders- even then I restrained myself: I eschewed upbraiding, I curtailed remonstrance; I tried to devour my repentance and disgust in secret; I repressed the deep antipathy I felt.

'Jane, I will not trouble you with abominable details: some strong words shall express what I have to say. I lived with that woman upstairs four years, and before that time she had tried me indeed: her character ripened and developed with frightful rapidity; her vices sprang up fast and rank: they were so strong, only cruelty could check them, and I would not use cruelty. What a pigmy intellect she had, and what giant propensities! How fearful were the curses those propensities entailed on me! Bertha Mason, the true daughter of an infamous mother, dragged me through all the hideous and degrading agonies which must attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste.

'My brother in the interval was dead, and at the end of the four years my father died too. I was rich enough now- yet poor to hideous indigence: a nature the most gross, impure, depraved I ever saw, was associated with mine, and called by the law and by society a part of me. And I could not rid myself of it by any legal proceedings: for the doctors now discovered that my wife was mad- her excesses had prematurely developed the germs of insanity. Jane, you don't like my narrative; you look almost sick- shall I defer the rest to another day?'

'No, sir, finish it now; I pity you- I do earnestly pity you.'

'Pity, Jane, from some people is a noxious and insulting sort of tribute, which one is justified in hurling back in the teeth of those who offer it; but that is the sort of pity native to callous, selfish hearts; it is a hybrid, egotistical pain at hearing of woes, crossed with ignorant contempt for those

who have endured them. But that is not your pity, Jane; it is not the feeling of which your whole face is full at this moment- with which your eyes are now almost overflowing- with which your heart is heaving- with which your hand is trembling in mine. Your pity, my darling, is the suffering mother of love: its anguish is the very natal pang of the divine passion. I accept it, Jane; let the daughter have free advent- my arms wait to receive her.'

'Now, sir, proceed; what did you do when you found she was mad?'

'Jane, I approached the verge of despair; a remnant of self-respect was all that intervened between me and the gulf. In the eyes of the world, I was doubtless covered with grimy dishonour; but I resolved to be clean in my own sight- and to the last I repudiated the contamination of her crimes, and wrenched myself from connection with her mental defects. Still, society associated my name and person with hers; I yet saw her and heard her daily: something of her breath (faugh!) mixed with the air I breathed; and besides, I remembered I had once been her husband- that recollection was then, and is now, inexpressibly odious to me; moreover, I knew that while she lived I could never be the husband of another and better wife; and, though five years my senior (her family and her father had lied to me even in the particular of her age), she was likely to live as long as I, being as robust in frame as she was infirm in mind. Thus, at the age of twenty-six, I was hopeless.

'One night I had been awakened by her yells- (since the medical men had pronounced her mad, she had, of course, been shut up)- it was a fiery West Indian night; one of the description that frequently precede the hurricanes of those climates. Being unable to sleep in bed, I got up and opened the window. The air was like sulphur-steams- I could find no refreshment anywhere. Mosquitoes came buzzing in and hummed sullenly round the room; the sea, which I could hear from thence, rumbled dull like an earthquake- black clouds were casting up over it; the moon was setting in the waves, broad and red, like a hot cannon-ball- she threw her last bloody glance over a world quivering with the ferment of tempest. I was physically influenced by the atmosphere and scene, and my ears were filled with the curses the maniac still shrieked out; wherein she momentarily mingled my name with such a tone of demon-hate, with such language!- no professed harlot ever had a fouler vocabulary than she: though two rooms off, I heard every word- the thin partitions of the West India house opposing but slight obstruction to her wolfish cries.

""This life," said I at last, "is hell: this is the air- those are the sounds of the bottomless pit! I have a right to deliver myself from it if I can. The sufferings of this mortal state will leave me with the heavy flesh that now cumpers my soul. Of the fanatic's burning eternity I have no fear: there is not a future state worse than this present one- let me break away, and go home to God!"

'I said this whilst I knelt down at, and unlocked a trunk which contained a brace of loaded pistols: I meant to shoot myself. I only entertained the intention for a moment; for, not being insane, the crisis of exquisite and unalloyed despair, which had originated the wish and design of self-destruction, was past in a second.

'A wind fresh from Europe blew over the ocean and rushed through the open casement: the storm broke, streamed, thundered, blaæd, and the air grew pure. I then framed and fixed a resolution.

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While I walked under the dripping orange-trees of my wet garden, and amongst its drenched pomegranates and pineapples, and while the refulgent dawn of the tropics kindled round me- I reasoned thus, Jane- and now listen; for it was true Wisdom that consoled me in that hour, and showed me the right path to follow.

'The sweet wind from Europe was still whispering in the refreshed leaves, and the Atlantic was thundering in glorious liberty; my heart, dried up and scorched for a long time, swelled to the tone, and filled with living blood- my being longed for renewal- my soul thirsted for a pure draught. I saw hope revive- and felt regeneration possible.

From a flowery arch at the bottom of my garden I gazed over the sea-bluer than the sky: the old world was beyond; clear prospects opened thus:-

"Go," said Hope, "and live again in Europe: there it is not known what a sullied name you bear, nor what a filthy burden is bound to you. You may take the maniac with you to England; confine her with due attendance and precautions at Thornfield: then travel yourself to what clime you will, and form what new tie you like.

That woman, who has so abused your long-suffering, so sullied your name, so outraged your honour, so blighted your youth, is not your wife, nor are you her husband. See that she is cared for as her condition demands, and you have done all that God and humanity require of you. Let her identity, her connection with yourself, be buried in oblivion: you are bound to impart them to no living being. Place her in safety and comfort: shelter her degradation with secrecy, and leave her."

I acted precisely on this suggestion. My father and brother had not made my marriage known to their acquaintance; because, in the very first letter I wrote to apprise them of the union- having already begun to experience extreme disgust of its consequences, and, from the family character and constitution, seeing a hideous future opening to me- I added an urgent charge to keep it secret: and very soon the infamous conduct of the wife my father had selected for me was such as to make him blush to own her as his daughter-in-law. Far from desiring to publish the connection, he became as anxious to conceal it as myself.

'To England, then, I conveyed her; a fearful voyage I had with such a monster in the vessel. Glad was I when I at last got her to Thornfield, and saw her safely lodged in that third storey room, of whose secret inner cabinet she has now for ten years made a wild beast's den- a goblin's cell. I had some trouble in finding an attendant for her, as it was necessary to select one on whose fidelity dependence could be placed; for her ravings would inevitably betray my secret: besides, she had lucid intervals of days- sometimes weeks- which she filled up with abuse of me. At last I hired Grace Poole from the Grimsby Retreat. She and the surgeon, Carter (who dressed Mason's wounds that night he was stabbed and worried), are the only two I have ever admitted to my confidence. Mrs. Fairfax may indeed have suspected something, but she could have gained no precise knowledge as to facts. Grace has, on the whole, proved a good keeper; though, owing partly to a fault of her own, of which it appears nothing can cure her, and which is incident to her harassing profession, her vigilance has been more than once lulled and baffled. The lunatic is both cunning and malignant;

she has never failed to take advantage of her guardian's temporary lapses; once to secrete the knife with which she stabbed her brother, and twice to possess herself of the key of her cell, and issue therefrom in the night-time. On the first of these occasions, she perpetrated the attempt to burn me in my bed; on the second, she paid that ghastly visit to you. I thank Providence, who watched over you, that she then spent her fury on your wedding apparel, which perhaps brought back vague reminiscences of her own bridal days: but on what might have happened, I cannot endure to reflect. When I think of the thing which flew at my throat this morning, hanging its black and scarlet visage over the nest of my dove, my blood curdles-'

'And what, sir,' I asked, while he paused, 'did you do when you had settled her here? Where did you go?' 'What did I do, Jane? I transformed myself into a will-o'-the-wisp.

Where did I go? I pursued wanderings as wild as those of the March-spirit. I sought the Continent, and went devious through all its lands. My fixed desire was to seek and find a good and intelligent woman, whom I could love: a contrast to the fury I left at Thornfield-'

'But you could not marry, sir.'

'I had determined and was convinced that I could and ought. It was not my original intention to deceive, as I have deceived you. I meant to tell my tale plainly, and make my proposals openly: and it appeared to me so absolutely rational that I should be considered free to love and be loved, I never doubted some woman might be found willing and able to understand my case and accept me, in spite of the curse with which I was burdened.'

'Well, sir?'

'When you are inquisitive, Jane, you always make me smile. You open your eyes like an eager bird, and make every now and then a restless movement, as if answers in speech did not flow fast enough for you, and you wanted to read the tablet of one's heart. But before I go on, tell me what you mean by your "Well, sir?" It is a small phrase very frequent with you; and which many a time has drawn me on and on through interminable talk: I don't very well know why.'

'I mean,- What next? How did you proceed? What came of such an event?'

'Precisely! and what do you wish to know now?'

'Whether you found any one you liked: whether you asked her to marry you; and what she said.'

'I can tell you whether I found any one I liked, and whether I asked her to marry me: but what she said is yet to be recorded in the book of Fate. For ten long years I roved about, living first in one capital, then another: sometimes in St. Petersburg; oftener in Paris; occasionally in Rome, Naples, and Florence. Provided with plenty of money and the passport of an old name, I could choose my own society: no circles were closed against me. I sought my ideal of a woman amongst English ladies, French countesses, Italian signoras, and German grafinnen. I could not find her. Sometimes,

for a fleeting moment, I thought I caught a glance, heard a tone, beheld a form, which announced the realisation of my dream: but I was presently undeceived. You are not to suppose that I desired perfection, either of mind or person. I longed only for what suited me- for the antipodes of the Creole: and I longed vainly. Amongst them all I found not one whom, had I been ever so free, I-warned as I was of the risks, the horrors, the loathings of incongruous unions- would have asked to marry me. Disappointment made me reckless. I tried dissipation-never debauchery: that I hated, and hate. That was my Indian Messalina's attribute: rooted disgust at it and her restrained me much, even in pleasure. Any enjoyment that bordered on riot seemed to approach me to her and her vices, and I eschewed it.

