WUTHERING HEIGHTS

By Emily Bronte

Chapter 1

1801 -

I have just returned from a visit to my landlord -the solitary neighbour that

I shall be troubled with. This is certainly a beautiful country! In all

England, I do not believe that I could have fixed on a situation so completely

removed from the stir of society. A perfect misanthropist's heaven: and Mr.

Heathcliff and I are such a suitable pair to divide the desolation between us.

A capital fellow! He little imagined how my heart warmed towards him when I

beheld his black eyes withdraw so suspiciously under their brows, as I rode

up, and when his fingers sheltered themselves, with a jealous resolution,

still further in his waistcoat, as I announced my name.

"Mr. Heathcliff?" I said.

A nod was the answer.

"Mr. Lockwood, your new tenant, sir. I do myself the honour of calling as soon

as possible after my arrival, to express the hope that I have not

inconvenienced you by my perseverance in soliciting the occupation of

Thrushcross Grange: I heard yesterday you had had some thoughts -"

"Thrushcross Grange is my own, sir," he interrupted, wincing. "I should not

allow any one to inconvenience me, if I could hinder it -walk in!"

The "walk in" was uttered with closed teeth, and expressed the sentiment, "Go

to the Deuce"; even the gate over which he leant manifested no sympathising

movement to the words; and I think that circumstance determined me to accept

the invitation: I felt interested in a man who seemed more exaggeratedly

reserved than myself.

When he saw my horse's breast fairly pushing the barrier, he did pull out his

hand to unchain it, and then sullenly preceded me up the causeway, calling, as

we entered the court, -"Joseph, take Mr. Lockwood's horse; and bring up some

wine."

"Here we have the whole establishment of domestics, I suppose," was the

reflection suggested by this compound order. "No wonder the grass grows up

between the flags, and cattle are the only hedge-cutters."

Joseph was an elderly, nay, an old man: very old, perhaps, though hale and

sinewy.

"The Lord help us!" he soliloquised in an undertone of peevish displeasure,

while relieving me of my horse; looking, meantime, in my face so sourly that I

charitably conjectured he must have need of divine aid to digest his dinner,

and his pious ejaculation had no reference to my unexpected advent.

Wuthering Heights is the name of Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling. "Wuthering" being

a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to

which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they

must have up there at all times, indeed; one may guess the power of the north

wind blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at

the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their

limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. Happily, the architect had

foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall,

and the corners defended with large jutting stones.

Before passing the threshold, I paused to admire a quantity of grotesque

carving lavished over the front, and especially about the principal door;

above which, among a wilderness of crumbling griffins and shameless little

boys, I detected the date `1500', and the name `Hareton Earnshaw'. I would

have made a few comments, and requested a short history of the place from the

surly owner; but his attitude at the door appeared to demand my speedy

entrance, or complete departure, and I had no desire to aggravate his

impatience previous to inspecting the penetralium.

One step brought us into the family sitting-room, without any introductory

lobby or passage: they call it here `the house' pre-eminently. It includes

kitchen and parlour, generally; but I believe at Wuthering Heights the kitchen

is forced to retreat altogether into another quarter; at least I distinguished

a chatter of tongues, and a clatter of culinary utensils, deep within; and I

observed no signs of roasting, boiling, or baking, about the huge fireplace;

nor any glitter of copper saucepans and tin cullenders on the walls. One end,

indeed, reflected splendidly both light and heat from ranks of immense pewter

dishes, interspersed with silver jugs and tankards, towering row after row, on

a vast oak dresser, to the very roof. The latter had never been underdrawn:

its entire anatomy lay bare to an inquiring eye, except where a frame of wood

laden with oatcakes and clusters of legs of beef, mutton, and ham, concealed

it. Above the chimney were sundry villainous old guns, and a couple of

horse-pistols: and, by way of ornament, three gaudily painted canisters

disposed along its ledge. The floor was of smooth, white stone; the chairs,

high-backed, primitive structures, painted green: one or two heavy black ones

lurking in the shade. In an arch under the dresser, reposed a huge,

liver-coloured bitch pointer, surrounded by a swarm of squealing puppies; and

other dogs haunted other recesses.

The apartment and furniture would have been nothing extraordinary as belonging

to a homely, northern farmer, with a stubborn countenance, and stalwart limbs

set out to advantage in knee-breeches and gaiters. Such an individual seated

in his armchair, his mug of ale frothing on the round table before him, is to

be seen in any circuit of five or six miles among these hills, if you go at

the right time after dinner. But Mr. Heathcliff forms a singular contrast to

his abode and style of living. He is a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect, in dress

and manners a gentleman: that is, as much a gentleman as many a country

squire; rather slovenly, perhaps, yet not looking amiss with his negligence,

because he has an erect and handsome figure; and rather morose. Possibly, some

people might suspect him of a degree of underbred pride; I have a sympathetic

chord within that tells me it is nothing of the sort: I know, by instinct, his

reserve springs from an aversion to showy displays of feeling -to

manifestations of mutual kindliness. He'll love and hate equally under cover,

and esteem it a species of impertinence to be loved or hated again. No, I'm

running on too fast: I bestow my own attributes over liberally on him. Mr.

Heathcliff may have entirely dissimilar reasons for keeping his hand out of

the way when he meets a would-be acquaintance, to those which actuate me. Let

me hope my constitution is almost peculiar: my dear mother used to say I

should never have a comfortable home; and only last summer I proved myself

perfectly unworthy of one.

While enjoying a month of fine weather at the seacoast, I was thrown into the

company of a most fascinating creature: a real goddess in my eyes, as long as

she took no notice of me. I "never told my love" vocally; still, if looks have

language, the merest idiot might have guessed I was over head and ears: she

understood me at last, and looked a return -the sweetest of all imaginable

looks. And what did I do? I confess it with shame -shrunk icily into myself,

like a snail; at every glance retired colder and farther; till finally the

poor innocent was led to doubt her own senses, and, overwhelmed with confusion

at her supposed mistake, persuaded her mamma to decamp. By this curious turn

of disposition I have gained the reputation of deliberate heartlessness; how

undeserved, I alone can appreciate.

I took a seat at the end of the hearthstone opposite that towards which my

landlord advanced, and filled up an interval of silence by attempting to

caress the canine mother, who had left her nursery, and was sneaking wolfishly

to the back of my legs, her lip curled up, and her white teeth watering for a

snatch. My caress provoked a long, guttural gnarl.

"You'd better let the dog alone," growled Mr. Heathcliff in unison, checking

fiercer demonstrations with a punch of his foot. "She's not accustomed to be

spoiled -not kept for a pet." Then, striding to a side door, he shouted again,

"Joseph!"

Joseph mumbled indistinctly in the depths of the cellar, but gave no

intimation of ascending; so his master dived down to him, leaving me vis-a-vis

the ruffianly bitch and a pair of grim shaggy sheepdogs, who shared with her a

jealous guardianship over all my movements. Not anxious to come in contact

with their fangs, I sat still; but, imagining they would scarcely understand

tacit insults, I unfortunately indulged in winking and making faces at the

trio, and some turn of my physiognomy so irritated madam, that she suddenly

broke into a fury, and leapt on my knees. I flung her back, and hastened to

interpose the table between us. This proceeding roused the whole hive.

Half-a-dozen four-footed fiends, of various sizes and ages, issued from hidden

dens to the common centre. I felt my heels and coat-laps peculiar subjects of

assault; and, parrying off the larger combatants as effectually as I could

with the poker, I was constrained to demand, aloud, assistance from some of

the household in re-establishing peace.

Mr. Heathcliff and his man climbed the cellar steps with vexatious phlegm; I

don't think they moved one second faster than usual, though the hearth was an

absolute tempest of worrying and yelping. Happily, an inhabitant of the

kitchen made more dispatch: a lusty dame, with tucked-up gown, bare arms, and

fire-flushed cheeks, rushed into the midst of us flourishing a frying-pan; and

used that weapon, and her tongue, to such purpose, that the storm subsided

magically, and she only remained, heaving like a sea after a high wind, when

her master entered on the scene.

"What the devil is the matter?" he asked, eyeing me in a manner I could ill

endure after this inhospitable treatment.

"What the devil, indeed!" I muttered. "The herd of possessed swine could have

had no worse spirits in them than those animals of yours, sir. You might as

well leave a stranger with a brood of tigers!"

"They won't meddle with persons who touch nothing," he remarked, putting the

bottle before me, and restoring the displaced table. "The dogs do right to be

vigilant. Take a glass of wine?"

"No thank you."

"Not bitten, are you?"

"If I had been, I would have set my signet on the biter."

Heathcliff's countenance relaxed into a grin.

"Come, come," he said, "you are flurried, Mr. Lockwood. Here, take a little

wine. Guests are so exceedingly rare in this house that I and my dogs, I am

willing to own, hardly know how to receive them. Your health, sir!"

I bowed and returned the pledge, beginning to perceive that it would be

foolish to sit sulking for the misbehaviour of a pack of curs; besides, I felt

loath to yield the fellow further amusement at my expense, since his humour

took that turn. He -probably swayed by prudential considerations of the folly

of offending a good tenant -relaxed a little in the laconic style of chipping

off his pronouns and auxiliary verbs, and introduced what he supposed would be

a subject of interest to me -a discourse on the advantages and disadvantages

of my present place of retirement. I found him very intelligent on the topics

we touched; and before I went home, I was encouraged so far as to volunteer

another visit tomorrow. He evidently wished no repetition of my intrusion. I

shall go, notwithstanding. It is astonishing how sociable I feel myself

compared with him.

Chapter 2

Yesterday afternoon set in misty and cold. I had half a mind to spend it by my

study fire, instead of wading through heath and mud to Wuthering Heights. On

coming up from dinner, however (N.B. -I dine between twelve and one o'clock;

the housekeeper, a matronly lady, taken as a fixture along with the house,

could not, or would not, comprehend my request that I might be served at

five), on mounting the stairs with this lazy intention, and stepping into the

room, I saw a servant-girl on her knees, surrounded by brushes and coal

scuttles, and raising an infernal dust as she extinguished the flames with

heaps of cinders. This spectacle drove me back immediately; I took my hat,

and, after a four miles' walk, arrived at Heathcliff's garden gate just in

time to escape the first feathery flakes of a snow-shower.

On that bleak hilltop the earth was hard with a black frost, and the air made

me shiver through every limb. Being unable to remove the chain, I jumped over,

and, running up the flagged causeway bordered with straggling gooseberry

bushes, knocked vainly for admittance, till my knuckles tingled and the dogs

howled.

"Wretched inmates!" I ejaculated mentally, "you deserve perpetual isolation

from your species for your churlish inhospitality. At least, I would not keep

my doors barred in the daytime. I don't care -I will get in!" So resolved, I

grasped the latch and shook it vehemently. Vinegar-faced Joseph projected his

head from a round window of the barn.

"Whet are ye for?" he shouted. "T' maister's dahn i' t' fowld. Goa rahned by

th' end ut' laith, if yah went tuh spake tull him."

"Is there nobody inside to open the door?" I hallooed responsively.

"They's nobbut t' missis; and shoo'll nut open't an ye mak yer flaysome dins

till neeght."

"Why? Cannot you tell her who I am, eh, Joseph?"

"Nor-ne me! Aw'll hae noa hend wi't," muttered the head, vanishing.

The snow began to drive thickly. I seized the handle to essay another trial,

when a young man without coat, and shouldering a pitchfork, appeared in the

yard behind. He hailed me to follow him, and, after marching through a

wash-house, and a paved area containing a coal-shed, pump, and pigeon-cote, we

at length arrived in the huge, warm, cheerful apartment where I was formerly

received. It glowed delightfully in the radiance of an immense fire,

compounded of coal, peat, and wood; and near the table, laid for a plentiful

evening meal, I was pleased to observe the `missis', an individual whose

existence I had never previously suspected. I bowed and waited, thinking she

would bid me take a seat. She looked at me, leaning back in her chair, and

remained motionless and mute.

"Rough weather!" I remarked. "I'm afraid, Mrs. Heathcliff, the door must bear

the consequence of your servants' leisure attendance; I had hard work to make

them hear me!"

She never opened her mouth. I stared -she stared also. At any rate, she kept

her eyes on me in a cool, regardless manner, exceedingly embarrassing and

disagreeable.

"Sit down," said the young man gruffly. "He'll be in soon."

I obeyed; and hemmed, and called the villain Juno, who deigned, at this second

interview, to move the extreme tip of her tail, in token of owning my

acquaintance.

"A beautiful animal!" I commenced again. "Do you intend parting with the

little ones, madam?"

"They are not mine," said the amiable hostess, more repellingly than

Heathcliff himself could have replied.

"Ah, your favourites are among these!" I continued, turning to an obscure

cushion full of something like cats.

"A strange choice of favourites!" she observed scornfully.

Unluckily, it was a heap of dead rabbits. I hemmed once more, and drew closer

to the hearth, repeating my comment on the wildness of the evening.

"You should not have come out," she said, rising and reaching from the

chimney-piece two of the painted canisters.

Her position before was sheltered from the light; now, I had a distinct view

of her whole figure and countenance. She was slender, and apparently scarcely

past girlhood: an admirable form, and the most exquisite little face that I

have ever had the pleasure of beholding: small features, very fair; flaxen

ringlets, or rather golden, hanging loose on her delicate neck; and eyes, had

they been agreeable in expression, they would have been irresistible;

fortunately for my susceptible heart, the only sentiment they evinced hovered

between scorn and a kind of desperation, singularly unnatural to be detected

there. The canisters were almost out of her reach; I made a motion to aid her;

she turned upon me as a miser might turn if any one attempted to assist him in

counting his gold.

"I don't want your help," she snapped; "I can get them for myself."

"I beg your pardon," I hastened to reply.

"Were you asked to tea?" she demanded, tying an apron over her neat black

frock, and standing with a spoonful of the leaf poised over the pot.

"I shall be glad to have a cup," I answered.

"Were you asked?" she repeated.

"No," I said, half smiling. "You are the proper person to ask me."

She flung the tea back, spoon and all, and resumed her chair in a pet, her

forehead corrugated, and her red underlip pushed out, like a child's ready to

cry.

Meanwhile, the young man had slung onto his person a decidedly shabby upper

garment, and, erecting himself before the blaze, looked down on me from the

corner of his eyes, for all the world as if there were some mortal feud

unavenged between us. I began to doubt whether he were a servant or not: his

dress and speech were both rude, entirely devoid of the superiority observable

in Mr. and Mrs. Heathcliff; his thick, brown curls were rough and

uncultivated, his whiskers encroached bearishly over his cheeks, and his hands

were embrowned like those of a common labourer: still his bearing was free,

almost haughty, and he showed none of a domestic's assiduity in attending on

the lady of the house. In the absence of clear proofs of his condition, I

deemed it best to abstain from noticing his curious conduct, and, five minutes

afterwards, the entrance of Heathcliff relieved me, in some measure, from my

uncomfortable state.

"You see, sir, I am come, according to promise!" I exclaimed, assuming the

cheerful; "and I fear I shall be weather-bound for half an hour, if you can

afford me shelter during that space."

"Half an hour?" he said, shaking the white flakes from his clothes; "I wonder

you should select the thick of a snowstorm to ramble about in. Do you know

that you run a risk of being lost in the marshes? People familiar with these

moors often miss their road on such evenings; and I can tell you there is no

chance of a change at present."

"Perhaps I can get a guide among your lads, and he might stay at the Grange

till morning -could you spare me one?"

"No, I could not."

"Oh, indeed! Well, then, I must trust to my own sagacity."

"Umph!"

"Are you going to mak' th' tea?" demanded he of the shabby coat, shifting his

ferocious gaze from me to the young lady.

"Is he to have any?" she asked, appealing to Heathcliff.

"Get it ready, will you?" was the answer, uttered so savagely that I started.

The tone in which the words were said revealed a genuine bad nature. I no

longer felt inclined to call Heathcliff a capital fellow. When the

preparations were finished, he invited me with -"Now, sir, bring forward your

chair." And we all, including the rustic youth, drew round the table, an

austere silence prevailing while we discussed our meal.

I thought, if I had caused the cloud, it was my duty to make an effort to

dispel it. They could not every day sit so grim and taciturn; and it was

impossible, however ill-tempered they might be, that the universal scowl they

wore was their everyday countenance.

"It is strange," I began, in the interval of swallowing one cup of tea and

receiving another -"it is strange how custom can mould our tastes and ideas:

many could not imagine the existence of happiness in a life of such complete

exile from the world as you spend, Mr. Heathcliff; yet, I'll venture to say,

that, surrounded by your family, and with your amiable lady as the presiding

genius over your home and heart -"

"My amiable lady!" he interrupted, with an almost diabolical sneer on his

face. "Where is she -my amiable lady?"

"Mrs. Heathcliff, your wife, I mean."

"Well, yes -Oh, you would intimate that her spirit has taken the post of

ministering angel, and guards the fortunes of Wuthering Heights, even when her

body is gone. Is that it?"

Perceiving myself in a blunder, I attempted to correct it. I might have seen

that there was too great a disparity between the ages of the parties to make

it likely that they were man and wife. One was about forty: a period of mental

vigour at which men seldom cherish the delusion of being married for love, by

girls: that dream is reserved for the solace of our declining years. The other

did not look seventeen.

Then it flashed upon me -"The clown at my elbow, who is drinking his tea out

of a basin and eating his bread with unwashed hands, may be her husband:

Heathcliff, junior, of course. Here is the consequence of being buried alive:

she has thrown herself away upon that boor from sheer ignorance that better

individuals existed! A sad pity -I must beware how I cause her to regret her

choice." The last reflection may seem conceited; it was not. My neighbour

struck me as bordering on repulsive; I knew, through experience, that I was

tolerably attractive.

"Mrs. Heathcliff is my daughter-in-law," said Heathcliff, corroborating my

surmise. He turned, as he spoke, a peculiar look in her direction, -a look of

hatred, unless he has a most perverse set of facial muscles that will not,

like those of other people, interpret the language of his soul.

"Ah, certainly -I see now; you are the favoured possessor of the beneficent

fairy," I remarked, turning to my neighbour.

This was worse than before: the youth grew crimson, and clenched his fist,

with every appearance of a meditated assault. But he seemed to recollect

himself presently, and smothered the storm in a brutal curse, muttered on my

behalf, which, however, I took care not to notice.

"Unhappy in your conjectures, sir!" observed my host; "we neither of us have

the privilege of owning your good fairy; her mate is dead. I said she was my

daughter-in-law, therefore, she must have married my son."

"And this young man is -"

"Not my son, assuredly!"

Heathcliff smiled again, as if it were rather too bold a jest to attribute the

paternity of that bear to him.

"My name is Hareton Earnshaw," growled the other, "and I'd counsel you to

respect it!"

"I've shown no disrespect," was my reply, laughing internally at the dignity

with which he announced himself.

He fixed his eye on me longer than I cared to return the stare, for fear I

might be tempted either to box his ears or render my hilarity audible. I began

to feel unmistakably out of place in that pleasant family circle. The dismal

spiritual atmosphere overcame, and more than neutralised, the glowing physical

comforts round me; and I resolved to be cautious how I ventured under those

rafters a third time.

The business of eating being concluded, and no one uttering a word of sociable

conversation, I approached a window to examine the weather. A sorrowful sight

I saw: dark night coming down prematurely, and sky and hills mingled in one

bitter whirl of wind and suffocating snow.

"I don't think it possible for me to get home now without a guide," I could

not help exclaiming. "The roads will be buried already; and, if they were

bare, I could scarcely distinguish a foot in advance."

"Hareton, drive those dozen sheep into the barn porch. They'll be covered if

left in the fold all night: and put a plank before them," said Heathcliff.

"How must I do?" I continued, with rising irritation.

There was no reply to my question; and on looking round I saw only Joseph

bringing in a pail of porridge for the dogs, and Mrs. Heathcliff leaning over

the fire, diverting herself with burning a bundle of matches which had fallen

from the chimney-piece as she restored the tea canister to its place. The

former, when he had deposited his burden, took a critical survey of the room,

and, in cracked tones, grated out -

"Aw woonder hagh yah can faishion tuh stand thear i' idleness un war, when all

on 'em's goan aght! Bud yah're a nowt, and it's noa use talking -yah'll niver

mend uh yer ill ways; bud goa raight tuh t' divil, like yer mother afore ye!"

I imagined, for a moment, that this piece of eloquence was addressed to me;

and, sufficiently enraged, stepped towards the aged rascal with an intention

of kicking him out of the door. Mrs. Heathcliff, however, checked me by her

answer.

"You scandalous old hypocrite!" she replied. "Are you not afraid of being

carried away bodily, whenever you mention the devil's name? I warn you to

refrain from provoking me, or I'll ask your abduction as a special favour.

Stop! look here, Joseph," she continued, taking a long, dark book from a

shelf; "I'll show you how far I've progressed in the Black Art: I shall soon

be competent to make a clear house of it. The red cow didn't die by chance;

and your rheumatism can hardly be reckoned among providential visitations!"

"Oh, wicked, wicked!" gasped the elder; "may the Lord deliver us from evil!"

"No, reprobate! you are a castaway -be off, or I'll hurt you seriously! I'll

have you all modelled in wax and clay; and the first who passes the limits I

fix, shall -I'll not say what he shall be done to -but, you'll see! Go, I'm

looking at you!"

The little witch put a mock malignity into her beautiful eyes, and Joseph,

trembling with sincere horror, hurried out praying and ejaculating "wicked" as

he went. I thought her conduct must be prompted by a species of dreary fun;

and, now that we were alone, I endeavoured to interest her in my distress.

"Mrs. Heathcliff," I said earnestly, "you must excuse me for troubling you -I

presume, because, with that face, I'm sure you cannot help being good-hearted.

Do point out some landmarks by which I may know my way home. I have no more

idea how to get there than you would have how to get to London!"

"Take the road you came," she answered, ensconcing herself in a chair, with a

candle, and the long book open before her. "It is brief advice, but as sound

as I can give."

"Then, if you hear of me being discovered dead in a bog or a pit full of snow,

your conscience won't whisper that it is partly your fault?"

"How so? I cannot escort you. They wouldn't let me go to the end of the

garden-wall."

"You! I should be sorry to ask you to cross the threshold, for my convenience,

on such a night," I cried. "I want you to tell me my way, not to show it; or

else to persuade Mr. Heathcliff to give me a guide."

"Who? There is himself, Earnshaw, Zillah, Joseph, and I. Which would you have?"

"Are there no boys at the farm?"

"No; those are all."

"Then, it follows that I am compelled to stay."

"That you may settle with your host. I have nothing to do with it."

"I hope it will be a lesson to you, to make no more rash journeys on these

hills," cried Heathcliff's stern voice from the kitchen entrance. "As to

staying here, I don't keep accommodations for visitors: you must share a bed

with Hareton, or Joseph, if you do."

"I can sleep on a chair in this room," I replied.

"No, no! A stranger is a stranger, be he rich or poor: it will not suit me to

permit any one the range of the place while I am off guard!" said the

unmannerly wretch.

With this insult, my patience was at an end. I uttered an expression of

disgust, and pushed past him into the yard, running against Earnshaw in my

haste. It was so dark that I could not see the means of exit; and, as I

wandered round, I heard another specimen of their civil behaviour amongst each

other. At first, the young man appeared about to befriend me.

"I'll go with him as far as the park," he said.

"You'll go with him to hell!" exclaimed his master, or whatever relation he

bore. "And who is to look after the horses, eh?"

"A man's life is of more consequence than one evening's neglect of the horses;

somebody must go," murmured Mrs. Heathcliff, more kindly than I expected.

"Not at your command!" retorted Hareton. "If you set store on him, you'd

better be quiet."

"Then I hope his ghost will haunt you; and I hope Mr. Heathcliff will never

get another tenant till the Grange is a ruin!" she answered sharply.

"Hearken, hearken, shoo's cursing on 'em!" muttered Joseph, towards whom I had

been steering.

He sat within earshot, milking the cows by the light of a lantern, which I

seized unceremoniously, and, calling out that I would send it back on the

morrow, rushed to the nearest postern.

"Maister, maister, he's staling t' lantern!" shouted the ancient, pursuing my

retreat. "Hey, Gnasher! Hey, dog! Hey, Wolf, holld him, holld him!"

On opening the little door, two hairy monsters flew at my throat, bearing me

down and extinguishing the light; while a mingled guffaw, from Heathcliff and

Hareton, put the copestone on my rage and humiliation. Fortunately, the beasts

seemed more bent on stretching their paws and yawning, and flourishing their

tails, than devouring me alive; but they would suffer no resurrection, and I

was forced to lie till their malignant masters pleased to deliver me; then,

hatless and trembling with wrath, I ordered the miscreants to let me out -on

their peril to keep me one minute longer -with several incoherent threats of

retaliation that, in their indefinite depth of virulency, smacked of King Lear.

The vehemence of my agitation brought on a copious bleeding at the nose, and

still Heathcliff laughed, and still I scolded. I don't know what would have

concluded the scene, had there not been one person at hand rather more

rational than myself, and more benevolent than my entertainer. This was

Zillah, the stout housewife, who at length issued forth to inquire into the

nature of the uproar. She thought that some of them had been laying violent

hands on me; and, not daring to attack her master, she turned her vocal

artillery against the younger scoundrel.

"Well, Mr. Earnshaw," she cried, "I wonder what you'll have agait next! Are we

going to murder folk on our very doorstones? I see this house will never do

for me -look at t' poor lad, he's fair choking! Wisht, wisht! you munn't go on

so. Come in, and I'll cure that: there now, hold ye still."

With these words she suddenly splashed a pint of icy water down my neck, and

pulled me into the kitchen. Mr. Heathcliff followed, his accidental merriment

expiring quickly in his habitual moroseness.

I was sick exceedingly, and dizzy and faint; and thus compelled perforce to

accept lodgings under his roof. He told Zillah to give me a glass of brandy,

and then passed on to the inner room, while she condoled with me on my sorry

predicament; and having obeyed his orders, whereby I was somewhat revived,

ushered me to bed.

Chapter 3

While leading the way upstairs, she recommended that I should hide the candle,

and not make a noise; for her master had an odd notion about the chamber she

would be put me in, and never let anybody lodge there willingly. I asked the

reason. She did not know, she answered: she had only lived there a year or

two; and they had so many queer goings on, she could not begin to be curious.

Too stupefied to be curious myself, I fastened my door and glanced round for

the bed. The whole furniture consisted of a chair, a clothes-press, and a

large oak case, with squares cut out near the top, resembling coach windows.

Having approached this structure, I looked inside, and perceived it to be a

singular sort of old-fashioned couch, very conveniently designed to obviate

the necessity for every member of the family having a room to himself. In

fact, it formed a little closet, and the ledge of a window, which it enclosed,

served as a table. I slid back the panelled sides, got in with my light,

pulled them together again, and felt secure against the vigilance of

Heathcliff, and everyone else.

The ledge, where I placed my candle, had a few mildewed books piled up in one

corner, and it was covered with writing scratched on the paint. This writing,

however, was nothing but a name repeated in all kinds of characters, large and

small -Catherine Earnshaw, here and there varied to Catherine Heathcliff, and

then again to Catherine Linton.