'Yet I could not live alone; so I tried the companionship of mistresses. The first I chose was Celine Varens- another of those steps which make a man spurn himself when he recalls them. You already know what she was, and how my liaison with her terminated. She had two successors: an Italian, Giacinta, and a German, Clara; both considered singularly handsome. What was their beauty to me in a few weeks?

Giacinta was unprincipled and violent: I tired of her in three months.

Clara was honest and quiet; but heavy, mindless, and unimpressible: not one whit to my taste. I was glad to give her a sufficient sum to set her up in a good line of business, and so get decently rid of her.

But, Jane, I see by your face you are not forming a very favourable opinion of me just now. You think me an unfeeling, loose-principled rake: don't you?'

'I don't like you so well as I have done sometimes, indeed, sir.

Did it not seem to you in the least wrong to live in that way, first with one mistress and then another? You talk of it as a mere matter of course.'

'It was with me; and I did not like it. It was a grovelling fashion of existence: I should never like to return to it. Hiring a mistress is the next worse thing to buying a slave: both are often by nature, and always by position, inferior: and to live familiarly with inferiors is degrading. I now hate the recollection of the time I passed with Celine, Giacinta, and Clara.'

I felt the truth of these words; and I drew from them the certain inference, that if I were so far to forget myself and all the teaching that had ever been instilled into me, as- under any pretext- with any justification- through any temptation- to become the successor of these poor girls, he would one day regard me with the same feeling which now in his mind desecrated their memory. I did not give utterance to this conviction: it was enough to feel it. I impressed it on my heart, that it might remain there to serve me as aid in the time of trial.

'Now, Jane, why don't you say "Well, sir?" I have not done. You are looking grave. You disapprove of me still, I see. But let me come to the point. Last January, rid of all mistresses- in a harsh, bitter

frame of mind, the result of a useless, roving, lonely life-corroded with disappointment, sourly disposed against all men, and especially against all womankind (for I began to regard the notion of an intellectual, faithful, loving woman as a mere dream), recalled by business, I came back to England.

'On a frosty winter afternoon, I rode in sight of Thornfield Hall. Abhorred spot! I expected no peace- no pleasure there. On a stile in Hay Lane I saw a quiet little figure sitting by itself. I passed it as negligently as I did the pollard willow opposite to it: I had no presentiment of what it would be to me; no inward warning that the arbitress of my life- my genius for good or evil- waited there in humble guise. I did not know it, even when, on the occasion of Mesrour's accident, it came up and gravely offered me help.

Childish and slender creature! It seemed as if a linnet had hopped to my foot and proposed to bear me on its tiny wing. I was surly; but the thing would not go: it stood by me with strange perseverance, and looked and spoke with a sort of authority. I must be aided, and by that hand: and aided I was.

'When once I had pressed the frail shoulder, something new- a fresh sap and sense- stole into my frame. It was well I had learnt that this elf must return to me- that it belonged to my house down below- or I could not have felt it pass away from under my hand, and seen it vanish behind the dim hedge, without singular regret. I heard you come home that night, Jane, though probably you were not aware that I thought of you or watched for you. The next day I observed you- myself unseen- for half an hour, while you played with Adele in the gallery. It was a snowy day, I recollect, and you could not go out of doors. I was in my room; the door was ajar: I could both listen and watch. Adele claimed your outward attention for a while; yet I fancied your thoughts were elsewhere: but you were very patient with her, my little Jane; you talked to her and amused her a long time. When at last she left you, you lapsed at once into deep reverie: you betook yourself slowly to pace the gallery. Now and then, in passing a casement, you glanced out at the thick-falling snow; you listened to the sobbing wind, and again you paced gently on and dreamed. I think those day visions were not dark: there was a pleasurable illumination in your eye occasionally, a soft excitement in your aspect, which told of no bitter, bilious, hypochondriac brooding: your look revealed rather the sweet musings of youth when its spirit follows on willing wings the flight of Hope up and on to an ideal heaven. The voice of Mrs. Fairfax, speaking to a servant in the hall, wakened you: and how curiously you smiled to and at yourself, Janet! There was much sense in your smile: it was very shrewd, and seemed to make light of your own abstraction. It seemed to say- "My fine visions are all very well, but I must not forget they are absolutely unreal. I have a rosy sky and a green flowery Eden in my brain; but without, I am perfectly aware, lies at my feet a rough tract to travel, and around me gather black tempests to encounter."

You ran downstairs and demanded of Mrs. Fairfax some occupation: the weekly house accounts to make up, or something of that sort, I think it was. I was vexed with you for getting out of my sight.

'Impatiently I waited for evening, when I might summon you to my presence. An unusual- to me- a perfectly new character I suspected was yours: I desired to search it deeper and know it better. You

entered the room with a look and air at once shy and independent: you were quaintly dressed- much as you are now. I made you talk: ere long I found you full of strange contrasts. Your garb and manner were restricted by rule; your air was often diffident, and altogether that of one refined by nature, but absolutely unused to society, and a good deal afraid of making herself disadvantageously conspicuous by some solecism or blunder; yet when addressed, you lifted a keen, a daring, and a glowing eye to your interlocutor's face: there was penetration and power in each glance you gave; when plied by close questions, you found ready and round answers. Very soon you seemed to get used to me: I believe you felt the existence of sympathy between you and your grim and cross master, Jane; for it was astonishing to see how quickly a certain pleasant ease tranquillised your manner: snarl as I would, you showed no surprise, fear, annoyance, or displeasure at my moroseness; you watched me, and now and then smiled at me with a simple yet sagacious grace I cannot describe. I was at once content and stimulated with what I saw: I liked what I had seen, and wished to see more. Yet, for a long time, I treated you distantly, and sought your company rarely. I was an intellectual epicure, and wished to prolong the gratification of making this novel and piquant acquaintance: besides, I was for a while troubled with a haunting fear that if I handled the flower freely its bloom would fade- the sweet charm of freshness would leave it. I did not then know that it was no transitory blossom, but rather the radiant resemblance of one, cut in an indestructible gem. Moreover, I wished to see whether you would seek me if I shunned you- but you did not; you kept in the schoolroom as still as your own desk and easel; if by chance I met you, you passed me as soon, and with as little token of recognition, as was consistent with respect. Your habitual expression in those days, Jane, was a thoughtful look; not despondent, for you were not sickly; but not buoyant, for you had little hope, and no actual pleasure. I wondered what you thought of me, or if you ever thought of me, and resolved to find this out.

'I resumed my notice of you. There was something glad in your glance, and genial in your manner, when you conversed: I saw you had a social heart; it was the silent schoolroom- it was the tedium of your life- that made you mournful. I permitted myself the delight of being kind to you; kindness stirred emotion soon: your face became soft in expression, your tones gentle; I liked my name pronounced by your lips in a grateful happy accent. I used to enjoy a chance meeting with you, Jane, at this time: there was a curious hesitation in your manner: you glanced at me with a slight trouble- a hovering doubt: you did not know what my caprice might be- whether I was going to play the master and be stern, or the friend and be benignant. I was now too fond of you often to simulate the first whim; and, when I stretched my hand out cordially, such bloom and light and bliss rose to your young, wistful features, I had much ado often to avoid straining you then and there to my heart.'

'Don't talk any more of those days, sir,' I interrupted, furtively dashing away some tears from my eyes; his language was torture to me; for I knew what I must do- and do soon- and these reminiscences, and these revelations of his feelings, only made my work more difficult.

'No, Jane,' he returned: 'what necessity is there to dwell on the Past, when the Present is so much surer- the Future so much brighter?'

I shuddered to hear the infatuated assertion.

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'You see now how the case stands- do you not?' he continued. 'After a youth and manhood passed half in unutterable misery and half in dreary solitude, I have for the first time found what I can truly love- I have found you. You are my sympathy- my better self- my good angel. I am bound to you with a strong attachment. I think you good, gifted, lovely: a fervent, a solemn passion is conceived in my heart; it leans to you, draws you to my centre and spring of life, wraps my existence about you, and, kindling in pure, powerful flame, fuses you and me in one.'

'It was because I felt and knew this, that I resolved to marry you.'

To tell me that I had already a wife is empty mockery: you know now that I had but a hideous demon. I was wrong to attempt to deceive you; but I feared a stubbornness that exists in your character. I feared early instilled prejudice: I wanted to have you safe before hazarding confidences. This was cowardly: I should have appealed to your nobleness and magnanimity at first, as I do now- opened to you plainly my life of agony- described to you my hunger and thirst after a higher and worthier existence- shown to you, not my resolution (that word is weak), but my resistless bent to love faithfully and well, where I am faithfully and well loved in return. Then I should have asked you to accept my pledge of fidelity and to give me yours.

Jane- give it me now.'

A pause.

'Why are you silent, Jane?'

I was experiencing an ordeal: a hand of fiery iron grasped my vitals. Terrible moment: full of struggle, blackness, burning! Not a human being that ever lived could wish to be loved better than I was loved; and him who thus loved me I absolutely worshipped: and I must renounce love and idol. One drear word comprised my intolerable duty- 'Depart!'

'Jane, you understand what I want of you? Just this promise- "I will be yours, Mr. Rochester."'

'Mr. Rochester, I will not be yours.'

Another long silence.

'Jane!' recommenced he, with a gentleness that broke me down with grief, and turned me stone-cold with ominous terror- for this still voice was the pant of a lion rising- 'Jane, do you mean to go one way in the world, and to let me go another?'

'I do.'

'Jane' (bending towards and embracing me), 'do you mean it now?'

'I do.'

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'And now?' softly kissing my forehead and cheek.

'I do,' extricating myself from restraint rapidly and completely.

'Oh, Jane, this is bitter! This- this is wicked. It would not be wicked to love me.'

'It would to obey you.'

A wild look raised his brows- crossed his features: he rose; but he forbore yet. I laid my hand on the back of a chair for support: I shook, I feared- but I resolved.

'One instant, Jane. Give one glance to my horrible life when you are gone. All happiness will be torn away with you. What then is left?

For a wife I have but the maniac upstairs: as well might you refer me to some corpse in yonder churchyard. What shall I do, Jane? Where turn for a companion and for some hope?'