In vapid listlessness I leant my head against the window, and continued

spelling over Catherine Earnshaw -Heathcliff -Linton, till my eyes closed; but

they had not rested five minutes when a glare of white letters started from

the dark, as vivid as spectres -the air swarmed with Catherines; and rousing

myself to dispel the obtrusive name, I discovered my candle wick reclining on

one of the antique volumes, and perfuming the place with an odour of roasted

calf-skin. I snuffed it off, and, very ill at ease under the influence of cold

and lingering nausea, sat up and spread open the injured tome on my knee. It

was a Testament, in lean type, and smelling dreadfully musty: a flyleaf bore

the inscription -"Catherine Earnshaw, her book," and a date some quarter of a

century back. I shut it, and took up another, and another, till I had examined

all. Catherine's library was select, and its state of dilapidation proved it

to have been well used, though not altogether for a legitimate purpose:

scarcely one chapter had escaped a pen-and-ink commentary -at least, the

appearance of one -covering every morsel of blank that the printer had left.

Some were detached sentences; other parts took the form of a regular diary,

scrawled in an unformed, childish hand. At the top of an extra page (quite a

treasure, probably, when first lighted on) I was greatly amused to behold an

excellent caricature of my friend Joseph -rudely yet powerfully sketched. An

immediate interest kindled within me for the unknown Catherine, and I began

forthwith to decipher her faded hieroglyphics.

"An awful Sunday!" commenced the paragraph beneath. "I wish my father were

back again. Hindley is a detestable substitute -his conduct to Heathcliff is

atrocious -H. and I are going to rebel -we took our initiatory step this

evening.

"All day had been flooding with rain; we could not go to church, so Joseph

must needs get up a congregation in the garret; and, while Hindley and his

wife basked downstairs before a comfortable fire -doing anything but reading

their Bibles, I'll answer for it -Heathcliff, myself, and the unhappy

ploughboy were commanded to take our Prayer-books, and mount: we were ranged

in a row, on a sack of corn, groaning and shivering, and hoping that Joseph

would shiver too, so that he might give us a short homily for his own sake. A

vain idea! The service lasted precisely three hours; and yet my brother had

the face to exclaim, when he saw us descending, `What, done already?' On

Sunday evenings we used to be permitted to play, if we did not make much

noise; now a mere titter is sufficient to send us into corners!

" `You forget you have a master here,' says the tyrant. `I'll demolish the

first who puts me out of temper! I insist on perfect sobriety and silence. Oh,

boy! was that you? Frances, darling, pull his hair as you go by; I heard him

snap his fingers.' Frances pulled his hair heartily, and then went and seated

herself on her husband's knee; and there they were, like two babies, kissing

and talking nonsense by the hour -foolish palaver that we should be ashamed

of. We made ourselves as snug as our means allowed in the arch of the dresser.

I had just fastened our pinafores together, and hung them up for a curtain,

when in comes Joseph on an errand from the stables. He tears down my

handiwork, boxes my ears, and croaks -

" `T' maister nobbut just buried, and Sabbath nut o'ered, und t' sahnd uh t'

gospel still i' yer lugs, and yah darr be laiking! shame on ye! sit ye dahn,

ill childer! they's good books eneugh if ye'll read 'em: sit ye dahn, and

think uh yer sowls!'

"Saying this, he compelled us so to square our positions that we might receive

from the far-off fire a dull ray to show us the text of the lumber he thrust

upon us. I could not bear the employment. I took my dingy volume by the

scroop, and hurled it into the dog kennel, vowing I hated a good book.

Heathcliff kicked his to the same place. Then there was a hubbub!

" `Maister Hindley!' shouted our chaplain. `Maister, coom hither! Miss Cathy's

riven th' back off "Th' Helmet uh Salvation," un Heathcliff's pawsed his fit

intuh t' first part uh "T' Brooad Way to Destruction!" It's fair flaysome ut

yah let'em goa on this gait. Ech! th' owd man ud uh laced 'em properly -bud

he's goan!'

"Hindley hurried up from his paradise on the hearth, and seizing one of us by

the collar and the other by the arm, hurled both into the back-kitchen, where,

Joseph asseverated, `owd Nick' would fetch us as sure as we were living; and,

so comforted, we each sought a separate nook to await his advent. I reached

this book, and a pot of ink from the shelf, and pushed the house door ajar to

give me light, and I have got the time on with writing for twenty minutes; but

my companion is impatient, and proposes that we should appropriate the

dairywoman's cloak, and have a scamper on the moors, under its shelter. A

pleasant suggestion -and then, if the surly old man come in, he may believe

his prophecy verified -we cannot be damper, or colder, in the rain than we are

here."

I suppose Catherine fulfilled her project, for the next sentence took up

another subject: she waxed lachrymose.

"How little did I dream that Hindley would ever make me cry so!" she wrote.

"My head aches, till I cannot keep it on the pillow, and still I can't give

over. Poor Heathcliff! Hindley calls him a vagabond, and won't let him sit

with us, nor eat with us any more; and, he says, he and I must not play

together, and threatens to turn him out of the house if we break his orders.

He has been blaming our father (how dared he?) for treating H. too liberally;

and swears he will reduce him to his right place -"

I began to nod drowsily over the dim page; my eye wandered from manuscript to

print. I saw a red ornamented title -"Seventy Times Seven, and the First of

the Seventy-First. A Pious Discourse delivered by the Reverend Jabes

Branderham, in the Chapel of Gimmerden Sough." And while I was, half

consciously, worrying my brain to guess what Jabes Branderham would make of

his subject, I sank back in bed, and fell asleep. Alas, for the effects of bad

tea and bad temper! what else could it be that made me pass such a terrible

night? I don't remember another that I can at all compare with it since I was

capable of suffering.

I began to dream, almost before I ceased to be sensible of my locality. I

thought it was morning, and I had set out on my way home, with Joseph for a

guide. The snow lay yards deep in our road; and, as we floundered on, my

companion wearied me with constant reproaches that I had not brought a

pilgrim's staff, telling me that I could never get into the house without one,

and boastfully flourishing a heavy-headed cudgel, which I understood to be so

denominated. For a moment I considered it absurd that I should need such a

weapon to gain admittance into my own residence. Then a new idea flashed

across me. I was not going there: we were journeying to hear the famous Jabes

Branderham preach from the text -"Seventy Times Seven"; and either Joseph, the

preacher, or I had committed the "First of the Seventy-First," and were to be

publicly exposed and excommunicated.

We came to the chapel. I have passed it really in my walks, twice or thrice;

it lies in a hollow, between two hills -an elevated hollow, near a swamp,

whose peaty moisture is said to answer all the purposes of embalming on the

few corpses deposited there. The roof has been kept whole hitherto; but as the

clergyman's stipend is only twenty pounds per annum, and a house with two

rooms, threatening speedily to determine into one, no clergyman will undertake

the duties of pastor, especially as it is currently reported that his flock

would rather let him starve than increase the living by one penny from their

own pockets. However, in my dream, Jabes had a full and attentive

congregation; and he preached -good God! what a sermon: divided into four

hundred and ninety parts, each fully equal to an ordinary address from the

pulpit, and each discussing a separate sin! Where he searched for them, I

cannot tell. He had his private manner of interpreting the phrase, and it

seemed necessary the brother should sin different sins on every occasion. They

were of the most curious character: odd transgressions that I never imagined

previously.

Oh, how weary I grew. How I writhed, and yawned, and nodded, and revived! How

I pinched and pricked myself, and rubbed my eyes, and stood up, and sat down

again, and nudged Joseph to inform me if he would ever have done. I was

condemned to hear all out; finally, he reached the "First of the

Seventy-First." At that crisis, a sudden inspiration descended on me: I was

moved to rise and denounce Jabes Branderham as the sinner of the sin that no

Christian need pardon.

"Sir," I exclaimed, "sitting here within these four walls, at one stretch, I

have endured and forgiven the four hundred and ninety heads of your discourse.

Seventy times seven times have I plucked up my hat and been about to depart

-Seventy times seven times have you preposterously forced me to resume my

seat. The four hundred and ninety-first is too much. Fellow-martyrs, have at

him! Drag him down, and crush him to atoms, that the place which knows him may

know him no more!"

"Thou art the man!" cried Jabes, after a solemn pause, leaning over his

cushion. "Seventy times seven times didst thou gapingly contort thy visage

-seventy times seven did I take counsel with my soul -Lo, this is human

weakness; this also may be absolved! The First of the Seventy-First is come.

Brethren, execute upon him the judgment written. Such honour have all His

saints!"

With that concluding word the whole assembly, exalting their pilgrim's staves,

rushed round me in a body; and I, having no weapon to raise in self-defence,

commenced grappling with Joseph, my nearest and most ferocious assailant, for

his. In the confluence of the multitude, several clubs crossed; blows, aimed

at me, fell on other sconces. Presently the whole chapel resounded with

rappings and counter-rappings; every man's hand was against his neighbour; and

Branderham, unwilling to remain idle, poured forth his zeal in a shower of

loud taps on the boards of the pulpit, which responded so smartly that, at

last, to my unspeakable relief, they woke me. And what was it that had

suggested the tremendous tumult? What had played Jabes's part in the row?

Merely the branch of a fir-tree that touched my lattice, as the blast wailed

by, and rattled its dry cones against the panes! I listened doubtingly an

instant; detected the disturber, then turned and dozed, and dreamt again: if

possible, still more disagreeably than before.

This time, I remembered I was lying in the oak closet, and I heard distinctly

the gusty wind and the driving of the snow; I heard, also, the fir-bough

repeat its teasing sound, and ascribed it to the right cause; but it annoyed

me so much, that I resolved to silence it, if possible; and, I thought, I rose

and endeavoured to unhasp the casement. The hook was soldered into the staple,

a circumstance observed by me when awake, but forgotten. "I must stop it,

nevertheless!" I muttered, knocking my knuckles through the glass, and

stretching an arm out to seize the importunate branch; instead of which, my

fingers closed on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand! The intense horror

of nightmare came over me; I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to

it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed, "Let me in -let me in!" -"Who are

you?" I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself. "Catherine Linton,"

it replied, shiveringly (why did I think of Linton? I had read Earnshaw twenty

times for Linton), "I'm come home: I'd lost my way on the moor!" As it spoke,

I discerned, obscurely, a child's face looking through the window. Terror made

me cruel; and, finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off, I

pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the

blood ran down and soaked the bedclothes: still it wailed, "Let me in!" and

maintained its tenacious gripe, almost maddening me with fear. "How can I!" I

said at length. "Let me go, if you want me to let you in!" The fingers

relaxed, I snatched mine through the hole, hurriedly piled the books up in a

pyramid against it, and stopped my ears to exclude the lamentable prayer. I

seemed to keep them closed above a quarter of an hour; yet, the instant I

listened again, there was the doleful cry moaning on! "Begone!" I shouted.

"I'll never let you in, not if you beg for twenty years." -"It is twenty

years," mourned the voice, "twenty years. I've been a waif for twenty years!"

Thereat began a feeble scratching outside, and the pile of books moved as if

thrust forward. I tried to jump up, but could not stir a limb; and so yelled

aloud, in a frenzy of fright. To my confusion, I discovered the yell was not

ideal: hasty footsteps approached my chamber door; somebody pushed it open,

with a vigorous hand, and a light glimmered through the squares at the top of

the bed. I sat shuddering yet, and wiping the perspiration from my forehead;

the intruder appeared to hesitate, and muttered to himself. At last, he said

in a half-whisper, plainly not expecting an answer. "Is any one here?" I

considered it best to confess my presence, for I knew Heathcliff's accents,

and feared he might search further, if I kept quiet. With this intention, I

turned and opened the panels. I shall not soon forget the effect my action

produced.

Heathcliff stood near the entrance, in his shirt and trousers, with a candle

dripping over his fingers, and his face as white as the wall behind him. The

first creak of the oak startled him like an electric shock; the light leaped

from his hold to a distance of some feet, and his agitation was so extreme

that he could hardly pick it up.

"It is only your guest, sir," I called out, desirous to spare him the

humiliation of exposing his cowardice further. "I had the misfortune to scream

in my sleep, owing to a frightful nightmare. I'm sorry I disturbed you."

"Oh, God confound you, Mr. Lockwood! I wish you were at the -" commenced my

host, setting the candle on a chair, because he found it impossible to hold it

steady. "And who showed you up to this room?" he continued, crushing his nails

into his palms, and grinding his teeth to subdue the maxillary convulsions.

"Who was it? I've a good mind to turn them out of the house this moment!"

"It was your servant, Zillah," I replied, flinging myself on to the floor, and

rapidly resuming my garments. "I should not care if you did, Mr. Heathcliff;

she richly deserves it. I suppose that she wanted to get another proof that

the place was haunted, at my expense. Well, it is -swarming with ghosts and

goblins! You have reason in shutting it up, I assure you. No one will thank

you for a doze in such a den!"

"What do you mean?" asked Heathcliff, "and what are you doing? Lie down and

finish out the night, since you are here; but, for heaven's sake! don't repeat

that horrid noise; nothing could excuse it, unless you were having your throat

cut!"

"If the little fiend had got in at the window, she probably would have

strangled me!" I returned. "I'm not going to endure the persecutions of your

hospitable ancestors again. Was not the Reverend Jabes Branderham akin to you

on the mother's side? And that minx, Catherine Linton, or Earnshaw, or however

she was called -she must have been a changeling -wicked little soul! She told

me she had been walking the earth these twenty years; a just punishment for

her mortal transgressions, I've no doubt!"

Scarcely were these words uttered, when I recollected the association of

Heathcliff's with Catherine's name in the book, which had completely slipped

from my memory till thus awakened. I blushed at my inconsideration; but,

without showing further consciousness of the offence, I hastened to add -"The

truth is, sir, I passed the first part of the night in -" here I stopped

afresh -I was about to say `perusing those old volumes', then it would have

revealed my knowledge of their written, as well as their printed, contents;

so, correcting myself, I went on -"in spelling over the name scratched on that

window-ledge. A monotonous occupation, calculated to set me asleep, like

counting, or -"

"What can you mean by talking in this way to me?" thundered Heathcliff with

savage vehemence. "How -how dare you, under my roof? -God! he's mad to speak

so!" And he struck his forehead with rage.

I did not know whether to resent this language or pursue my explanation; but

he seemed so powerfully affected that I took pity and proceeded with my

dreams; affirming I had never heard the appellation of `Catherine Linton'

before, but reading it often over produced an impression which personified

itself when I had no longer my imagination under control. Heathcliff gradually

fell back into the shelter of the bed, as I spoke, finally sitting down almost

concealed behind it. I guessed, however, by his irregular and intercepted

breathing, that he struggled to vanquish an excess of violent emotion. Not

liking to show him that I heard the conflict, I continued my toilette rather

noisily, looked at my watch, and soliloquised on the length of the night: "Not

three o'clock yet! I could have taken oath it had been six. Time stagnates

here: we must surely have retired to rest at eight!"

"Always at nine in winter, and always rise at four," said my host, suppressing

a groan; and, as I fancied, by the motion of his shadow's arm, dashing a tear

from his eyes. "Mr. Lockwood," he added, "you may go into my room; you'll only

be in the way, coming downstairs so early; and your childish outcry has sent

sleep to the devil for me."

"And for me, too," I replied. "I'll walk in the yard till daylight, and then

I'll be off; and you need not dread a repetition of my intrusion. I am now

quite cured of seeking pleasure in society, be it country or town. A sensible

man ought to find sufficient company in himself."

"Delightful company!" muttered Heathcliff. "Take the candle, and go where you

please. I shall join you directly. Keep out of the yard, though, the dogs are

unchained; and the house -Juno mounts sentinel there, and -nay, you can only

ramble about the steps and passages. But, away with you! I'll come in two

minutes!"

I obeyed, so far as to quit the chamber; when, ignorant where the narrow

lobbies led, I stood still, and was witness, involuntarily, to a piece of

superstition on the part of my landlord, which belied, oddly, his apparent

sense. He got on to the bed, and wrenched open the lattice, bursting, as he

pulled at it, into an uncontrollable passion of tears. "Come in! come in!" he

sobbed. "Cathy, do come. Oh do -once more! Oh! my heart's darling! hear me

this time, Catherine, at last!" The spectre showed a spectre's ordinary

caprice: it gave no sign of being; but the snow and wind whirled wildly

through, even reaching my station, and blowing out the light.

There was such an anguish in the gush of grief that accompanied this raving,

that my compassion made me overlook its folly, and I drew off, half angry to

have listened at all, and vexed at having related my ridiculous nightmare,

since it produced that agony; though why, was beyond my comprehension. I

descended cautiously to the lower regions, and landed in the back-kitchen,

where a gleam of fire, raked compactly together, enabled me to rekindle my

candle. Nothing was stirring except a brindled, grey cat, which crept from the

ashes and saluted me with a querulous mew.

Two benches, shaped in sections of a circle, nearly enclosed the hearth; on

one of these I stretched myself, and Grimalkin mounted the other. We were both

of us nodding, ere any one invaded our retreat, and then it was Joseph,

shuffling down a wooden ladder that vanished in the roof, through a trap: the

ascent to his garret, I suppose. He cast a sinister look at the little flame

which I had enticed to play between the ribs, swept the cat from its

elevation, and bestowing himself in the vacancy, commenced the operation of

stuffing a three-inch pipe with tobacco. My presence in his sanctum was

evidently esteemed a piece of impudence too shameful for remark: he silently

applied the tube to his lips, folded his arms, and puffed away. I let him

enjoy the luxury unannoyed; and after sucking out his last wreath and heaving

a profound sigh, he got up, and departed as solemnly as he came.

A more elastic footstep entered next, and now I opened my mouth for a `good

morning', but closed it again, the salutation unachieved; for Hareton Earnshaw

was performing his orisons sotto voce, in a series of curses directed against

every object he touched, while he rummaged a corner for a spade or shovel to

dig through the drifts. He glanced over the back of the bench, dilating his

nostrils, and thought as little of exchanging civilities with me as with my

companion the cat. I guessed, by his preparations, that egress was allowed,

and, leaving my hard couch, made a movement to follow him. He noticed this,

and thrust at an inner door with the end of his spade, intimating by an

inarticulate sound that there was the place where I must go, if I changed my

locality.

It opened into the house, where the females were already astir: -Zillah urging

flakes of flame up the chimney with a colossal bellows; and Mrs. Heathcliff,

kneeling on the hearth, reading a book by the aid of the blaze. She held her

hand interposed between the furnace-heat and her eyes, and seemed absorbed in

her occupation, desisting from it only to chide the servant for covering her

with sparks, or to push away a dog, now and then, that snoozled its nose

over-forwardly into her face. I was surprised to see Heathcliff there also. He

stood by the fire, his back towards me, just finishing a stormy scene to poor

Zillah, who ever and anon interrupted her labour to pluck up the corner of her

apron, and heave an indignant groan.

"And you, you worthless -" he broke out as I entered, turning to his

daughter-in-law, and employing an epithet as harmless as duck, or sheep, but

generally represented by a dash. "There you are, at your idle tricks again?

The rest of them do earn their bread -you live on my charity! Put your trash

away, and find something to do. You shall pay me for the plague of having you

eternally in my sight -do you hear, damnable jade?"

"I'll put my trash away, because you can make me, if I refuse," answered the

young lady, closing her book, and throwing it on a chair. "But I'll not do

anything, though you should swear your tongue out, except what I please!"

Heathcliff lifted his hand, and the speaker sprang to a safer distance,

obviously acquainted with its weight. Having no desire to be entertained by a

cat-and-dog combat, I stepped forward briskly, as if eager to partake the

warmth of the hearth, and innocent of any knowledge of the interrupted

dispute. Each had enough decorum to suspend further hostilities: Heathcliff

placed his fists, out of temptation, in his pockets; Mrs. Heathcliff curled

her lip, and walked to a seat far off, where she kept her word by playing the

part of a statue during the remainder of my stay. That was not long. I

declined joining their breakfast, and, at the first gleam of dawn, took an

opportunity of escaping into the free air, now clear, and still, and cold as

impalpable ice.

My landlord hallooed for me to stop, ere I reached the bottom of the garden,

and offered to accompany me across the moor. It was well he did, for the whole

hill-back was one billowy, white ocean, -the swells and falls not indicating

corresponding rises and depressions in the ground: many pits, at least, were

filled to a level; and entire ranges of mounds, the refuse of the quarries,

blotted from the chart which my yesterday's walk left pictured in my mind. I

had remarked on one side of the road, at intervals of six or seven yards, a

line of upright stones, continued through the whole length of the barren;

these were erected, and daubed with lime on purpose to serve as guides in the

dark, and also when a fall, like the present, confounded the deep swamps on

either hand with the firmer path; but, excepting a dirty dot pointing up here

and there, all traces of their existence had vanished, and my companion found

it necessary to warn me frequently to steer to the right or left, when I

imagined I was following correctly the windings of the road. We exchanged

little conversation, and he halted at the entrance of Thrushcross Park, saying

I could make no error there. Our adieux were limited to a hasty bow, and then

I pushed forward, trusting to my own resources, for the porter's lodge is

untenanted as yet. The distance from the gate to the Grange is two miles: I

believe I managed to make it four, what with losing myself among the trees,

and sinking up to the neck in snow, -a predicament which only those who have

experienced it can appreciate. At any rate, whatever were my wanderings, the

clock chimed twelve as I entered the house; and that gave exactly an hour for

every mile of the usual way from Wuthering Heights.

My human fixture and her satellites rushed to welcome me, exclaiming,

tumultuously, they had completely given me up; everybody conjectured that I

perished last night, and they were wondering how they must set about the

search for my remains. I bid them be quiet, now that they saw me returned,

and, benumbed to my very heart, I dragged upstairs; whence, after putting on

dry clothes, and pacing to and fro thirty or forty minutes to restore the

animal heat, I am adjourned to my study, feeble as a kitten, -almost too much

so to enjoy the cheerful fire and smoking coffee which the servant has

prepared for my refreshment.

Chapter 4

What vain weathercocks we are! I, who had determined to hold myself

independent of all social intercourse, and thanked my stars that, at length, I

had lighted on a spot where it was next to impracticable -I, weak wretch,

after maintaining till dusk a struggle with low spirits and solitude, was

finally compelled to strike my colours; and, under pretence of gaining

information concerning the necessities of my establishment, I desired Mrs.

Dean, when she brought in supper, to sit down while I ate it; hoping sincerely

she would prove a regular gossip, and either rouse me to animation or lull me

to sleep by her talk.

"You have lived here a considerable time," I commenced; "did you not say

sixteen years?"

"Eighteen, sir; I came, when the mistress was married, to wait on her; after

she died, the master retained me for his housekeeper."

"Indeed."

There ensued a pause. She was not a gossip, I feared, unless about her own

affairs, and those could hardly interest me. However, having studied for an

interval, with a fist on either knee, and a cloud of meditation over her ruddy

countenance, she ejaculated -

"Ah, times are greatly changed since then!"

"Yes," I remarked; "you've seen a good many alterations, I suppose?"

"I have: and troubles too," she said.

"Oh, I'll turn the talk on my landlord's family!" I thought to myself. "A good

subject to start -and that pretty girl-widow, I should like to know her

history: whether she be a native of the country, or, as is more probable, an

exotic that the surly indigenae will not recognise for kin." With this

intention I asked Mrs. Dean why Heathcliff let Thrushcross Grange, and

preferred living in a situation and residence so much inferior. "Is he not

rich enough to keep the estate in good order?" I inquired.

"Rich, sir!" she returned. "He has, nobody knows what money, and every year it

increases. Yes, yes, he's rich enough to live in a finer house than this; but

he's very near -close-handed; and, if he had meant to flit to Thrushcross

Grange, as soon as he heard of a good tenant he could not have borne to miss

the chance of getting a few hundreds more. It is strange people should be so

greedy, when they are alone in the world!"

"He had a son, it seems?"

"Yes, he had one -he is dead."

"And that young lady, Mrs. Heathcliff, is his widow?"

"Yes."

"Where did she come from originally?"

"Why, sir, she is my late master's daughter: Catherine Linton was her maiden

name. I nursed her, poor thing! I did wish Mr. Heathcliff would remove here,

and then we might have been together again."

"What! Catherine Linton?" I exclaimed, astonished. But a minute's reflection

convinced me it was not my ghostly Catherine. "Then," I continued, "my

predecessor's name was Linton?"

"It was."

"And who is that Earnshaw, Hareton Earnshaw, who lives with Mr. Heathcliff?

are they relations?"

"No; he is the late Mrs. Linton's nephew."

"The young lady's cousin, then?"

"Yes; and her husband was her cousin also, -one on the mother's, the other on

the father's side. Heathcliff married Mr. Linton's sister."

"I see the house at Wuthering Heights has `Earnshaw' carved over the front

door. Are they an old family?"

"Very old, sir; and Hareton is the last of them, as our Miss Cathy is of us -I

mean of the Lintons. Have you been to Wuthering Heights? I beg pardon for

asking; but I should like to hear how she is."

"Mrs. Heathcliff? she looked very well, and very handsome; yet, I think, not

very happy."

"Oh dear, I don't wonder! And how did you like the master?"

"A rough fellow, rather, Mrs. Dean. Is not that his character?"

"Rough as a saw-edge, and hard as whinstone! The less you meddle with him the

better."

"He must have had some ups and downs in life to make him such a churl. Do you

know anything of his history?"

"It's a cuckoo's, sir -I know all about it, except where he was born, and who

were his parents, and how he got his money, at first. And Hareton has been

cast out like an unfledged dunnock! The unfortunate lad is the only one in all

this parish that does not guess how he has been cheated."

"Well, Mrs. Dean, it will be a charitable deed to tell me something of my

neighbours. I feel I shall not rest if I go to bed, so be good enough to sit

and chat an hour."

"Oh, certainly, sir! I'll just fetch a little sewing, and then I'll sit as

long as you please. But you've caught cold, -I saw you shivering, and you must

have some gruel to drive it out."

The worthy woman bustled off, and I crouched nearer the fire; my head felt

hot, and the rest of me chill; moreover, I was excited, almost to a pitch of

foolishness, through my nerves and brain. This caused me to feel, not

uncomfortable, but rather fearful (as I am still) of serious effects from the

incidents of today and yesterday. She returned presently, bringing a smoking

basin and a basket of work; and, having placed the former on the hob, drew in

her seat, evidently pleased to find me so companionable.

Before I came to live here, she commenced -waiting no further invitation to

her story -I was almost always at Wuthering Heights; because my mother had

nursed Mr. Hindley Earnshaw, that was Hareton's father, and I got used to

playing with the children. I ran errands too, and helped to make hay, and hung

about the farm ready for anything that anybody would set me to. One fine

summer morning -it was the beginning of harvest, I remember -Mr. Earnshaw, the

old master, came downstairs, dressed for a journey; and after he had told

Joseph what was to be done during the day, he turned to Hindley and Cathy and

me -for I sat eating my porridge with them -and he said, speaking to his son,

"Now, my bonny man, I'm going to Liverpool today -what shall I bring you? You

may choose what you like, only let it be little, for I shall walk there and

back, -sixty miles each way, that is a long spell!" Hindley named a fiddle,

and then he asked Miss Cathy; she was hardly six years old, but she could ride

any horse in the stable, and she chose a whip. He did not forget me, for he

had a kind heart, though he was rather severe sometimes. He promised to bring

me a pocketful of apples and pears, and then he kissed his children, said

good-bye, and set off.

It seemed a long while to us all -the three days of his absence -and often did

little Cathy ask when he would be home. Mrs. Earnshaw expected him by

supper-time on the third evening, and she put the meal off hour after hour;

there were no signs of his coming, however, and at last the children got tired

of running down to the gate to look. Then it grew dark; she would have had

them to bed, but they begged sadly to be allowed to stay up; and, just about

eleven o'clock, the door-latch was raised quietly, and in stepped the master.

He threw himself into a chair, laughing and groaning, and bid them all stand

off, for he was nearly killed -he would not have such another walk for the

three kingdoms.