'Do as I do: trust in God and yourself. Believe in heaven. Hope to meet again there.'

'Then you will not yield?'

'No.'

'Then you condemn me to live wretched and to die accursed?' His voice rose.

'I advise you to live sinless, and I wish you to die tranquil.'

'Then you snatch love and innocence from me? You fling me back on lust for a passion- vice for an occupation?'

'Mr. Rochester, I no more assign this fate to you than I grasp at it for myself. We were born to strive and endure- you as well as I: do so. You will forget me before I forget you.'

'You make me a liar by such language: you sully my honour. I declared I could not change: you tell me to my face I shall change soon. And what a distortion in your judgment, what a perversity in your ideas, is proved by your conduct! Is it better to drive a fellow-creature to despair than to transgress a mere human law, no man being injured by the breach? for you have neither relatives nor acquaintances whom you need fear to offend by living with me?'

This was true: and while he spoke my very conscience and reason turned traitors against me, and charged me with crime in resisting him. They spoke almost as loud as Feeling: and that clamoured wildly. 'Oh, comply!' it said. 'Think of his misery; think of his danger- look at his state when left alone; remember his headlong nature; consider the recklessness following on despair- soothe him;

save him; love him; tell him you love him and will be his. Who in the world cares for you? or who will be injured by what you do?'

Still indomitable was the reply- 'I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself. I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad- as I am now. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigour; stringent are they; inviolate they shall be. If at my individual convenience I might break them, what would be their worth? They have a worth- so I have always believed; and if I cannot believe it now, it is because I am insane- quite insane: with my veins running fire, and my heart beating faster than I can count its throbs. Preconceived opinions, foregone determinations, are all I have at this hour to stand by: there I plant my foot.'

I did. Mr. Rochester, reading my countenance, saw I had done so.

His fury was wrought to the highest: he must yield to it for a moment, whatever followed; he crossed the floor and seized my arm and grasped my waist. He seemed to devour me with his flaming glance: physically, I felt, at the moment, powerless as stubble exposed to the draught and glow of a furnace: mentally, I still possessed my soul, and with it the certainty of ultimate safety. The soul, fortunately, has an interpreter- often an unconscious, but still a truthful interpreter- in the eye. My eye rose to his; and while I looked in his fierce face I gave an involuntary sigh; his gripe was painful, and my overtaxed strength almost exhausted.

'Never,' said he, as he ground his teeth, 'never was anything at once so frail and so indomitable. A mere reed she feels in my hand!' (And he shook me with the force of his hold.) 'I could bend her with my finger and thumb: and what good would it do if I bent, if I uprooted, if I crushed her? Consider that eye: consider the resolute, wild, free thing looking out of it, defying me, with more than courage- with a stern triumph. Whatever I do with its cage, I cannot get at it- the savage, beautiful creature! If I tear, if I rend the slight prison, my outrage will only let the captive loose. Conqueror I might be of the house; but the inmate would escape to heaven before I could call myself possessor of its clay dwelling-place. And it is you, spirit- with will and energy, and virtue and purity- that I want: not alone your brittle frame. Of yourself you could come with soft flight and nestle against my heart, if you would: seized against your will, you will elude the grasp like an essence- you will vanish ere I inhale your fragrance. Oh! come, Jane, come!'

As he said this, he released me from his clutch, and only looked at me. The look was far worse to resist than the frantic strain: only an idiot, however, would have succumbed now. I had dared and baffled his fury; I must elude his sorrow: retired to the door.

'You are going, Jane?'

'I am going, sir.'

'You are leaving me?'

'Yes.'

'You will not come? You will not be my comforter, my rescuer? My deep love, my wild woe, my frantic prayer, are all nothing to you?' What unutterable pathos was in his voice! How hard it was to reiterate firmly, 'I am going.'

'Jane!'

'Mr. Rochester!'

'Withdraw, then, - I consent; but remember, you leave me here in anguish. Go up to your own room; think over all I have said, and, Jane, cast a glance on my sufferings- think of me.'

He turned away; he threw himself on his face on the sofa. 'Oh, Jane! my hope- my love- my life!' broke in anguish from his lips. Then came a deep, strong sob.

I had already gained the door; but, reader, I walked back- walked back as determinedly as I had retreated. I knelt down by him; I turned his face from the cushion to me; I kissed his cheek; I smoothed his hair with my hand.

'God bless you, my dear master!' I said. 'God keep you from harm and wrong- direct you, solace you- reward you well for your past kindness to me.'

'Little Jane's love would have been my best reward,' he answered; 'without it, my heart is broken. But Jane will give me her love: yes- nobly, generously.'

Up the blood rushed to his face; forth flashed the fire from his eyes; erect he sprang; he held his arms out; but I evaded the embrace, and at once quitted the room.

'Farewell!' was the cry of my heart as I left him. Despair added, 'Farewell for ever!'

.....

That night I never thought to sleep; but a slumber fell on me as soon as I lay down in bed. I was transported in thought to the scenes of childhood: I dreamt I lay in the red-room at Gateshead; that the night was dark, and my mind impressed with strange fears. The light that long ago had struck me into syncope, recalled in this vision, seemed glidingly to mount the wall, and tremblingly to pause in the centre of the obscured ceiling. I lifted up my head to look: the roof resolved to clouds, high and dim; the gleam was such as the moon imparts to vapours she is about to sever. I watched her come- watched with the strangest anticipation; as though some word of doom were to be written on her disk. She broke forth as never moon yet burst from cloud: a hand first penetrated the sable folds and waved them away; then, not a moon, but a white human form shone in the azure, inclining a glorious brow earthward. It gazed and gazed on me. It spoke to my spirit: immeasurably distant

was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart-

'My daughter, flee temptation.'

'Mother, I will.'

So I answered after I had waked from the trancelike dream. It was yet night, but July nights are short: soon after midnight, dawn comes.

'It cannot be too early to commence the task I have to fulfil,' thought I. I rose: I was dressed; for I had taken off nothing but my shoes. I knew where to find in my drawers some linen, a locket, a ring.

In seeking these articles, I encountered the beads of a pearl necklace Mr. Rochester had forced me to accept a few days ago. I left that; it was not mine: it was the visionary bride's who had melted in air. The other articles I made up in a parcel; my purse, containing twenty shillings (it was all I had), I put in my pocket:

I tied on my straw bonnet, pinned my shawl, took the parcel and my slippers, which I would not put on yet, and stole from my room.

'Farewell, kind Mrs. Fairfax!' I whispered, as I glided past her door. 'Farewell, my darling Adele! I said, as I glanced towards the nursery. No thought could be admitted of entering to embrace her. I had to deceive a fine ear: for aught I knew it might now be listening.

I would have got past Mr. Rochester's chamber without a pause; but my heart momentarily stopping its beat at that threshold, my foot was forced to stop also. No sleep was there: the inmate was walking restlessly from wall to wall; and again and again he sighed while I listened. There was a heaven- a temporary heaven- in this room for me, if I chose: I had but to go in and to say-

'Mr. Rochester, I will love you and live with you through life till death,' and a fount of rapture would spring to my lips. I thought of this.

That kind master, who could not sleep now, was waiting with impatience for day. He would send for me in the morning; I should be gone. He would have me sought for: vainly. He would feel himself forsaken; his love rejected: he would suffer; perhaps grow desperate. I thought of this too. My hand moved towards the lock: I caught it back, and glided on.

Drearly I wound my way downstairs: I knew what I had to do, and I did it mechanically. I sought the key of the side-door in the kitchen; I sought, too, a phial of oil and a feather; I oiled the key and the lock. I got some water, I got some bread: for perhaps I should have to walk far; and my strength, sorely shaken of late, must not break down. All this I did without one sound. I opened the door, passed out, shut it softly. Dim dawn glimmered in the yard.

The great gates were closed and locked; but a wicket in one of them was only latched. Through that I departed: it, too, I shut; and now I was out of Thornfield.

A mile off, beyond the fields, lay a road which stretched in the contrary direction to Millcote; a road I had never travelled, but often noticed, and wondered where it led: thither I bent my steps.

No reflection was to be allowed now: not one glance was to be cast back; not even one forward. Not one thought was to be given either to the past or to the future. The first was a page so heavenly sweet- so deadly sad- that to read one line of it would dissolve my courage and break down my energy. The last was an awful blank: something like the world when the deluge was gone by.

I skirted fields, and hedges, and lanes till after sunrise. I believe it was a lovely summer morning: I know my shoes, which I had put on when I left the house, were soon wet with dew. But I looked neither to rising sun, nor smiling sky, nor wakening nature. He who is taken out to pass through a fair scene to the scaffold, thinks not of the flowers that smile on his road, but of the block and axe-edge; of the disseverment of bone and vein; of the grave gaping at the end: and I thought of drear flight and homeless wandering- and oh! with agony I thought of what I left. I could not help it. I thought of him now- in his room- watching the sunrise; hoping I should soon come to say I would stay with him and be his. I longed to be his; I panted to return: it was not too late; I could yet spare him the bitter pang of bereavement. As yet my flight, I was sure, was undiscovered. I could go back and be his comforter- his pride; his redeemer from misery, perhaps from ruin. Oh, that fear of his self-abandonment- far worse than my abandonment- how it goaded me!

It was a barbed arrow-head in my breast; it tore me when I tried to extract it; it sickened me when remembrance thrust it farther in.

Birds began singing in brake and copse: birds were faithful to their mates; birds were emblems of love. What was I? In the midst of my pain of heart and frantic effort of principle, I abhorred myself. I had no solace from self-appraisal: none even from self-respect. I had injured- wounded- left my master. I was hateful in my own eyes.

Still I could not turn, nor retrace one step. God must have led me on.

As to my own will or conscience, impassioned grief had trampled one and stifled the other. I was weeping wildly as I walked along my solitary way: fast, fast I went like one delirious. A weakness, beginning inwardly, extending to the limbs, seized me, and I fell: I lay on the ground some minutes, pressing my face to the wet turf. I had some fear- or hope- that here I should die: but I was soon up; crawling forwards on my hands and knees, and then again raised to my feet- as eager and as determined as ever to reach the road.