"And at the end of it, to be flighted to death!" he said, opening his

greatcoat, which he held bundled up in his arms. "See here, wife! I was never

so beaten with anything in my life; but you must e'en take it as a gift of

God, though it's as dark almost as if it came from the devil."

We crowded round, and over Miss Cathy's head I had a peep at a dirty, ragged,

black-haired child, big enough both to walk and talk: indeed, its face looked

older than Catherine's; yet, when it was set on its feet, it only stared

round, and repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could

understand. I was frightened, and Mrs. Earnshaw was ready to fling it out of

doors: she did fly up, asking how he could fashion to bring that gypsy brat

into the house, when they had their own bairns to feed and fend for? What he

meant to do with it, and whether he were mad? The master tried to explain the

matter; but he was really half dead with fatigue, and all that I could make

out, amongst her scolding, was a tale of his seeing it starving, and

houseless, and as good as dumb, in the streets of Liverpool, where he picked

it up and inquired for its owner. Not a soul knew to whom it belonged, he

said; and his money and time being both limited, he thought it better to take

it home with him at once than run into vain expenses there; because he was

determined he would not leave it as he found it. Well, the conclusion was that

my mistress grumbled herself calm; and Mr. Earnshaw told me to wash it, and

give it clean things, and let it sleep with the children.

Hindley and Cathy contented themselves with looking and listening till peace

was restored; then, both began searching their father's pockets for the

presents he had promised them. The former was a boy of fourteen, but when he

drew out what had been a fiddle, crushed to morsels in the greatcoat, he

blubbered aloud; and Cathy, when she learned the master had lost her whip in

attending on the stranger, showed her humour by grinning and spitting at the

stupid little thing, earning for her pains a sound blow from her father to

teach her cleaner manners. They entirely refused to have it in bed with them,

or even in their room; and I had no more sense, so I put it on the landing of

the stairs, hoping it might be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else

attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr. Earnshaw's door, and there he

found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got there;

I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity

was sent out of the house.

This was Heathcliff's first introduction to the family. On coming back a few

days afterwards (for I did not consider my banishment perpetual) I found they

had christened him `Heathcliff': it was the name of a son who died in

childhood, and it has served him ever since, both for Christian and surname.

Miss Cathy and he were now very thick; but Hindley hated him, and to say the

truth I did the same; and we plagued and went on with him shamefully; for I

wasn't reasonable enough to feel my injustice, and the mistress never put in a

word on his behalf when she saw him wronged.

He seemed a sullen, patient child, hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment; he

would stand Hindley's blows without winking or shedding a tear, and my pinches

moved him only to draw in a breath and open his eyes, as if he had hurt

himself by accident and nobody was to blame. This endurance made old Earnshaw

furious, when he discovered his son persecuting the poor, fatherless child, as

he called him. He took to Heathcliff strangely, believing all he said (for

that matter, he said precious little, and generally the truth), and petting

him up far above Cathy, who was too mischievous and wayward for a favourite.

So, from the very beginning, he bred bad feeling in the house; and at Mrs.

Earnshaw's death, which happened in less than two years after, the young

master had learned to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend,

and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections and his privileges, and

he grew bitter with brooding over these injuries. I sympathised a while; but

when the children fell ill of the measles, and I had to tend them, and take on

me the cares of a woman at once, I changed my ideas. Heathcliff was

dangerously sick, and while he lay at the worst he would have me constantly by

his pillow, -I suppose he felt I did a good deal for him, and he hadn't wit to

guess that I was compelled to do it. However, I will say this, he was the

quietest child that ever nurse watched over. The difference between him and

the others forced me to be less partial. Cathy and her brother harassed me

terribly: he was as uncomplaining as a lamb; though hardness, not gentleness,

made him give little trouble.

He got through, and the doctor affirmed it was in a great measure owing to me,

and praised me for my care. I was vain of his commendations, and softened

towards the being by whose means I earned them, and thus Hindley lost his last

ally. Still I couldn't dote on Heathcliff, and I wondered often what my master

saw to admire so much in the sullen boy, who never, to my recollection, repaid

his indulgence by any sign of gratitude. He was not insolent to his

benefactor, he was simply insensible, though knowing perfectly the hold he had

on his heart, and conscious he had only to speak and all the house would be

obliged to bend to his wishes. As an instance, I remember Mr. Earnshaw once

bought a couple of colts at the parish fair, and gave the lads each one.

Heathcliff took the handsomest, but it soon fell lame, and when he discovered

it, he said to Hindley -

"You must exchange horses with me: I don't like mine; and if you won't I shall

tell your father of the three thrashings you've given me this week, and show

him my arm, which is black to the shoulder." Hindley put out his tongue, and

cuffed him over the ears. "You'd better do it at once," he persisted, escaping

to the porch (they were in the stable); "you will have to; and if I speak of

these blows, you'll get them again with interest." -"Off, dog!" cried Hindley,

threatening him with an iron weight used for weighing potatoes and hay. "Throw

it," he replied, standing still, "and then I'll tell how you boasted that you

would turn me out of doors as soon as he died, and see whether he will not

turn you out directly." Hindley threw it, hitting him on the breast, and down

he fell, but staggered up immediately, breathless and white; and, had not I

prevented it, he would have gone just so to the master, and got full revenge

by letting his condition plead for him, intimating who had caused it. "Take my

colt, gypsy, then!" said young Earnshaw. "And I pray that he may break your

neck; take him, and be damned, you beggarly interloper! and wheedle my father

out of all he has; only afterwards show him what you are, imp of Satan! -And

take that, -I hope he'll kick out your brains!"

Heathcliff had gone to loose the beast, and shift it to his own stall; he was

passing behind it when Hindley finished his speech by knocking him under its

feet, and without stopping to examine whether his hopes were fulfilled, ran

away as fast as he could. I was surprised to witness how coolly the child

gathered himself up, and went on with his intention, exchanging saddles and

all, and then sitting down on a bundle of hay to overcome the qualm which the

violent blow occasioned, before he entered the house. I persuaded him easily

to let me lay the blame of his bruises on the horse: he minded little what

tale was told since he had what he wanted. He complained so seldom, indeed, of

such stirs as these, that I really thought him not vindictive. I was deceived

completely, as you will hear.

Chapter 5

In the course of time, Mr. Earnshaw began to fail. He had been active and

healthy, yet his strength left him suddenly; and when he was confined to the

chimney-corner he grew grievously irritable. A nothing vexed him, and

suspected slights of his authority nearly threw him into fits. This was

especially to be remarked if any one attempted to impose upon, or domineer

over, his favourite; he was painfully jealous lest a word should be spoken

amiss to him, seeming to have got into his head the notion that, because he

liked Heathcliff, all hated, and longed to do him an ill-turn. It was a

disadvantage to the lad, for the kinder among us did not wish to fret the

master, so we humoured his partiality; and that humouring was rich nourishment

to the child's pride and black tempers. Still it became in a manner necessary;

twice, or thrice, Hindley's manifestations of scorn, while his father was

near, roused the old man to a fury: he seized his stick to strike him, and

shook with rage that he could not do it.

At last, our curate (we had a curate then who made the living answer by

teaching the little Lintons and Earnshaws, and farming his bit of land

himself) advised that the young man should be sent to college; and Mr.

Earnshaw agreed, though with a heavy spirit, for he said, "Hindley was naught,

and would never thrive as where he wandered."

I hoped heartily we should have peace now. It hurt me to think the master

should be made uncomfortable by his own good deed. I fancied the discontent of

age and disease arose from his family disagreements, as he would have it that

it did: really, you know, sir, it was in his sinking frame. We might have got

on tolerably, notwithstanding, but for two people, Miss Cathy and Joseph, the

servant; you saw him, I daresay, up yonder. He was, and is yet, most likely,

the wearisomest self-righteous Pharisee that ever ransacked a Bible to rake

the promises to himself and fling the curses on his neighbours. By his knack

of sermonising and pious discoursing, he contrived to make a great impression

on Mr. Earnshaw; and the more feeble the master became, the more influence he

gained. He was relentless in worrying him about his soul's concerns, and about

ruling his children rigidly. He encouraged him to regard Hindley as a

reprobate; and, night after night, he regularly grumbled out a long string of

tales against Heathcliff and Catherine, always minding to flatter Earnshaw's

weakness by heaping the heaviest blame on the last.

Certainly, she had ways with her such as I never saw a child take up before,

and she put all of us past our patience fifty times and oftener in a day; from

the hour she came downstairs till the hour she went to bed, we had not a

minute's security that she wouldn't be in mischief. Her spirits were always at

high-water mark, her tongue always going -singing, laughing, and plaguing

everybody who would not do the same. A wild, wicked slip she was -but she had

the bonniest eye, and sweetest smile, and lightest foot in the parish; and,

after all, I believe she meant no harm; for when once she made you cry in good

earnest, it seldom happened that she would not keep you company, and oblige

you to be quiet that you might comfort her. She was much too fond of

Heathcliff. The greatest punishment we could invent for her was to keep her

separate from him; yet she got chided more than any of us on his account. In

play, she liked exceedingly to act the little mistress, using her hands

freely, and commanding her companions: she did so to me, but I would not bear

slapping and ordering, and so I let her know.

Now, Mr. Earnshaw did not understand jokes from his children: he had always

been strict and grave with them; and Catherine, on her part, had no idea why

her father should be crosser and less patient in his ailing condition than he

was in his prime. His peevish reproofs wakened in her a naughty delight to

provoke him: she was never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once,

and she defying us with her bold, saucy look, and her ready words; turning

Joseph's religious curses into ridicule, baiting me, and doing just what her

father hated most, -showing how her pretended insolence, which he thought

real, had more power over Heathcliff than his kindness; how the boy would do

her bidding in anything, and his only when it suited his own inclination.

After behaving as badly as possible all day, she sometimes came fondling to

make it up at night. "Nay, Cathy," the old man would say, "I cannot love thee;

thou'rt worse than thy brother. Go, say thy prayers, child, and ask God's

pardon. I doubt thy mother and I must rue that we ever reared thee!" That made

her cry, at first; and then, being repulsed continually hardened her, and she

laughed if I told her to say she was sorry for her faults and beg to be

forgiven.

But the hour came, at last, that ended Mr. Earnshaw's troubles on earth. He

died quietly in his chair one October evening, seated by the fireside. A high

wind blustered round the house, and roared in the chimney: it sounded wild and

stormy, yet it was not cold, and we were all together -I, a little removed

from the hearth, busy at my knitting, and Joseph reading his Bible near the

table (for the servants generally sat in the house then, after their work was

done). Miss Cathy had been sick, and that made her still; she leant against

her father's knee, and Heathcliff was lying on the floor with his head in her

lap. I remember the master, before he fell into a doze, stroking her bonny

hair -it pleased him rarely to see her gentle -and saying, "Why canst thou not

always be a good lass, Cathy?" And she turned her face up to his, and laughed,

and answered, "Why cannot you always be a good man, Father?" But as soon as

she saw him vexed again, she kissed his hand, and said she would sing him to

sleep. She began singing very low, till his fingers dropped from hers, and his

head sank on his breast. Then I told her to hush, and not stir, for fear she

should wake him. We all kept as mute as mice a full half-hour, and should have

done so longer, only Joseph, having finished his chapter, got up and said that

he must rouse the master for prayers and bed. He stepped forward, and called

him by name, and touched his shoulder; but he would not move, so he took the

candle and looked at him. I thought there was something wrong as he set down

the light, and seizing the children each by an arm, whispered them to `frame

upstairs, and make little din -they might pray alone that evening -he had

summut to do.'

"I shall bid Father good-night first," said Catherine, putting her arms round

his neck before we could hinder her. The poor thing discovered her loss

directly -she screamed out, "Oh, he's dead, Heathcliff! he's dead!" And they

both set up a heartbreaking cry.

I joined my wail to theirs, loud and bitter; but Joseph asked what we could be

thinking of to roar in that way over a saint in heaven. He told me to put on

my cloak and run to Gimmerton for the doctor and the parson. I could not guess

the use that either would be of, then. However, I went, through wind and rain,

and brought one, the doctor, back with me; the other said he would come in the

morning. Leaving Joseph to explain matters, I ran to the children's room;

their door was ajar, I saw they had never laid down, though it was past

midnight; but they were calmer, and did not need me to console them. The

little souls were comforting each other with better thoughts than I could have

hit on: no parson in the world ever pictured heaven so beautifully as they

did, in their innocent talk; and, while I sobbed and listened, I could not

help wishing we were all there safe together.

Chapter 6

Mr. Hindley came home to the funeral; and -a thing that amazed us, and set the

neighbours gossiping right and left -he brought a wife with him. What she was,

and where she was born, he never informed us; probably, she had neither money

nor name to recommend her, or he would scarcely have kept the union from his

father.

She was not one that would have disturbed the house much on her own account.

Every object she saw, the moment she crossed the threshold, appeared to

delight her, and every circumstance that took place about her, except the

preparing for the burial, and the presence of the mourners. I thought she was

half silly, from her behaviour while that went on: she ran into her chamber,

and made me come with her, though I should have been dressing the children,

and there she sat shivering and clasping her hands, and asking repeatedly,

"Are they gone yet?" Then she began describing with hysterical emotion the

effect it produced on her to see black; and started, and trembled, and, at

last, fell a-weeping -and when I asked what was the matter, answered she

didn't know, but she felt so afraid of dying! I imagined her as little likely

to die as myself. She was rather thin, but young, and fresh complexioned, and

her eyes sparkled as bright as diamonds. I did remark, to be sure, that

mounting the stairs made her breathe very quick, that the least sudden noise

set her all in a quiver, and that she coughed troublesomely sometimes; but I

knew nothing of what these symptoms portended, and had no impulse to

sympathise with her. We don't in general take to foreigners, here, Mr.

Lockwood, unless they take to us first.

Young Earnshaw was altered considerably in the three years of his absence. He

had grown sparer, and lost his colour, and spoke and dressed quite

differently; and, on the very day of his return, he told Joseph and me we must

thenceforth quarter ourselves in the back-kitchen, and leave the house for

him. Indeed, he would have carpeted and papered a small spare room for a

parlour; but his wife expressed such pleasure at the white floor and huge

glowing fireplace, at the pewter dishes and delf-case and dog kennel, and the

wide space there was to move about in where they usually sat, that he thought

it unnecessary to her comfort, and so dropped the intention.

She expressed pleasure, too, at finding a sister among her new acquaintance,

and she prattled to Catherine, and kissed her, and ran about with her, and

gave her quantities of presents, at the beginning. Her affection tired very

soon, however, and when she grew peevish, Hindley became tyrannical. A few

words from her, evincing a dislike to Heathcliff, were enough to rouse in him

all his old hatred of the boy. He drove him from their company to the

servants, deprived him of the instructions of the curate, and insisted that he

should labour out of doors instead, compelling him to do so as hard as any

other lad on the farm.

He bore his degradation pretty well at first, because Cathy taught him what

she learned, and worked or played with him in the fields. They both promised

fair to grow up as rude as savages, the young master being entirely negligent

how they behaved, and what they did; so they kept clear of him. He would not

even have seen after their going to church on Sundays, only Joseph and the

curate reprimanded his carelessness when they absented themselves, and that

reminded him to order Heathcliff a flogging, and Catherine a fast from dinner

or supper. But it was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors

in the morning and remain there all day, and the after punishment grew a mere

thing to laugh at. The curate might set as many chapters as he pleased for

Catherine to get by heart, and Joseph might thrash Heathcliff till his arm

ached; they forgot everything the minute they were together again, -at least

the minute they had contrived some naughty plan of revenge; and many a time

I've cried to myself to watch them growing more reckless daily, and I not

daring to speak a syllable, for fear of losing the small power I still

retained over the unfriended creatures. One Sunday evening it chanced that

they were banished from the sitting-room, for making a noise, or a light

offence of the kind, and when I went to call them to supper, I could discover

them nowhere. We searched the house, above and below, and the yard and

stables; they were invisible; and, at last, Hindley in a passion told us to

bolt the doors, and swore nobody should let them in that night. The household

went to bed; and I, too anxious to lie down, opened my lattice and put my head

out to harken, though it rained, determined to admit them in spite of the

prohibition, should they return. In a while, I distinguished steps coming up

the road, and the light of a lantern glimmering through the gate. I threw a

shawl over my head and ran to prevent them from waking Mr. Earnshaw by

knocking. There was Heathcliff, by himself: it gave me a start to see him alone.

"Where is Miss Catherine?" I cried hurriedly. "No accident, I hope?" -"At

Thrushcross Grange," he answered, "and I would have been there too, but they

had not the manners to ask me to stay." -"Well, you will catch it!" I said,

"you'll never be content till you're sent about your business. What in the

world led you wandering to Thrushcross Grange?" -"Let me get off my wet

clothes, and I'll tell you all about it, Nelly," he replied. I bid him beware

of rousing the master, and while he undressed and I waited to put out the

candle, he continued -"Cathy and I escaped from the wash-house to have a

ramble at liberty, and getting a glimpse of the Grange lights, we thought we

would just go and see whether the Lintons passed their Sunday evenings

standing shivering in corners, while their father and mother sat eating and

drinking, and singing and laughing, and burning their eyes out before the

fire. Do you think they do? Or reading sermons, and being catechised by their

manservant, and set to learn a column of Scripture names if they don't answer

properly?" -"Probably not," I responded. "They are good children, no doubt,

and don't deserve the treatment you receive, for your bad conduct." -"Don't

you cant, Nelly," he said. "Nonsense! We ran from the top of the Heights to

the park without stopping -Catherine completely beaten in the race, because

she was barefoot. You'll have to seek for her shoes in the bog tomorrow. We

crept through a broken hedge, groped our way up the path, and planted

ourselves on a flower plot under the drawing-room window. The light came from

thence; they had not put up the shutters, and the curtains were only half

closed. Both of us were able to look in by standing on the basement and

clinging to the ledge, and we saw -ah! it was beautiful -a splendid place

carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables, and a pure white

ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains

from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers. Old Mr. and Mrs.

Linton were not there; Edgar and his sister had it entirely to themselves.

Shouldn't they have been happy? We should have thought ourselves in heaven!

And now, guess what your good children were doing? Isabella -I believe she is

eleven, a year younger than Cathy -lay screaming at the farther end of the

room, shrieking as if witches were running red-hot needles into her. Edgar

stood on the hearth weeping silently, and in the middle of the table sat a

little dog, shaking its paw and yelping, which, from their mutual accusations,

we understood they had nearly pulled in two between them. The idiots! That was

their pleasure! to quarrel who should hold a heap of warm hair, and each begin

to cry because both, after struggling to get it, refused to take it. We

laughed outright at the petted things; we did despise them! When would you

catch me wishing to have what Catherine wanted? or find us by ourselves,

seeking entertainment in yelling, and sobbing, and rolling on the ground,

divided by the whole room? I'd not exchange, for a thousand lives, my

condition here for Edgar Linton's at Thrushcross Grange -not if I might have

the privilege of flinging Joseph off the highest gable, and painting the

house-front with Hindley's blood!"

"Hush, hush!" I interrupted. "Still you have not told me, Heathcliff, how

Catherine is left behind?"

"I told you we laughed," he answered. "The Lintons heard us, and with one

accord they shot like arrows to the door; there was silence, and then a cry,

`Oh, mamma, mamma! Oh, papa! Oh, mamma, come here. Oh, papa, oh!' They really

did howl out something in that way. We made frightful noises to terrify them

still more, and then we dropped off the ledge, because somebody was drawing

the bars, and we felt we had better flee. I had Cathy by the hand, and was

urging her on, when all at once she fell down. -`Run, Heathcliff, run!' she

whispered. `They have let the bulldog loose, and he holds me!' The devil had

seized her ankle, Nelly; I heard his abominable snorting. She did not yell out

-no! she would have scorned to do it, if she had been spitted on the horns of

a mad cow. I did, though: I vociferated curses enough to annihilate any fiend

in Christendom, and I got a stone and thrust it between his jaws, and tried

with all my might to cram it down his throat. A beast of a servant came up

with a lantern, at last, shouting, `Keep fast, Skulker, keep fast!' He changed

his note, however, when he saw Skulker's game. The dog was throttled off, his

huge, purple tongue hanging half a foot out of his mouth, and his pendant lips

streaming with bloody slaver. The man took Cathy up: she was sick, not from

fear, I'm certain, but from pain. He carried her in; I followed, grumbling

execrations and vengeance. `What prey, Robert?' hallooed Linton from the

entrance. `Skulker has caught a little girl, sir' he replied, `and there's a

lad here,' he added, making a clutch at me, `who looks an out-and-outer! Very

like, the robbers were for putting them though the window to open the doors to

the gang after all were asleep, that they might murder us at their ease. Hold

your tongue, you foul-mouthed thief, you! you shall go to the gallows for

this. Mr. Linton, sir, don't lay by your gun.' -`No, no, Robert,' said the old

fool. `The rascals knew that yesterday was my rent day; they thought to have

me cleverly. Come in; I'll furnish them a reception. There, John, fasten the

chain. Give Skulker some water, Jenny. To beard a magistrate in his

stronghold, and on the Sabbath, too! Where will their insolence stop? Oh, my

dear Mary, look here! Don't be afraid, it is but a boy -yet the villain scowls

so plainly in his face; would it not be a kindness to the country to hang him

at once, before he shows his nature in acts as well as features?' He pulled me

under the chandelier, and Mrs. Linton placed her spectacles on her nose and

raised her hands in horror. The cowardly children crept nearer, also, Isabella

lisping -`Frightful thing! Put him in the cellar, papa. He's exactly like the

son of the fortune-teller that stole my tame pheasant. Isn't he, Edgar?'

"While they examined me, Cathy came round; she heard the last speech, and

laughed. Edgar Linton, after an inquisitive stare, collected sufficient wit to

recognise her. They see us at church, you know, though we seldom meet them

elsewhere. `That's Miss Earnshaw!' he whispered to his mother, `and look how

Skulker has bitten her -how her foot bleeds!'

" `Miss Earnshaw? Nonsense!' cried the dame. `Miss Earnshaw scouring the

county with a gypsy! And yet, my dear, the child is in mourning -surely it is

-and she may be lamed for life!'

" `What culpable carelessness in her brother!' exclaimed Mr. Linton, turning

from me to Catherine. `I've understood from Shielders' (that was the curate,

sir) `that he lets her grow up in absolute heathenism. But who is this? Where

did she pick up this companion? Oho! I declare he is that strange acquisition

my late neighbour made, in his journey to Liverpool -a little Lascar, or an

American or Spanish castaway.'

" `A wicked boy, at all events,' remarked the old lady, `and quite unfit for a

decent house! Did you notice his language, Linton? I'm shocked that my

children should have heard it.'

"I recommenced cursing -don't be angry, Nelly -and so Robert was ordered to

take me off. I refused to go without Cathy; he dragged me into the garden,

pushed the lantern into my hand, assured me that Mr. Earnshaw should be

informed of my behaviour, and, bidding me march directly, secured the door

again. The curtains were still looped up at one corner, and I resumed my

station as spy; because, if Catherine had wished to return, I intended

shattering their great glass panes to a million of fragments, unless they let

her out. She sat on the sofa quietly. Mrs. Linton took off the grey cloak of

the dairymaid which we had borrowed for our excursion, shaking her head and

expostulating with her, I suppose: she was a young lady, and they made a

distinction between her treatment and mine. Then the woman-servant brought a

basin of warm water, and washed her feet; and Mr. Linton mixed a tumbler of

negus, and Isabella emptied a plateful of cakes into her lap, and Edgar stood

gaping at a distance. Afterwards, they dried and combed her beautiful hair,

and gave her a pair of enormous slippers, and wheeled her to the fire; and I

left her, as merry as she could be, dividing her food between the little dog

and Skulker, whose nose she pinched as she ate; and kindling a spark of spirit

in the vacant blue eyes of the Lintons -a dim reflection from her own

enchanting face. I saw they were full of stupid admiration; she is so

immeasurably superior to them -to everybody on earth, is she not, Nelly?"

"There will more come of this business than you reckon on," I answered,

covering him up and extinguishing the light. "You are incurable, Heathcliff;

and Mr. Hindley will have to proceed to extremities, see if he won't." My

words came truer than I desired. The luckless adventure made Earnshaw furious.

And then Mr. Linton, to mend matters, paid us a visit himself on the morrow;

and read the young master such a lecture on the road he guided his family,

that he was stirred to look about him, in earnest. Heathcliff received no

flogging, but he was told that the first word he spoke to Miss Catherine

should ensure a dismissal; and Mrs. Earnshaw undertook to keep her

sister-in-law in due restraint when she returned home; employing art, not

force: with force she would have found it impossible.

Chapter 7

Cathy stayed at Thrushcross Grange five weeks, -till Christmas. By that time

her ankle was thoroughly cured, and her manners much improved. The mistress

visited her often in the interval, and commenced her plan of reform by trying

to raise her self-respect with fine clothes and flattery, which she took

readily; so that, instead of a wild, hatless little savage jumping into the

house, and rushing to squeeze us all breathless, there lighted from a handsome

black pony a very dignified person, with brown ringlets falling from the cover

of a feathered beaver, and a long cloth habit, which she was obliged to hold

up with both hands that she might sail in. Hindley lifted her from her horse,

exclaiming delightedly, "Why, Cathy, you are quite a beauty! I should scarcely

have known you: you look like a lady now. Isabella Linton is not to be

compared with her, is she, Frances?" -"Isabella has not her natural

advantages," replied his wife; "but she must mind and not grow wild again

here. Ellen, help Miss Catherine off with her things -stay, dear, you will

disarrange your curls -let me untie your hat."

I removed the habit, and there shone forth beneath, a grand plaid silk frock,

white trousers, and burnished shoes; and, while her eyes sparkled joyfully

when the dogs came bounding up to welcome her, she dare hardly touch them lest

they should fawn upon her splendid garments. She kissed me gently -I was all

flour making the Christmas cake, and it would not have done to give me a hug

-and then she looked round for Heathcliff. Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw watched

anxiously their meeting, thinking it would enable them to judge, in some

measure, what grounds they had for hoping to succeed in separating the two

friends.

Heathcliff was hard to discover, at first. If he were careless and uncared-for

before Catherine's absence, he had been ten times more so since. Nobody but I

even did him the kindness to call him a dirty boy, and bid him wash himself,

once a week; and children of his age seldom have a natural pleasure in soap

and water. Therefore, not to mention his clothes, which had seen three months'

service in mire and dust, and his thick uncombed hair, the surface of his face

and hands was dismally beclouded. He might well skulk behind the settle on

beholding such a bright, graceful damsel enter the house, instead of a

rough-headed counterpart of himself, as he expected. "Is Heathcliff not here?"

she demanded, pulling off her gloves, and displaying fingers wonderfully

whitened with doing nothing and staying in doors.

"Heathcliff, you may come forward," cried Mr. Hindley, enjoying his

discomfiture, and gratified to see what a forbidding young blackguard he would

be compelled to present himself. "You may come and wish Miss Catherine

welcome, like the other servants."

Cathy, catching a glimpse of her friend in his concealment, flew to embrace

him; she bestowed seven or eight kisses on his cheek within the second, and

then stopped, and drawing back, burst into a laugh, exclaiming, "Why, how very

black and cross you look! and how -how funny and grim! But that's because I'm

used to Edgar and Isabella Linton. Well, Heathcliff, have you forgotten me?"

She had some reason to put the question, for shame and pride threw double

gloom over his countenance, and kept him immovable.

"Shake hands, Heathcliff," said Mr. Earnshaw, condescendingly; "once in a way,

that is permitted."

"I shall not," replied the boy, finding his tongue at last; "I shall not stand

to be laughed at. I shall not bear it!"