When I got there, I was forced to sit to rest me under the hedge; and while I sat, I heard wheels, and saw a coach come on. I stood up and lifted my hand; it stopped. I asked where it was going: the driver named a place a long way off, and where I was sure Mr. Rochester had no connections. I asked for what sum he would take me there; he said thirty shillings; I answered I had but twenty; well, he would try to make it do. He further gave me leave to get into the inside, as the vehicle was empty: I entered, was shut in, and it rolled on its way.

Gentle reader, may you never feel what I then felt! May your eyes never shed such stormy, scalding, heart-wrung tears as poured from mine. May you never appeal to Heaven in prayers so hopeless and so agonised as in that hour left my lips; for never may you, like me, dread to be the instrument of evil to what you wholly love.

第二十七章

下午某个时候，我抬起头来，向四周瞧了瞧，看见西沉的太阳正在墙上涂上金色的落日印记，我问道，“我该怎么办？”

我心灵的回答——“立即离开桑菲尔德”——是那么及时，又那么可怕，我立即捂住了耳朵。我说，这些话我现在可受不了。“我不当爱德华·罗切斯特先生的新娘，是我痛苦中最小的一部份，”我断言，“我从一场美梦中醒来，发现全是竹篮打水一场空，这种恐惧我既能忍受，也能克服。不过要我义无反顾地马上离他而去却让我受不了，我不能这么做。”

但是，我内心的另一个声音却认为我能这样做，而且预言我应当这么做。我斟酌着这个决定，希望自己软弱些，以躲避已经为我铺下的可怕的痛苦道路。而良心已变成暴君，抓住激情的喉咙，嘲弄地告诉她，她那美丽的脚已经陷入了泥沼，还发誓要用铁臂把她推入深不可测的痛苦深渊。

“那么把我拉走吧！”我嚷道，“让别人来帮助我！”

“不，你得自己挣脱，没有人帮助你。你自己得剜出你的右眼；砍下你的右手，把你的心作为祭品而且要由你这位祭司把它刺穿。”

我蓦地站了起来，被如此无情的法官所铸就的孤独，被充斥着如此可怕声音的寂静吓坏了。我站直时只觉得脑袋发晕。我明白自己由于激动和缺乏营养而感到不舒服。那天我没有吃早饭，肉和饮料都没有进过嘴。带着一种莫名的痛苦，我忽然回想起来，尽管我已在这里关了很久，但没有人带口信来问问我怎么样了，或者邀请我下楼去，甚至连阿黛勒也没有来敲我的门，费尔法克斯太太也没有来找我。“朋友们总是忘记那些被命运所抛弃的人，”我咕哝着，一面拉开门闩，走了出去。我在一个什么东西上绊了一下。因为我依然头脑发晕，视觉模糊，四肢无力，所以无法立刻控制住自己。我跌倒了，但没有倒在地上，一只伸出的手抓住了我。我抬起头来。——罗切斯特先生扶着我，他坐在我房门口的一把椅子上。

“你终于出来了，”他说，“是呀，我已经等了你很久了，而且细听着，但既没有听到一点动静，也没有听到一声哭泣，再过五分钟那么死一般的沉寂，我可要像盗贼那样破门而入了。看来，你避开我？——你把自己关起来，独自伤心？我倒情愿你厉声责备我。你易动感情，因此我估计会大闹一场。我准备你热泪如雨，只不过希望它落在我胸膛上，而现在，没有知觉的地板，或是你湿透了的手帕，接受了你的眼泪。可是我错了，你根本没有哭！我看到了白白的脸颊，暗淡的眼睛，却没有泪痕。那么我猜想，你的心一定哭泣着在流血？”

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“听着，简，没有一句责备的话吗？没有尖刻、辛辣的言词？没有挫伤感情或者打击热情的字眼？你静静地坐在我让你坐的地方，无精打采地看着我。”

“简，我决不想这么伤害你，要是某人有一头亲如女儿的母羊，吃他的面包，饮用他的杯子，躺在他怀抱里，而由于某种疏忽，在屠场里宰了它，他对血的错误的悔恨决不会超过我现在的悔恨，你能宽恕我吗？”

读者！——我当时当地就宽恕了他。他的目光隐含着那么深沉的忏悔；语调里透出这样真实的憾意，举止中富有如此男子气的活力。此外，他的整个神态和风度中流露出那么矢志不移的爱情——我全都宽恕了他，不过没有诉诸语言，没有表露出来，而只是掩藏在心底里。

“你知道我是个恶棍吗，简？”不久他若有所思地问——我想是对我继续缄默令神而感到纳闷，我那种心情是软弱而不是意志力的表现。

“是的，先生。”

“那就直截了当毫不留情地告诉我吧——别姑息我，”

“我不能，我既疲倦又不舒服。我想喝点儿水。”

他颤抖着叹了口气，把我抱在怀里下楼去了。起初我不知道他要把我抱到哪个房间去，在我呆滞的目光中一切都朦朦胧胧。很快我觉得一团温暖的火又回到了我身上，因为虽然时令正是夏天，我在自己的房间里早已浑身冰凉。他把酒送到我嘴里，我尝了一尝，缓过了神来。随后我吃了些他拿来的东西，于是很快便恢复过来了。我在图书室里——坐在他的椅子上一——他就在我旁边。“要是我现在就毫无痛苦地结束生命，那倒是再好没有了。”我想，“那样我就不必狠心绷断自己的心弦，以中止同罗切斯特先生心灵上的联系。后来我得离开他。我不想离开他——我不能离开他。”

“你现在好吗，简？”

“好多了，先生。很快就会好的。”

“再尝一下酒，简。”

我照他的话做了。随后他把酒杯放在桌上，站到我面前，专注地看着我。突然他转过身来，充满激情含糊不清地叫了一声，快步走过房间，又折回来，朝我弯下身子，像是要吻我，但我记起现在已不允许抚爱了。我转过头去，推开了他的脸。

“什么？——这是怎么回事？”他急忙嚷道。“呵，我知道！你不想吻伯莎·梅森的丈夫？你认为我的怀里已经有人，我的拥抱已被占有？”

“无论怎么说，已没有我的份和我的容身之地了，先生。”

“为什么，简？我来免去你多费口舌的麻烦，让我替你回答——因为我已经有了一个妻子，你会回答——我猜得对吗？”

“是的。”

“要是你这样想，你准对我抱有成见了，你一定认为我是一个诡计多端的浪子——低俗下贱的恶棍，煽起没有真情的爱，把你拉进预先设置好的圈套，剥夺你的名誉，打消你的自尊。你对这有什么看法？我看你无话可说，首先你身子依然虚弱，还得花好些工夫才能喘过气来；其次，你还不习惯于指控我，辱骂我；此外眼泪的闸门大开着，要是你说得太多，泪水会奔涌而出，你没有心思来劝说，来责备，来大闹一场。你在思索着怎样来行动——你认为空谈无济于事。我知道你——我戒备着。”

“先生，我不想与你作对，”我说，我那发抖的嗓音警告我要把话缩短。

“不按你理解的字义而按我理解的字义来说，你正谋划着毁灭我。你等于已经说，我是一个已婚男子——正因为这样，你躲着我，避开我。刚才你已拒绝吻我，你想跟我完全成为陌路人，只不过作为阿黛勒的家庭教师住在这座房子里。要是我对你说了句友好的话，要是一种友好的感情使你再次向着我，你会说‘那个人差点让我成了他的情妇，我必须对他冷若冰霜’，于是你便真的冷若冰霜了。”

我清了清喉咙稳住了嗓子回答他，“我周围的一切都改变了，先生。我也必须改变——这是毫无疑问的，为了避免感情的波动，免得不断抵制回忆和联想，那就只有一个办法——阿黛勒得另请家庭教师，先生。”

“噢，阿黛勒要上学去——我已作了安排。我也无意拿桑菲尔德府可怕的联想和回忆来折磨你——这是个可诅咒的地方——这个亚干的营帐——这个傲慢的墓穴，向着明亮开阔的天空，显现出生不如死的鬼相——这个狭窄的石头地狱，一个真正的魔鬼，抵得上我们想象中的一大批——简，你不要呆在这儿，我也不呆。我明知桑菲尔德府鬼影憧憧，却把你带到这儿来，这是我的过错。我还没有见你就已责令他们把这个地方的祸害都瞒着你，只是因为我怕你一知道与谁同住在一个屋檐下，阿黛勒就找不到肯呆在这里的女教师了。而我的计划又不允许我把这疯子迁往别的地方，——尽管我拥有一个比这里更幽静，更隐蔽的老房子，叫做芬丁庄园。要不是考虑到那里地处森林中心，环境很不卫生，我良心上羞于作这样的安排，我是很可以让她安安稳稳地住在那儿的。那里潮湿的墙壁可能会很快从我肩上卸下她这个包袱。不过恶棍种种，恶行各有不同，我的并不在于间接谋杀，即便是对付对我恨之入骨的人。

“然而，把疯女人的住处瞒着你，不过是像用斗篷把一个孩子盖起来，把它放在一棵箭毒树旁边，那魔鬼把四周都毒化了，而只毒气不散，不过我将关闭桑菲尔德府，我要用钉子封住前门，用板条盖没矮窗。我要给普尔太太二百英镑一年，让她同我的妻子——你称之为可怕的女巫，一起生活。只要给钱，格雷斯愿意干很多事，而且她可以让她在格里姆斯比收容所看门的儿子来作伴，我的妻子发作的时候，譬如受妖精的启发要把人们夜晚烧死在床上，用刀刺他们，从骨头上把肉咬下来的时候，格雷斯身边好歹也有个帮手。”

“先生，”我打断他说，“对那个不幸的女人来说，你实在冷酷无情。你一谈起她就恨恨地——

一势不两立。那很残酷——她发疯也是身不由己的。”

“简，我的小宝贝，（我会这么叫你，因为你确实是这样），你不了解你谈的事儿，你又错怪我了。我恨她并不是因为她发了疯。要是你疯了，你想我会恨你吗？”

“我想你会的，先生。”

“那你错了。你一点也不了解我，一点也不了解我会怎样地爱。你身上每一丁点皮肉如同我自己身上的一样，对我来说都非常宝贵，病痛之时也一样如此。你的脑袋是我的宝贝，要是出了毛病，也照样是我的宝贝。要是你呓语连篇，我的胳膊会围住你，而不是紧身马甲——即使在动怒的时候你乱抓乱拉，对我说来也是迷人的。要是你像今天早上的那个女人那样疯狂向我扑来，我会用拥抱接受你，至少既起到制止的作用，又显出抚爱来。我不会像厌恶地避开她一样避开你，在你安静的时刻，你身边没有监护人，没有护士，只有我。我会带着不倦的温柔体贴，在你身边走动，尽管你不会对我报之以微笑。我会永不厌腻地盯着你的眼睛，尽管那双眼睛已不再射出一缕确认我的光芒。——但是我干嘛要顺着那样的思路去想呢？我刚谈着让你离开桑菲尔德。你知道，一切都准备好了，让你立刻离开这里，明天你就走。我只不过求你在这间屋子里再忍受一个晚上，简，随后就向它的痛苦和恐怖诀别：我自有的地方可去，那会是个安全的避难所，躲开可憎的回忆、不受欢迎的干扰——甚至还有欺诈和诽谤。”

“带着阿黛勒走吧，先生，”我插嘴说，“你也有她可以作伴了。”

“你这是什么意思，简？我已告诉你了，我要送阿黛勒上学”我何必要一个孩子作伴？何况又不是我的孩子——一个法国舞女的杂种。你干嘛把我跟她缠在一起？我说，你为什么把阿黛勒派给我作伴？”

“你听说过我的父亲是个贪得无厌的人吗？”

“我大致了解一些。”

“好吧，简，出于贪婪，我父亲决心把他的财产合在一起，而不能容忍把它分割，留给我相当一部分。他决定一切都归我哥哥罗兰，然而也不忍心我这个儿子成为穷光蛋，还得通过一桩富有的婚事解决我的生计。不久之后他替我找了个伴侣。他有一个叫梅森先生的老相识，是西印度的种植园主和商人。他作了调查，肯定梅森先生家业很大。他发现梅森先生有一双儿女，还知道他能够，也愿意给他的女儿三万英镑的财产，那已经足够了。我一离开大学就被送往牙买加，跟一个已经替我求了爱的新娘成婚。我的父亲只字不提她的钱，却告诉我在西班牙城梅森小姐有倾城之貌，这倒不假。她是个美人，有布兰奇·英格拉姆的派头，身材高大，皮肤黝黑，雍容华贵。她家里也希望把我弄到手，因为我身世不错，和她一样。他又开始走动，但很快停了下来，这回正好停在我面前。”

“简！你愿意听我说理吗？（他弯下腰来，凑近我耳朵）因为要是你不听，我就要使用暴力了。”他的声音嘶哑，他的神态像是要冲破不可忍受的束缚，不顾一切地大胆放肆了。我在另一个场合见过这种情形，要是再增一分狂乱的冲动，我就对他无能为力了。此刻，唯有在一瞬间将他控制住，不然，一个表示厌恶，逃避和胆怯的动作将置我自己——还有他——于死地。然而我并不害怕，丝毫没有。我感到一种内在的力量，一种气势在支持着我。危急关头往往险象环生，但也并非没有魅力，就像印第安人乘着皮筏穿过激流所感觉到的那样。”

学英语，练听力，上听力课堂！

我握住他捏得紧紧的手，松开他扭曲的手指，抚慰地对他说：

“坐下吧，你爱谈多久我就同你谈多久，你想说什么，不管有理无理，都听你说。”

他坐了下来，但我并没有让他马上就开口，我已经强忍住眼泪多时，竭力不让它流下来，因为我知道他不喜欢看到我哭。但现在我认为还是让眼泪任意流淌好，爱淌多久就淌多久。要是一腔泪水使他生了气，那就更好。于是我放任自己，哭了个痛快。

不久我就听他真诚地求我镇静下来，我说他那么怒火冲天，我可无法镇静下来。

“可是我没有生气，简。我只是太爱你了。你那苍白的小脸神色木然，铁板一块，我可受不了。安静下来，噢，把眼睛擦一擦。”

他口气软了下来，说明他已经克制住了。因此我也随之镇静下来。这时他试着要把他的头靠在我肩上，但我不允许，随后他要一把将我拉过去。不行！

“简！简！”他说。声调那么伤心，我的每根神经都颤栗起来了。“那么你不爱我了？你看重的只是我的地位以及作为我妻子的身份？现在你认为我不配作你的丈夫，你就害怕我碰你一碰了，好像我是什么癞蛤蟆或者猿猴似的。”

这些话使我感到难受，可是我能做什么，说什么呢？也许我应当什么也别做，什么也别做。但是我被悔恨折磨着，因为我伤了他的感情，我无法抑制自己的愿望，在我制造的伤口上贴上膏药。

“我确实爱你，”我说，“从来没有这么爱过。但我决不能表露或纵容这种感情。这是我最后一次表达了。”

“最后一次，简！什么！你认为可以跟我住在一起，天天看到我，而同时要是仍爱我，却又经常保持冷漠和疏远吗？”

“不，先生，我肯定不行，因此我认为只有一个办法，但要是我说出来，你准会发火。”

“噢，说吧！我就是大发雷霆，你也有哭哭啼啼的本事。”

“罗切斯特先生，我得离开你。”

“离开多久，简？几分钟工夫吧，梳理一下你有些蓬乱的头发，洗一下你看上去有些发烧的脸吗？”

“我得离开阿黛勒和桑菲尔德。我得永生永世离开你。我得在陌生的面孔和陌生的环境中开始新的生活。”

“当然。我同你说过你应当这样。我不理睬你一味要走的疯话。你的意思是你得成为我的一部份。至于新的生活，那很好，但你得成为我的妻子。我没有结过婚。你得成为罗切斯特太

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太——应当名实相符。只要你我还活着，我只会守着你。你得到我在法国南部拥有的一个地方，地中海沿岸一座墙壁雪白的别墅。在那里有人守护着你，你准会过着无忧无虑的幸福生活。决不必担心我会引诱你上当——让你成为我的情妇。你为什么摇头？简，你得通情达理，要不然我真的会再发狂的。”

他的嗓子和手都颤抖着，他大大的鼻孔扇动着，他的眼睛冒着火光，但我依然敢说——

“先生，你的妻子还活着，这是早上你自己承认的事实。要是按你的希望同你一起生活，我岂不成了你的情妇。别的说法都是诡辩——是欺骗。”

“简，我不是一个脾气温和的人——你忘了这点。我忍不了很久。我并不冷静，也不是一个不动感情的人，可怜可怜我和你自己吧，把你的手指按在我脉搏上，感觉一下它怎样跳动吧，而且当心——”

他露出手腕，伸向我。他的脸颊和嘴唇因为失血而变得苍白。我左右为难，十分苦恼。用他所厌恶的拒绝把他煽动起来吧，那是残酷的；要让步呢，又不可能。我做了一件走投无路的人出于本能会做的事——求助于高于凡人的神明。“上帝帮助我！”这句话从我嘴里脱口而出。

“我真傻：”罗切斯特先生突然说。“我老是告诉她我没有结过婚，却没有解释为什么。我忘了她一点也不知道那个女人的性格，不知道我同她地狱一般结合的背景。呵，我可以肯定，一旦简知道了我所知道的一切，她准会同意我的看法。把你的手放在我的手里，简妮特——这样我有接触和目光为依据，证明你在我旁边——我会用寥寥几句话，告诉你事情的真相。你能听我吗？”

“是的，先生。听你几小时都行。”

“我只要求几分钟。简，你是否听到过，或者知道我在家里不是老大，我还有一个年龄比我大的哥哥？”

“我记得费尔法克斯太太一次告诉过我。”

“你听说过我的父亲是个贪得无厌的人吗？”

“我大致了解一些。”

“好吧，简，出于贪婪，我父亲决心把他的财产合在一起，而不能容忍把它分割，留给我相当一部分。他决定一切都归我哥哥罗兰，然而也不忍心我这个儿子成为穷光蛋，还得通过一桩富有的婚事解决我的生计。不久之后他替我找了个伴侣。他有一个叫梅森先生的老相识，是西印度的种植园主和商人。他作了调查，肯定梅森先生家业很大。他发现梅森先生有一双儿女，还知道他能够，也愿意给他的女儿三万英镑的财产，那已经足够了。我一离开大学就被送往牙买加，跟一个已经替我求了爱的新娘成婚。我的父亲只字不提她的钱，却告诉我在西班牙城梅森小姐有倾城之貌，这倒不假。她是个美人，有布兰奇·英格拉姆的派头，身材高大，皮肤黝黑，雍容华贵。她家里也希望把我弄到手，因为我身世不错，和她一样。他们把她带到聚会上给我看，打扮得花枝招展。我难得单独见她，也很少同她私下交谈。她恭维

我，还故意卖弄姿色和才艺来讨好我。她圈子里的男人似乎都被她所倾倒，同时也羡慕我，我被弄得眼花缭乱，激动不已。我的感官被刺激起来了，由于幼稚无知，没有经验，以为自己爱上了她。社交场中的愚蠢角逐、年青人的好色、鲁莽和盲目，会使人什么糊里糊涂的蠢事都干得出来。她的亲戚们怂恿我；情敌们激怒我；她来勾引我。于是我还几乎不知道是怎么回事儿，婚事就定了。呵——一想起这种行为我便失去了自尊！——我被内心一种自我鄙视的痛苦所压倒，我从来没有爱过她，敬重过她，甚至也不了解她。她天性中有没有一种美德我都没有把握。在她的内心或举止中，我既没有看到谦逊和仁慈，也没有看到坦诚和高雅。而我娶了她——我是多么粗俗，多么没有骨气！真是有个眼无珠的大傻瓜！要是我没有那么大的过失，也许我早就——不过还是让我记住我在同谁说话。