And he would have broken from the circle, but Miss Cathy seized him again.

"I did not mean to laugh at you," she said. "I could not hinder myself.

Heathcliff, shake hands, at least! Why are you sulky for? It was only that you

looked odd. If you wash your face and brush your hair, it will be all right;

but you are so dirty!"

She gazed concernedly at the dusky fingers she held in her own, and also at

her dress, which she feared had gained no embellishment from its contact with

his.

"You needn't have touched me!" he answered, following her eye and snatching

away his hand. "I shall be as dirty as I please: and I like to be dirty, and I

will be dirty."

With that he dashed head foremost out of the room, amid the merriment of the

master and mistress, and to the serious disturbance of Catherine, who could

not comprehend how her remarks should have produced such an exhibition of bad

temper.

After playing lady's-maid to the newcomer, and putting my cakes in the oven,

and making the house and kitchen cheerful with great fires, befitting

Christmas eve, I prepared to sit down and amuse myself by singing carols, all

alone, regardless of Joseph's affirmations that he considered the merry tunes

I chose as next door to songs. He had retired to private prayer in his

chamber, and Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw were engaging Missy's attention by sundry

gay trifles bought for her to present to the little Lintons, as an

acknowledgment of their kindness. They had invited them to spend the morrow at

Wuthering Heights, and the invitation had been accepted, on one condition:

Mrs. Linton begged that her darlings might be kept carefully apart from that

"naughty swearing boy."

Under these circumstances I remained solitary. I smelt the rich scent of the

heating spices; and admired the shining kitchen utensils, the polished clock,

decked in holly, the silver mugs ranged on a tray ready to be filled with

mulled ale for supper; and, above all, the speckless purity of my particular

care -the scoured and well-swept floor. I gave due inward applause to every

object, and then I remembered how old Earnshaw used to come in when all was

tidied, and call me a cant lass, and slip a shilling into my hand as a

Christmas-box; and from that I went on to think of his fondness for

Heathcliff, and his dread lest he should suffer neglect after death had

removed him; and that naturally led me to consider the poor lad's situation

now, and from singing I changed my mind to crying. It struck me soon, however,

there would be more sense in endeavouring to repair some of his wrongs than

shedding tears over them. I got up and walked into the court to seek him. He

was not far; I found him smoothing the glossy coat of the new pony in the

stable, and feeding the other beasts, according to custom.

"Make haste, Heathcliff!" I said, "the kitchen is so comfortable; and Joseph

is upstairs: make haste, and let me dress you smart before Miss Cathy comes

out, and then you can sit together, with the whole hearth to yourselves, and

have a long chatter till bedtime."

He proceeded with his task and never turned his head towards me.

"Come -are you coming?" I continued. "There's a little cake for each of you,

nearly enough; and you'll need half-an-hour's donning."

I waited five minutes, but getting no answer left him. Catherine supped with

her brother and sister-in-law: Joseph and I joined at an unsociable meal,

seasoned with reproofs on one side and sauciness on the other. His cake and

cheese remained on the table all night for the fairies. He managed to continue

work till nine o'clock, and then marched dumb and dour to his chamber. Cathy

sat up late, having a world of things to order for the reception of her new

friends; she came into the kitchen once to speak to her old one, but he was

gone, and she only stayed to ask what was the matter with him, and then went

back. In the morning he rose early; and as it was a holiday, carried his

ill-humour onto the moors, not reappearing till the family were departed for

church. Fasting and reflecting seemed to have brought him to a better spirit.

He hung about me for a while, and having screwed up his courage, exclaimed

abruptly -

"Nelly, make me decent, I'm going to be good."

"High time, Heathcliff," I said; "you have grieved Catherine: she's sorry she

ever came home, I daresay! It looks as if you envied her, because she is more

thought of than you."

The notion of envying Catherine was incomprehensible to him, but the notion of

grieving her he understood clearly enough.

"Did she say she was grieved?" he inquired, looking very serious.

"She cried when I told her you were off again this morning."

"Well, I cried last night," he returned, "and I had more reason to cry than

she."

"Yes; you had the reason of going to bed with a proud heart and an empty

stomach," said I. "Proud people breed sad sorrows for themselves. But, if you

be ashamed of your touchiness, you must ask pardon, mind, when she comes in.

You must go up and offer to kiss her, and say -you know best what to say; only

do it heartily, and not as if you thought her converted into a stranger by her

grand dress. And now, though I have dinner to get ready, I'll steal time to

arrange you so that Edgar Linton shall look quite a doll beside you: and that

he does. You are younger, and yet, I'll be bound, you are taller and twice as

broad across the shoulders; you could knock him down in a twinkling, don't you

feel that you could?"

Heathcliff's face brightened a moment; then it was overcast afresh, and he

sighed.

"But, Nelly, if I knocked him down twenty times, that wouldn't make him less

handsome or me more so. I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was

dressed and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be!"

"And cried for mamma at every turn," I added, "and trembled if a country lad

heaved his fist against you, and sat at home all day for a shower of rain. Oh,

Heathcliff, you are showing a poor spirit! Come to the glass, and I'll let you

see what you should wish. Do you mark those two lines between your eyes; and

those thick brows, that instead of rising arched, sink in the middle; and that

couple of black fiends, so deeply buried, who never open their windows boldly,

but lurk glinting under them, like devil's spies? Wish and learn to smooth

away the surly wrinkles, to raise your lids frankly, and change the fiends to

confident, innocent angels, suspecting and doubting nothing, and always seeing

friends where they are not sure of foes. Don't get the expression of a vicious

cur that appears to know the kicks it gets are its desert, and yet hates all

the world, as well as the kicker, for what it suffers."

"In other words, I must wish for Edgar Linton's great blue eyes and even

forehead," he replied. "I do -and that won't help me to them."

"A good heart will help you to a bonny face, my lad," I continued, "if you

were a regular black; and a bad one will turn the bonniest into something

worse than ugly. And now that we've done washing, and combing, and sulking

-tell me whether you don't think yourself rather handsome? I'll tell you, I

do. You're fit for a prince in disguise. Who knows but your father was Emperor

of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with

one week's income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you

were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England. Were I in your place,

I would frame high notions of my birth; and the thoughts of what I was should

give me courage and dignity to support the oppressions of a little farmer!"

So I chattered on; and Heathcliff gradually lost his frown and began to look

quite pleasant, when all at once our conversation was interrupted by a

rumbling sound moving up the road and entering the court. He ran to the window

and I to the door, just in time to behold the two Lintons descend from the

family carriage, smothered in cloaks and furs, and the Earnshaws dismount from

their horses: they often rode to church in winter. Catherine took a hand of

each of the children, and brought them into the house and set them before the

fire, which quickly put colour into their white faces.

I urged my companion to hasten now and show his amiable humour, and he

willingly obeyed; but ill-luck would have it that, as he opened the door

leading from the kitchen on one side, Hindley opened it on the other. They

met, and the master, irritated at seeing him clean and cheerful, or, perhaps,

eager to keep his promise to Mrs. Linton, shoved him back with a sudden

thrust, and angrily bade Joseph "keep the fellow out of the room -send him

into the garret till dinner is over. He'll be cramming his fingers in the

tarts and stealing the fruit, if left alone with them a minute."

"Nay, sir," I could not avoid answering, "he'll touch nothing, not he; and I

suppose he must have his share of the dainties as well as we."

"He shall have his share of my hand, if I catch him downstairs again till

dark," cried Hindley. "Begone, you vagabond! What! you are attempting the

coxcomb, are you? Wait till I get hold of those elegant locks -see if I won't

pull them a bit longer!"

"They are long enough already," observed Master Linton, peeping from the

doorway. "I wonder they don't make his head ache. It's like a colt's mane over

his eyes!"

He ventured this remark without any intention to insult, but Heathcliff's

violent nature was not prepared to endure the appearance of impertinence from

one whom he seemed to hate, even then, as a rival. He seized a tureen of hot

apple-sauce, the first thing that came under his gripe, and dashed it full

against the speaker's face and neck, who instantly commenced a lament that

brought Isabella and Catherine hurrying to the place. Mr. Earnshaw snatched up

the culprit directly and conveyed him to his chamber, where, doubtless, he

administered a rough remedy to cool the fit of passion, for he reappeared red

and breathless. I got the dish-cloth, and, rather spitefully, scrubbed Edgar's

nose and mouth, affirming it served him right for meddling. His sister began

weeping to go home, and Cathy stood by confounded, blushing for all.

"You should not have spoken to him!" she expostulated with Master Linton. "He

was in a bad temper, and now you've spoilt your visit; and he'll be flogged: I

hate him to be flogged! I can't eat my dinner. Why did you speak to him, Edgar?"

"I didn't," sobbed the youth, escaping from my hands, and finishing the

remainder of the purification with his cambric pocket handkerchief. "I

promised mamma that I wouldn't say one word to him, and I didn't."

"Well, don't cry," replied Catherine, contemptuously; "you're not killed.

Don't make more mischief, -my brother is coming: be quiet! Give over,

Isabella! Has anybody hurt you?"

"There, there, children -to your seats!" cried Hindley, bustling in. "That

brute of a lad has warmed me nicely. Next time, Master Edgar, take the law

into your own fists -it will give you an appetite!"

The little party recovered its equanimity at sight of the fragrant feast. They

were hungry after their ride, and easily consoled, since no real harm had

befallen them. Mr. Earnshaw carved bountiful platefuls, and the mistress made

them merry with lively talk. I waited behind her chair, and was pained to

behold Catherine, with dry eyes and an indifferent air, commence cutting up

the wing of a goose before her. "An unfeeling child," I thought to myself;

"how lightly she dismisses her old playmate's troubles. I could not have

imagined her to be so selfish." She lifted a mouthful to her lips; then she

set it down again: her cheeks flushed, and the tears gushed over them. She

slipped her fork to the floor, and hastily dived under the cloth to conceal

her emotion. I did not call her unfeeling long, for I perceived she was in

purgatory throughout the day, and wearying to find an opportunity of getting

by herself, or paying a visit to Heathcliff, who had been locked up by the

master, as I discovered, on endeavouring to introduce to him a private mess of

victuals.

In the evening we had a dance. Cathy begged that he might be liberated then,

as Isabella Linton had no partner; her entreaties were vain, and I was

appointed to supply the deficiency. We got rid of all gloom in the excitement

of the exercise, and our pleasure was increased by the arrival of the

Gimmerton band, mustering fifteen strong: a trumpet, a trombone, clarionets,

bassoons, French horns, and a bass viol, besides singers. They go the rounds

of all the respectable houses, and receive contributions every Christmas, and

we esteemed it a first-rate treat to hear them. After the usual carols had

been sung, we set them to songs and glees. Mrs. Earnshaw loved the music, and

so they gave us plenty.

Catherine loved it too; but she said it sounded sweetest at the top of the

steps, and she went up in the dark: I followed. They shut the house door

below, never noting our absence, it was so full of people. She made no stay at

the stairs' head, but mounted farther, to the garret where Heathcliff was

confined, and called him. He stubbornly declined answering for a while; she

persevered, and finally persuaded him to hold communion with her through the

boards. I let the poor things converse unmolested, till I supposed the songs

were going to cease, and the singers to get some refreshment; then I clambered

up the ladder to warn her. Instead of finding her outside, I heard her voice

within. The little monkey had crept by the skylight of one garret, along the

roof, into the skylight of the other, and it was with the utmost difficulty I

could coax her out again. When she did come, Heathcliff came with her, and she

insisted that I should take him into the kitchen, as my fellow-servant had

gone to a neighbour's to be removed from the sound of our `devil's psalmody',

as it pleased him to call it. I told them I intended by no means to encourage

their tricks; but as the prisoner had never broken his fast since yesterday's

dinner, I would wink at his cheating Mr. Hindley that once. He went down; I

set him a stool by the fire, and offered him a quantity of good things; but he

was sick and could eat little, and my attempts to entertain him were thrown

away. He leant his two elbows on his knees, and his chin on his hands, and

remained wrapt in dumb meditation. On my inquiring the subject of his

thoughts, he answered gravely -

"I'm trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don't care how long I

wait, if I can only do it at last. I hope he will not die before I do!"

"For shame, Heathcliff!" said I. "It is for God to punish wicked people; we

should learn to forgive."

"No, God won't have the satisfaction that I shall," he returned. "I only wish

I knew the best way! Let me alone, and I'll plan it out: while I'm thinking of

that I don't feel pain."

But, Mr. Lockwood, I forget these tales cannot divert you. I'm annoyed how I

should dream of chattering on at such a rate; and your gruel cold, and you

nodding for bed! I could have told Heathcliff's history, all that you need

hear, in half-a-dozen words.

Thus interrupting herself, the housekeeper rose, and proceeded to lay aside

her sewing; but I felt incapable of moving from the hearth, and I was very far

from nodding. "Sit still, Mrs. Dean," I cried, "do sit still, another

half-hour! You've done just right to tell the story leisurely. That is the

method I like, and you must finish in the same style. I am interested in every

character you have mentioned, more or less."

"The clock is on the stroke of eleven, sir."

"No matter -I'm not accustomed to go to bed in the long hours. One or two is

early enough for a person who lies till ten."

"You shouldn't lie till ten. There's the very prime of the morning gone long

before that time. A person who has not done one half his day's work by ten

o'clock, runs a chance of leaving the other half undone."

"Nevertheless, Mrs. Dean, resume your chair; because tomorrow I intend

lengthening the night till afternoon. I prognosticate for myself an obstinate

cold, at least."

"I hope not, sir. Well, you must allow me to leap over some three years;

during that space Mrs. Earnshaw -"

"No, no, I'll allow nothing of the sort! Are you acquainted with the mood of

mind in which, if you were seated alone, and the cat licking its kitten on the

rug before you, you would watch the operation so intently that puss's neglect

of one ear would put you seriously out of temper?"

"A terribly lazy mood, I should say."