“新娘的母亲我从来没有见过，我以为她死了。但蜜月一过，我便发现自己搞错了。她不过是疯了，被关在疯人院里。我妻子还有个弟弟，是个不会说话的白痴。你所见到的大弟（尽管我讨厌他的亲人，却并不恨他，因为在他软弱的灵魂中，还有许多爱心，表现在他对可怜的姐姐一直很关心，以及对我一度显出狗一般的依恋）有一天很可能也会落到这个地步。我父亲和我哥哥罗兰对这些情况都知道，但他们只想到三万英镑，并且狼狈为奸坑害我。

“这都是些丑恶的发现，但是，除了隐瞒实情的欺诈行为，我不应当把这些都怪罪于我的妻子。尽管我发现她的个性与我格格不入，她的趣味使我感到厌恶，她的气质平庸、低下、狭隘，完全不可能向更高处引导，向更广处发展；我发现无法同她舒舒畅畅地度过一个晚上，甚至一个小时。我们之间没有真诚的对话，因为一谈任何话题，马上会得到她既粗俗又陈腐，即怪僻又愚蠢的呼应——我发觉自己决不会有一个清静安定的家，因为没有一个人能忍受她不断发作暴烈无理的脾性，能忍受她荒唐、矛盾和苛刻的命令所带来的烦恼——即使那样，我也克制住了。我避免责备，减少规劝，悄悄地吞下了自己的悔恨和厌恶。我抑制住了自己的反感。

“简，我不想用讨厌的细节来打扰你了，我要说的话可以用几句激烈的话来表达。我跟那个女人在楼上住了四年，在那之前她折磨得我够呛。她的性格成熟了，并可怕地急剧发展；她的劣迹层出不穷，而且那么严重，只有使用残暴的手段才能加以制止，而我又于心不忍，她的智力那么弱——而她的冲动又何等之强呵！那些冲动给我造成了多么可怕的灾祸！伯莎·梅森——一个声名狼藉的母亲的真正的女儿——把我拉进了堕落骇人的痛苦深渊。一个男人同一个既放纵又鄙俗的妻子结合，这必定是在劫难逃的。

“在这期间我的哥哥死了，四年之后我父亲相继去世。从此我够富有的了——同时又穷得可怕。我所见过的最粗俗、最肮脏、最下贱的属性同我联系在一起，被法律和社会称作我的一部分。而我无法通过任何法律程序加以摆脱，因为这时医生们发觉我的妻子疯了——她的放肆已经使发疯的种子早熟——简，你不喜欢我的叙述，你看上去几乎很厌恶——其余的话是不是改日再谈？”

“不，先生，现在就讲完它。我怜悯你——我真诚地怜悯你。”

“怜悯，这个词出自某些人之口时，简，是讨厌而带有污辱性的，完全有理由把它奉还给说出来的人。不过那是内心自私无情的人的怜悯，这是听到灾祸以后所产生的以自我为中心的痛苦，混杂着对受害者的盲目鄙视。但这不是你的怜悯，简，此刻你满脸透出的不是这种感情。——此刻你眼睛里洋溢着——你内心搏动着的——使你的手颤抖的是另一种感情。我

的宝贝，你的怜悯是爱的痛苦母亲，它的痛苦是神圣的热恋出世时的阵痛。我接受了，简！让那女儿自由地降生吧——我的怀抱已等待着接纳她了。”

“好，先生，说下去，你发现她疯了以后怎么办呢？”

“简——我到了绝望的边缘，能把我和深渊隔开的就只剩自尊了。在世人的眼里，无疑我已是名誉扫地，但我决心在自己眼里保持清白——我终于拒绝接受她的罪孽的感染，挣脱了同她神经缺陷的联系。但社会依然把我的名字，我本人和她捆在一起，我仍旧天天看到她，听到她。她呼吸的一部分（呸！）混杂在我呼吸的空气中。此外，我还记得我曾是她丈夫——对我来说这种联想过去和现在都有说不出的憎恶。而且我知道，只要她还活着，我就永远不能成为另一个更好的妻子的丈夫。尽管她比我大五岁（她的家庭和她的父亲甚至在她年龄细节上也骗了我），她很可能跟我活得一样长，因为她虽然头脑衰弱，但体魄强健。于是在二十六岁的年纪上，我便全然无望了。”

“一天夜里我被她的叫喊惊醒了（自从医生宣布她疯了以后，她当然是被关起来了）——那是西印度群岛火燎似的夜晚，这种天气常常是飓风到来的前奏。我难以入睡，便爬起来开了窗。空气像含硫的蒸气——到处都让人提不起神来。蚊子嗡嗡的飞进来，阴沉地在房间里打转。在那儿我能听到大海之声，像地震一般沉闷地隆隆响着。黑云在大海上空集结，月亮沉落在宽阔的红色波浪上，像一个滚烫的炮弹——向颤抖着正酝酿风暴的海洋，投去血色的目光。我确实深受这种气氛和景色的感染，而我的耳朵却充斥着疯子尖叫着的咒骂声。咒骂中夹杂着我的名字，语调里那么充满仇恨，语言又那么肮脏！——没有一个以卖淫为业的妓女，会使用比她更污秽的字眼，尽管隔了两个房间，我每个字都听得清清楚楚——西印度群岛薄薄的隔板丝毫挡不住她狼一般的嚎叫。”

“‘这种生活，’我终于说，‘是地狱！这就是无底深渊里的空气和声音！要是我能够，我有权解脱自己。人世的痛苦连同拖累我灵魂的沉重肉体都会离我而去。对狂热者信奉的地狱之火，我并不害怕。将来的状况不会比现在的更糟——让我摆脱，回到上帝那儿去吧！’”

“我一面说，一面蹲在一只箱子旁边，把锁打开，箱子里放着一对上了子弹的手枪。我想开枪自杀。但这一念头只转了一会儿，由于我没有发疯，那种激起自杀念头并使我万念俱灰的危机，刹那间过去了。”

“刚刚来自欧洲的风吹过洋面，穿过宽敞的窗户。暴风雨到来了，大雨滂沱，雷鸣电闪，空气变得清新了。随后我设想并下定了决心。我在湿漉漉的园子里水珠滴嗒的桔子树下，在湿透的石榴和菠萝树中间漫步，周围燃起了灿烂的热带黎明——于是我思考着，简——噢，听着，在那一时刻真正的智慧抚慰了我，向我指明了正确的道路。”

“从欧洲吹来的甜甜的凤，在格外清新的树叶间耳语，大西洋自由自在地咆哮着。我那颗早已干枯和焦灼的心，对着那声音舒张开来，注满了活的血液——我的身躯向往新生——我的心灵渴望甘露。我看见希望复活了——感到重生有了可能。我从花园顶端拱形花棚下眺望着大海——它比天空更加蔚蓝。旧世界已经远去，清晰的前景展现在面前，于是：

“‘走吧，’希望说，‘再到欧洲去生活吧，在那里你那被玷污的名字不为人所知，也没有人知道你背负着龌龊的重荷。你可以把疯子带往英国，关在桑菲尔德，给予应有的照料和戒备。”

然后到随便哪个地方去旅游，结识你喜欢的新关系。那个女人恣意让你如此长期受苦，如此败坏你的名声，如此侵犯你的荣誉，如此毁灭你的青春，她不是你妻子，你也不是她丈夫。注意让她按病情需要得到照应，那你就已做了上帝和人类要求你的一切。让她的身份，她同你的关系永远被忘却，你决不要把这些告诉任何活人。把她安置在一个安全舒适的地方，悄悄地把她的堕落掩藏起来，离开她吧。’”

“我完全按这个建议去做。我的父亲和哥哥没有把我婚姻的底细透给他们的旧识，因为在我写给他们的第一封信里，我就向他们通报了我的婚配——已经开始感受到它极其讨厌的后果，而且从那一家人的性格和体质中，看到了我可怕的前景——我附带又敦促他们严守秘密。不久，我父亲替我选中的妻子的丑行，已经到了这个地步，使他也羞于认她为媳了。对这一关系他远不想大事声张，却像我一样急于把它掩盖起来。

“随后我把她送到了英格兰，同这么个怪物呆在船上，经历了一次可怕的航行。我非常兴，最后终于把她送到了桑菲尔德，看她平安地住在三楼房间里。房间的内密室，十年来已被她弄成了野兽的巢穴——妖怪的密室。我费了一番周折找人服侍她。有必要选择一位忠实可靠的人，因为她的呓语必然会泄露我的秘密。此外，她还有神志清醒的日子——有时几周——这种时候她整日价骂我。最后我从格里姆斯比收容所雇来了格雷斯·普尔。她和外科医生卡特（梅森被刺并心事重重的那个夜晚，是他给梅森包，扎了伤口），只有这两个人，我让他们知道我内心的秘密。费尔法克斯太太其实也许有些怀疑，但无法确切了解有关事实。总的来说，格雷斯证明是个好管家。但多半是因为伴随这折磨人的差事而来，而又无可救药的自身缺陷，她不止一次放松警戒，出了事情。这个疯子既狡猾又恶毒，决不放过机会，利用看护人暂时的疏忽。有一次她偷偷拿刀捅了她弟弟，有两次搞到了她小房间的钥匙，并且夜间从那里走了出来。在以上第一个场合，她蓄意把我烧死在床上，第二次，她找到你门上来了。我感谢上帝守护你。随后她把火发在你的婚装上，那也许使她朦胧地记起了自己当新娘的日子，至于还可能发生什么，我不忍心再回想了，当我想起早上扑向我喉咙的东西，想起它把又黑又红的脸凑向我宝贝的窝里时，我的血凝结了——”

“那么，先生，”趁他顿住时我问，“你把她安顿在这里后，自己干了什么呢？你上哪儿去了”

“我干了什么吗，简？我让自己变成了一个形踪不定的人。我上哪儿去了？我像沼泽地的精灵那样东游西荡，去了欧洲大陆，迂回曲折穿越了那里所有的国家。我打定主意找一个我可以爱她的出色聪明的女人，与我留在桑菲尔德的泼妇恰成对比——”

“但你不能结婚，先生。”

“我决心而且深信我能够结婚，也应该结婚，我虽然已经骗了你，但欺骗不是我的初衷。我打算将自己的事儿坦诚相告，公开求婚。我应当被认为有爱和被爱的自由，在我看来这是绝对合理的。我从不怀疑能找到某个女人，愿意并理解我的处境，接纳我，尽管我背着该诅咒的包袱。”

“那么，先生？”

“当你刨根究底时，简，你常常使我发笑。你像一只急切的小鸟那样张开眼睛，时而局促不安地动来动去，仿佛口头回答的语速太慢，你还想读一读人家心上的铭文。我往下说之前，

学英语，练听力，上听力课堂！

告诉我你的‘那么，先生？’是什么意思。这个小小的短语你经常挂在嘴边，很多次是它把我导入无休止的交谈，连我自己也不十分清楚究竟为什么？”

“我的意思是——随后发生了什么？你怎么继续下去？这件事情后来怎样了？”

“完全茹跑出了我的视线之外，我对你很生气。”

“我急不可耐地等着晚间的到来，这样可以把你召到我面前。我怀疑，你有一种不同寻常的性格，对我来说，一种全新的性格，我很想对它进行深层的探索，了解得更透彻。你进了房间，目光与神态既腴腆又很有主见。你穿着古怪——很像你现在的样子。我使你开了腔，不久我就发现你身上充满奇怪的反差。你的服装和举止受着清规戒律的约束；你的神态往往很羞涩，完全是那种天性高雅绝不适应社交的人，很害怕自己因为某种失礼和错误而出丑。但一旦同你交谈，你向对方的脸庞投去锐利、大胆、闪亮的目光。你的每个眼神里都有一种穿透力。问你思路严密的问题，你应对如流。你似乎很快对我习惯了——我相信你觉得在你与你的严厉、暴躁的主人之间，有引起共鸣的地方，因为我惊异地看到，一种愉快的自在感，立刻使你的举止变得平静了。尽管我暴跳如雷，你并没有对我的乖僻露出惊奇、胆怯、苦恼或不快。你观察着我，不时朝我笑笑，那笑容中带着一种难以形容的朴实和聪明伶俐的神态。我立刻对我所目睹的感到满意和兴奋。我喜欢已经见到的东西，而且希望见得更多。然而很长一段时间我跟你簌簌 E 喽褙紫 乔 E 俏业哪俏晃饕《鹊锤镜奶氏悖 叶运 退 囊 瓷瞳漈淳 约词乖谧酪质币灿兴 际 R 磺薪 跻 吹南砌埽 屺刮彝 退 淖银 窳柯# 谗俏揖 X P 菴狻

“但是我无法单独生活，所以我尝试找情妇来作伴。我第一个选中的是塞莉纳·瓦伦——我所走的另一步，使人一想起就会唾弃自己。你已经知道她是怎么个人，我们之间的私通是如何结束的。她之后有两个后继者，一个是意大利人嘉辛塔；另一个是德国人克莱拉，两人都被认为美貌绝伦。但是几周之后我觉得她们的美貌对我又有什么意思？嘉辛塔肆无忌惮，性格暴烈，过了三个月我就讨厌了；克莱拉诚实文静，但反应迟钝，没有头脑，很不敏感，一点也不对我口味。我很高兴给了她相当一笔钱，替她找到了一个很好的行当，体面地把她撵走了。可是简，从你的脸上可以看出，刚才你对我的印象并不很好，你认为我是一个冷酷无情、放荡不羁的流氓，是吗？”

“说实在我并不像有时那么喜欢你，先生。你难道一点也不觉得这种一会儿这个情妇，一会儿那个情妇的生活方式不对吗？你谈起来仿佛这是理所当然的。”

“我是曾有这个想法，但我并不喜欢这么做。这是一种苟且偷生的生活，我决不想走回头路了。雇一个情妇之坏仅次于买一个奴隶，两者就本性和地位而言都是低下的，同下人厮混是堕落，现在我讨厌回忆同塞莉纳、嘉辛塔和克莱拉一起的日子。”

我觉得这番话很真实，并从中作出了推断：要是我忘了自己，忘了向来所受的教导，在任何借口，任何理由和任何诱惑之下重蹈这些可怜姑娘的复辙，有朝一日，他会以此刻回忆起来时褻渎她们的同样心情，来对待我。我并没有把这个想法说出来，感受到了也就够了。我把它印在心坎里，让它在考验的时刻对我有所帮助。

“噢，简，你干嘛不说‘那么，先生？’我还没有说完呢。你神情严肃，看得出来不同意我

的看法。不过让我直说吧。去年一月，我打发走了所有的情妇——当时的心情既冷酷又苦恼，那是毫无意义、飘忽不定的孤独生活的苦果——我心灰意冷，便怒悻悻地反对一切男性，尤其是反对一切女性（因为，我开始认为理智、忠实、可爱的女人不过是一种梦想），因为事务需要，我回到了英格兰。

“一个有霜冻的冬日午后，我骑在马上看见了桑菲尔德府。多么骇人的地方！在那里我预料没有安宁，没有欢乐。在海巷的阶梯上我看到一个斯斯文文的小东西独个儿坐着。我不经意地在她旁边走过，就像路过对面截去树梢的柳树一样。这小东西与我会有什么关系，我没有预感，也没有内心的感应暗示我。我生活的仲裁人——好歹也是我的守护神——穿着一身很不起眼的衣服坐在那儿。甚至我的梅斯罗马出了事故，这小东西一本正经上来帮忙时，我也还不知道她呢！一个稚气十足，纤弱苗条的家伙，仿佛一只红雀跳到我脚边，提议用它细小的翅膀背负我。我有些粗暴。但这东西就是不走，站在我旁边，固执得出奇，一付不容违抗的神态和口气。我得有人帮忙，而且是由那双手来帮，结果我是得到了帮助。

“我一压那娇柔的肩膀，某种新的东西——新鲜的活力和意识——悄悄地流进了我的躯体。好在我已知道这个小精灵得回到我身边——它住在我底下的房子里。要不然我会不无遗憾地感到它从我的手底下溜走，消失在暗淡的树篱中。我听到了你那天晚上回家来，简，尽管你未必知道我思念你，观察着你。第二天你与阿黛勒在走廊上玩的时候，我观察了你半个小时（没有暴露我自己）。我记得这是个下雪天，你们不能到户外去。我呆在自己的房间里，半开着门。我可以听，也可以看。一时阿黛勒占据了你的外在注意力，但我想象你的心思在别的地方。但你对她非常耐心，我的小简。你同她交谈，逗了她很久，最后她离开你时，你又立刻陷入了沉思。你开始在走廊上慢慢地踱起步来，不时经过窗前，你往外眺望着纷纷扬扬的雪，倾听着似泣似诉的风，你又再次轻轻地走着，沉入了遐想。我想白天的光线并不很暗，你的眼睛里时而映现出一种愉悦的光，面容里露出柔和的兴奋，表明这不是一种痛苦、暴躁、疑病症式的沉思。你的目光中透出一种青春的甜蜜思索，心甘情愿的翅膀载着青春的心灵，追逐着希望的踪影，不断登高，飞向理想的天国。费尔法克斯太太在大厅里同仆人说话的声音把你惊醒了，而你奇怪地独自笑着，也笑你自己，珍妮特。你的微笑意味深长，十分敏锐，也似乎是笑你自己走了神，它仿佛说，‘我所看到的美好景象尽管不错，但我决不能忘记这是绝对虚假的。在我的脑海里，有一个玫瑰式的天空，一个红花绿草的伊甸园；但在外面，我完全意识到，脚下有一条坎坷的路要走，有着渐渐聚拢的黑色风暴要面对。’你跑到了楼下，向费尔法克斯太太要些事儿干干，我想是清算一周的家庭帐目，或者诸如此类的事情。你跑出了我的视线之外，我对你很生气。”

“我急不可耐地等着晚间的到来，这样可以把你召到我面前。我怀疑，你有一种不同寻常的性格，对我来说，一种全新的性格，我很想对它进行深层的探索，了解得更透彻。你进了房间，目光与神态既腼腆又很有主见。你穿着古怪——很像你现在的样子。我使你开了腔，不久我就发现你身上充满奇怪的反差。你的服装和举止受着清规戒律的约束；你的神态往往很羞涩，完全是那种天性高雅绝不适应社交的人，很害怕自己因为某种失礼和错误而出丑。但一旦同你交谈，你向对方的脸庞投去锐利、大胆、闪亮的目光。你的每个眼神里都有一种穿透力。问你思路严密的问题，你应对如流。你似乎很快对我习惯了——我相信你觉得在你与你的严厉、暴躁的主人之间，有引起共鸣的地方，因为我惊异地看到，一种愉快的自在感，立刻使你的举止变得平静了。尽管我暴跳如雷，你并没有对我的乖僻露出惊奇、胆怯、苦恼或不快。你观察着我，不时朝我笑笑，那笑容中带着一种难以形容的朴实和聪明伶俐的神态。我立刻对我所目睹的感到满意和兴奋。我喜欢已经见到的东西，而且希望见得更多。然而很

长一段时间我跟你很疏远，很少找你作伴。我是一个精神享乐主义者，希望与这位活泼的新朋友相识而带来的喜悦能经久不衰。此外，我一时为一种拂之不去的忧虑所困扰，担心要是我随意摆弄这花朵，它就会凋谢——新鲜诱人的魅力便会消失。那时我并不知道，这不是一朵朝开夕落的花朵，而是一种灿烂绚丽不可摧毁的宝石花。此外，我想看一看，要是我躲着你，你是否会来找我——但你没有，你呆在书房里，像你的桌子和画板那样纹丝不动。要是我偶而碰到你，你会很快走过，只不过出于礼貌稍稍打个招呼。简，在那些日子里，若有所思的神态是你习惯的表情：不是低沉沮丧，因为你没有病态；但也不是轻松活泼，因为你没有什么希望和真正的快乐。我不知道你是怎么想我的——或者从来是否想过我。为了发现这点，我继续注意你。你交谈时眼神中透出某种快意，举止中隐含着亲切。我看到你内心是喜欢与人交往的，但清静的教室——乏味的生活弄得你情绪低落。我很乐意和气待你，而善意很快激起了情绪，你的面部表情变得温柔，你的声调变得亲切。我很喜欢我的名字从你的嘴里吐出来，带着感激和快乐的声调。那时候我常常喜欢在不经意中碰到你，简，而你显出犹豫不决的样子。你略带困惑看了我一眼，那是一种徘徊不去的疑虑。你不知道我是否会反复无常——究竟会摆出主人的架子，一面孔的威严，还是会做个朋友，慈祥和蔼。这时我已经太喜欢你了，不忍激起第一种念头。我真诚地伸出手时，清新、光明、幸福的表情便浮现在你年轻而充满渴望的脸上，我便总是犹疑不定，免得自己当场就把你拉进怀抱。”

“别再谈那些日子了，先生，”我打断了他，偷偷地抹去了几滴眼泪。他的话对我无异于折磨，因为我知道自己该做什么——并且马上做——所有这一切回忆和他情感的袒露只会使我更加为难。

“不，简，”他回答说，“当现在已那么肯定——未来又那么光明的时候，谈论过去又有什么必要呢？”

我一听这番神魂颠倒的话，打了个寒噤。

“你明白是怎么回事——是不是？”他继续说，“在一半是难以言表的痛苦和一半是意气消沉的孤独中，度过了我的少年和成年时期后，我第一次发现我可以真正爱的东西——我找到了你。你是我的共鸣体——我的更好的一半——我的好天使——我与你紧紧地依恋着。我认为你很出色，有天份，很可爱，一种热烈而庄严的激情隐藏在我内心。这种激情向着你——并且燃起纯洁、猛烈的火焰，把你我熔合在一起。

“正是因为我感觉到而且明白这一点，我决计娶你。说我已有一个妻子，那是空洞的嘲弄。现在你知道我只有一个可怕的魔鬼。我想欺骗你，这是我的不是。但我担心你性格中执拗的一面。我担心早就种下的偏见，我想在稳操胜券以后，再冒吐露真情的危险。这其实是怯懦，我应当像现在这样，先求助于你的高尚心灵和宽宏大度——直截了当地向你倾吐生活中的苦恼——向你描述我对更高级和更有价值的生活的渴求——不是向你表示决心（这字眼太弱了）而是不可抵御的爱意，也即是在被别人忠贞不二地深爱着的时候，我也那么去爱别人，随后我应当要求你接受我忠贞的誓言，也要求你发誓：简——现在就对我说吧。”

一阵静默。

“你干嘛不吱声，简？”

学英语，练听力，上听力课堂！

我经历着一次煎熬。一双铁铸火燎的手，紧紧抓住了我的命脉。一个可怕的时刻，充满着搏击、黑暗和燃烧！人世间再也没有人能期望像我这样被爱了。也没有人像我这样拜倒在我的人物的脚下，我必须摒弃爱情和偶像。一个凄凉的字眼就表达了我不可忍受的责任——“走！”

“简，你明白我期待你干什么，就只要这么答应一下：‘我将属于你，罗切斯特先生。’”

“罗切斯特先生，我将不属于你。”

又一次长时间的沉默。

“简！”他又开口了，嗓音里透出的温存使我难过得心碎，也使我怀着不祥的恐怖，变得石头般冰冷——因为这种平静的声音是狮子起来时的喘息——“简，你的意思是，在世上你走你的路，我走我的路？”

“我是这个意思。”

“简，”（俯下身子拥抱我）“你这会儿还是这个意思吗，”

“是的，”

“现在还这样？”他轻轻地吻了吻我的额头和脸颊。

“是的，”我飞快地彻底挣脱了他。

“呵，简，这太狠心了！这——这很不道德，但爱我并不算不道德。”

“照你的话办会不道德。”

一个狂野的神色使他双眉直竖——那神色掠过他的脸庞。他站了起来，但又忍下了。我把手靠在椅背上撑住自己，我颤抖，我害怕——但我很镇定。

“等一下，简。你走之前，再看一眼我那可怕的生活。你一走，一切幸福也就被夺走了。然后留下了什么呢？作为妻子，我只有一个疯子在上楼，你还不如把我同墓地里的死尸扯在一起。我该怎么办，简？哪儿去找伙伴，哪儿还能寻觅希望？”

“像我一样办吧，相信上帝和你自己，相信上天，希望在那儿再次见到你。”

“那你不改变主意了？”

“不。”

“那你判我活着受罪，死了挨骂吗？”他提高了嗓门。

“我劝你活得清白，希望你死得安宁。”

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“那你就把爱情和纯洁从我这里夺走了？你把我推回老路，拿肉欲当爱情——以作恶为职业？”

“罗切斯特先生，我没有把这种命运强加给你，就像我自己不会把它当作我的命运一样。我们生来就是苦难和忍受的，你我都一样，就这么去做吧。我还没有忘掉，你就会先忘掉我。”

“你说这样的话是要把我当成一个骗子：你败坏了我的名誉。我宣布我不会变心，而你却当着我的面说我很快就会变心。你的行为证明，你的判断存在着多大的歪曲：你的观念又是何等的反常！难道仅仅违背人类的一个法律不是比把你的同类推向绝望更好吗？——任何人都不会因为违背法律而受到伤害，因为你既无亲戚又无熟人，不必害怕由于同我生活而得罪他们。”

这倒是真的。他说话时我的良心和理智都背叛了我，指控我犯了同他对抗的罪。两者似乎像感情一样大叫大嚷。感情疯狂地叫喊着。“呵，同意吧！”它说。“想想他的痛苦，考虑考虑他的危险——看看他一个人被丢下时的样子吧，记住他轻率冒险的本性，想一想伴随绝望而来的鲁莽吧，——安慰他，拯救他，爱他。告诉他你爱他，而且是属于他的。世上有谁来关心你？你的所作所为会伤着谁呢？”

但是那回答依然是不可改变的——“我关心我自己，愈是孤单，愈是没有朋友，愈是无助，那我就愈是自尊。我会遵守上帝创造、由人批准的法规，我会坚持我清醒时，而不是像现在这样发疯时服从的准则。法规和准则不光是为了没有诱惑的时刻，而是针对现在这样，肉体 and 灵魂起来抗拒它的严厉和苛刻的时候。它们再严厉也是不可破坏的。要是出于我个人的方便而加以违背，那它们还有什么价值？它们是有价值的——我向来是这么相信的。如果我此刻不信，那是因为我疯了——疯得可厉害啦，我的血管里燃烧着火，我的心跳快得难以计数。此刻我所能依靠的是原有的想法和以往的决心：我要巍然不动地站在那里。”

我这么做了，罗切斯特先生观察着我的脸色，看出我已经这么办了。他的怒气被激到了极点。不管会产生什么后果，他都得发作一会儿。他从房间一头走过来，抓住我胳膊，把我的腰紧紧抱住。他眼睛那么冒火，仿佛要把我吞下去似的。肉体上，这时我无能为力，就像扔在炉中强风和火光里的草根——精神上，我的心灵保持着克制，正因为这样，我对最终的安全很有把握。幸亏灵魂有一个诠释者——常常是位无意识的，却仍是忠实的诠释者——那就是眼睛。我与他目光相对，一面瞪着他那付凶相，一面不由自主地叹了口气。他那么紧握着使我很痛，我由于过分用力而精疲力尽了。

“从来没有，”他咬牙切齿地说，“从来没有任何东西既那么脆弱，又那么顽强。在我手里她摸上去只不过像根芦苇，（他紧握手使劲摇我），我可以不费吹灰之力把它弄弯曲，但要是我把它弄弯了，拔起来，碾碎它，那又有什么用？想想那双眼睛，想想从中射出的坚定、狂野、自在的目光，蔑视我，内中隐含的不止是勇气，而是严峻的胜利感。不管我怎么摆弄这笼子，我无法靠拢它——这野蛮、漂亮的家伙，要是我撕坏或者打破这小小的监狱，我的暴行只会让囚徒获得自由。我也许可以成为这所房子的征服者，但我还来不及称自己为泥屋的拥有人，里边的居住者会早就飞到天上去了。而我要的正是你的精神——富有意志、活力、德行和纯洁，而不单是你脆弱的躯体。如果你愿意，你自己可以轻轻地飞来，偎依着我的心坎，而要是违背你的意思死死抓住你，你会像一阵香气那样在我手掌中溜走——我还没有闻

到你就消失了。呵！来吧，简，来吧！”

他一面说，一面松开了紧握的手，只是看着我。这眼神远比发疯似的紧扯难以抗拒。然而现在只有傻瓜才会屈服。我已面对他的怒火，把它挫败了。我得避开他的忧愁，便向门边走去。

“你走了，简？”

“我走了，先生。”

“你离开我了？”

“是的。”

“你不来了？你不愿来抚慰我，拯救我？——我深沉的爱，凄楚的悲苦，疯狂的祈求，你都无动于衷？”

他的嗓音里带着一种多么难以言表的悲哀！要毅然决然重复“我走了”这句话有多难！

“简！”

“罗切斯特先生。”

“那么你就离开吧——我同意——但记住，你撇下我在这儿痛苦不堪。上你自己的房间去，细细想想我说过话，而且，简，看上一眼我的痛苦吧——想想我吧。”

他走开了，一脸扎进了沙发。“呵，简！我的希望——我的爱——我的生命！”他痛苦地脱口而出，随后响起了深沉而强烈的哭泣声。

我已经走到了门边，可是读者呀，我走了回来——像我退出时一样坚决地走了回来。我跪倒在他旁边，我把他的脸从沙发垫转向我，我吻了吻他的脸颊，用手把他的头发撸服贴。

“上帝祝福你，我亲爱的主人，”我说。“上帝会保护你免受伤害，免做错事——指引你，安慰你——好好地报答你过去对我的好意。”

“小简的爱将是我最好的酬报，”他回答说：“没有它，我会心碎。但简会把她的爱给我，是的——既高尚又慷慨。”

血一下子涌到了我脸上，他的眼睛射出了火光。他猛地一跳，站直了身子，伸出双臂。但我躲开了拥抱，立刻走出了房间。

“别了，”我离开他时我的心儿在叫喊。绝望又使我加了一句话“永别了。”