"On the contrary, a tiresomely active one. It is mine, at present; and,

therefore, continue minutely. I perceive that people in these regions acquire

over people in towns the value that the spider in a dungeon does over a spider

in a cottage, to their various occupants; and yet the deepened attraction is

not entirely owing to the situation of the looker-on. They do live more in

earnest, more in themselves, and less in surface change, and frivolous

external things. I could fancy a love for life here almost possible; and I was

a fixed unbeliever in any love of a year's standing. One state resembles

setting a hungry man down to a single dish, on which he may concentrate his

entire appetite and do it justice; the other, introducing him to a table laid

out by French cooks: he can perhaps extract as much enjoyment from the whole,

but each part is a mere atom in his regard and remembrance."

"Oh! here we are the same as anywhere else, when you get to know us," observed

Mrs. Dean, somewhat puzzled at my speech.

"Excuse me," I responded; "you, my good friend, are a striking evidence

against that assertion. Excepting a few provincialisms of slight consequence,

you have no marks of the manners which I am habituated to consider as peculiar

to your class. I am sure you have thought a great deal more than the

generality of servants think. You have been compelled to cultivate your

reflective faculties for want of occasions for frittering your life away in

silly trifles."

Mrs. Dean laughed.

"I certainly esteem myself a steady, reasonable kind of body," she said; "not

exactly from living among the hills and seeing one set of faces, and one

series of actions, from year's end to year's end; but I have undergone sharp

discipline, which has taught me wisdom; and then, I have read more than you

would fancy, Mr. Lockwood. You could not open a book in this library that I

have not looked into, and got something out of also; unless it be that range

of Greek and Latin, and that of French, -and those I know one from another: it

is as much as you can expect of a poor man's daughter. However, if I am to

follow my story in true gossip's fashion, I had better go on; and instead of

leaping three years, I will be content to pass to the next summer -the summer

of 1778, that is nearly twenty-three years ago."

Chapter 8

On the morning of a fine June day, my first bonny little nursling, and the

last of the ancient Earnshaw stock, was born. We were busy with the hay in a

far away field, when the girl that usually brought our breakfasts came running

an hour too soon, across the meadow and up the lane, calling me as she ran.

"Oh, such a grand bairn!" she panted out. "The finest lad that ever breathed!

But the doctor says missis must go: he says she's been in a consumption these

many months. I heard him tell Mr. Hindley; and now she has nothing to keep

her, and she'll be dead before winter. You must come home directly. You're to

nurse it, Nelly: to feed it with sugar and milk, and take care of it day and

night. I wish I were you, because it will be all yours when there is no missis!"

"But is she very ill?" I asked, flinging down my rake, and tying my bonnet.

"I guess she is; yet she looks bravely," replied the girl, "and she talks as

if she thought of living to see it grow a man. She's out of her head for joy,

it's such a beauty! If I were her, I'm certain I should not die: I should get

better at the bare sight of it, in spite of Kenneth. I was fairly mad at him.

Dame Archer brought the cherub down to master, in the house, and his face just

began to light up, then the old croaker steps forward, and says he, `Earnshaw,

it's a blessing your wife has been spared to leave you this son. When she

came, I felt convinced we shouldn't keep her long; and now, I must tell you,

the winter will probably finish her. Don't take on, and fret about it too

much! it can't be helped. And besides, you should have known better than to

choose such a rush of a lass!' "

"And what did the master answer?" I inquired.

"I think he swore; but I didn't mind him, I was straining to see the bairn,"

and she began again to describe it rapturously. I, as zealous as herself,

hurried eagerly home to admire, on my part; though I was very sad for

Hindley's sake. He had room in his heart only for two idols -his wife and

himself: he doted on both, and adored one, and I couldn't conceive how he

would bear the loss.

When we got to Wuthering Heights, there he stood at the front door; and, as I

passed in, I asked, "How was the baby?"

"Nearly ready to run about, Nell!" he replied, putting on a cheerful smile.

"And the mistress?" I ventured to inquire; "the doctor says she's -"

"Damn the doctor!" he interrupted, reddening. "Frances is quite right: she'll

be perfectly well by this time next week. Are you going upstairs? Will you

tell her that I'll come, if she'll promise not to talk. I left her because she

would not hold her tongue; and she must -tell her Mr. Kenneth says she must be

quiet."

I delivered this message to Mrs. Earnshaw; she seemed in flighty spirits, and

replied merrily -

"I hardly spoke a word, Ellen, and there he has gone out twice, crying. Well,

say I promise I won't speak: but that does not bind me not to laugh at him!"

Poor soul! Till within a week of her death that gay heart never failed her,

and her husband persisted doggedly, nay, furiously, in affirming her health

improved every day. When Kenneth warned him that his medicines were useless at

that stage of the malady, and he needn't put him to further expense by

attending her, he retorted -

"I know you need not -she's well -she does not want any more attendance from

you! She never was in a consumption. It was a fever, and it is gone: her pulse

is as slow as mine now, and her cheek is cool."

He told his wife the same story, and she seemed to believe him; but one night,

while leaning on his shoulder in the act of saying she thought she should be

able to get up tomorrow, a fit of coughing took her -a very slight one -he

raised her in his arms; she put her two hands about his neck, her face

changed, and she was dead.

As the girl had anticipated, the child Hareton fell wholly into my hands. Mr.

Earnshaw, provided he saw him healthy and never heard him cry, was contented,

as far as regarded him. For himself, he grew desperate: his sorrow was of that

kind that will not lament. He neither wept nor prayed: he cursed and defied,

-execrated God and man, and gave himself up to reckless dissipation. The

servants could not bear his tyrannical and evil conduct long: Joseph and I

were the only two that would stay. I had not the heart to leave my charge; and

besides, you know, I had been his foster-sister, and excused his behaviour

more readily than a stranger would. Joseph remained to hector over tenants and

labourers; and because it was his vocation to be where he had plenty of

wickedness to reprove.

The master's bad ways and bad companions formed a pretty example for Catherine

and Heathcliff. His treatment of the latter was enough to make a fiend of a

saint. And, truly, it appeared as if the lad were possessed of something

diabolical at that period. He delighted to witness Hindley degrading himself

past redemption; and became daily more notable for savage sullenness and

ferocity. I could not half tell what an infernal house we had. The curate

dropped calling, and nobody decent came near us, at last, unless Edgar

Linton's visits to Miss Cathy might be an exception. At fifteen she was the

queen of the countryside; she had no peer; and she did turn out a haughty,

headstrong creature! I own I did not like her, after her infancy was past; and

I vexed her frequently by trying to bring down her arrogance: she never took

an aversion to me, though. She had a wondrous constancy to old attachments;

even Heathcliff kept his hold on her affections unalterably; and young Linton,

with all his superiority, found it difficult to make an equally deep

impression. He was my late master; that is his portrait over the fireplace. It

used to hang on one side, and his wife's on the other; but hers has been

removed, or else you might see something of what she was. Can you make that out?

Mrs. Dean raised the candle, and I discerned a soft-featured face, exceedingly

resembling the young lady at the Heights, but more pensive and amiable in

expression. It formed a sweet picture. The long light hair curled slightly on

the temples; the eyes were large and serious; the figure almost too graceful.

I did not marvel how Catherine Earnshaw could forget her first friend for such

an individual. I marvelled much how he, with a mind to correspond with his

person, could fancy my idea of Catherine Earnshaw.

"A very agreeable portrait," I observed to the housekeeper. "Is it like?"

"Yes," she answered; "but he looked better when he was animated; that is his

everyday countenance: he wanted spirit in general."

Catherine had kept up her acquaintance with the Lintons since her five weeks'

residence among them; and as she had no temptation to show her rough side in

their company, and had the sense to be ashamed of being rude where she

experienced such invariable courtesy, she imposed unwittingly on the old lady

and gentleman, by her ingenuous cordiality; gained the admiration of Isabella,

and the heart and soul of her brother: acquisitions that flattered her from

the first, for she was full of ambition, and led her to adopt a double

character without exactly intending to deceive any one. In the place where she

heard Heathcliff termed a `vulgar young ruffian' and `worse than a brute', she

took care not to act like him; but at home she had small inclination to

practise politeness that would only be laughed at, and restrain an unruly

nature when it would bring her neither credit nor praise.

Mr. Edgar seldom mustered courage to visit Wuthering Heights openly. He had a

terror of Earnshaw's reputation, and shrunk from encountering him; and yet he

was always received with our best attempts at civility: the master himself

avoided offending him, knowing why he came; and if he could not be gracious,

kept out of the way. I rather think his appearance there was distasteful to

Catherine: she was not artful, never played the coquette, and had evidently an

objection to her two friends meeting at all; for when Heathcliff expressed

contempt of Linton in his presence, she could not half coincide, as she did in

his absence; and when Linton evinced disgust and antipathy to Heathcliff, she

dare not treat his sentiments with indifference, as if depreciation of her

playmate were of scarcely any consequence to her. I've had many a laugh at her

perplexities and untold troubles, which she vainly strove to hide from my

mockery. That sounds ill-natured; but she was so proud, it became really

impossible to pity her distress, till she should be chastened into more

humility. She did bring herself, finally, to confess and confide in me: there

was not a soul else that she might fashion into an adviser.

Mr. Hindley had gone from home, one afternoon, and Heathcliff presumed to give

himself a holiday on the strength of it. He had reached the age of sixteen

then, I think, and without having bad features or being deficient in

intellect, he contrived to convey an impression of inward and outward

repulsiveness that his present aspect retains no traces of. In the first

place, he had by that time lost the benefit of his early education: continual

hard work, begun soon and concluded late, had extinguished any curiosity he

once possessed in pursuit of knowledge, and any love for books or learning.

His childhood's sense of superiority, instilled into him by the favours of old

Mr. Earnshaw, was faded away. He struggled long to keep up an equality with

Catherine in her studies, and yielded with poignant though silent regret; but

he yielded completely, and there was no prevailing on him to take a step in

the way of moving upward, when he found he must, necessarily, sink beneath his

former level. Then personal appearance sympathised with mental deterioration;

he acquired a slouching gait and ignoble look; his naturally reserved

disposition was exaggerated into an almost idiotic excess of unsociable

moroseness; and he took a grim pleasure, apparently, in exciting the aversion

rather than the esteem of his few acquaintance.

Catherine and he were constant companions still at his seasons of respite from

labour; but he had ceased to express his fondness for her in words, and

recoiled with angry suspicion from her girlish caresses, as if conscious there

could be no gratification in lavishing such marks of affection on him. On the

before-named occasion he came into the house to announce his intention of

doing nothing, while I was assisting Miss Cathy to arrange her dress: she had

not reckoned on his taking it into his head to be idle, and imagining she

would have the whole place to herself, she managed, by some means, to inform

Mr. Edgar of her brother's absence, and was then preparing to receive him.

"Cathy, are you busy this afternoon?" asked Heathcliff. "Are you going

anywhere?"

"No, it is raining," she answered.

"Why have you that silk frock on, then?" he said. "Nobody coming here, I hope?"

"Not that I know of," stammered Miss; "but you should be in the field now,

Heathcliff. It is an hour past dinner-time; I thought you were gone."

"Hindley does not often free us from his accursed presence," observed the boy.

"I'll not work any more today; I'll stay with you."

"Oh, but Joseph will tell," she suggested; "you'd better go!"

"Joseph is loading lime on the farther side of Penistone Crag; it will take

him till dark, and he'll never know."

So saying, he lounged to the fire, and sat down. Catherine reflected an

instant, with knitted brows -she found it needful to smooth the way for an

intrusion. "Isabella and Edgar Linton talked of calling this afternoon," she

said, at the conclusion of a minute's silence. "As it rains, I hardly expect

them; but they may come, and if they do, you run the risk of being scolded for

no good."

"Order Ellen to say you are engaged, Cathy," he persisted; "don't turn me out

for those pitiful, silly friends of yours! I'm on the point, sometimes, of

complaining that they -but I'll not -"

"That they what?" cried Catherine, gazing at him with a troubled countenance.

"Oh, Nelly!" she added petulantly, jerking her head away from my hands,

"you've combed my hair quite out of curl! That's enough; let me alone. What

are you on the point of complaining about, Heathcliff?"

"Nothing -only look at the almanac on that wall." He pointed to a framed sheet

hanging near the window, and continued -"The crosses are for the evenings you

have spent with the Lintons, the dots for those spent with me. Do you see?

I've marked every day."

"Yes -very foolish: as if I took notice!" replied Catherine in a peevish tone.

"And where is the sense of that?"

"To show that I do take notice," said Heathcliff.

"And should I always be sitting with you?" she demanded, growing more

irritated. "What good do I get? What do you talk about? You might be dumb, or

a baby, for anything you say to amuse me, or for anything you do, either!"

"You never told me before that I talked too little, or that you disliked my

company, Cathy!" exclaimed Heathcliff in much agitation.

"It's no company at all, when people know nothing and say nothing," she

muttered.

Her companion rose up, but he hadn't time to express his feelings further, for

a horse's feet were heard on the flags, and having knocked gently, young

Linton entered, his face brilliant with delight at the unexpected summons he

had received. Doubtless Catherine marked the difference between her friends,

as one came in and the other went out. The contrast resembled what you see in

exchanging a bleak, hilly, coal country for a beautiful fertile valley; and

his voice and greeting were as opposite as his aspect. He had a sweet, low

manner of speaking, and pronounced his words as you do; -that's less gruff

than we talk here, and softer.

"I'm not come too soon, am I?" he said, casting a look at me: I had begun to

wipe the plate, and tidy some drawers at the far end in the dresser.

"No," answered Catherine. "What are you doing there, Nelly?"

"My work, Miss," I replied. (Mr. Hindley had given me directions to make a

third party in any private visits Linton chose to pay.)

She stepped behind me and whispered crossly, "Take yourself and your dusters

off; when company are in the house, servants don't commence scouring and

cleaning in the room where they are!"

"It's a good opportunity, now that master is away," I answered aloud: "he

hates me to be fidgeting over these things in his presence. I'm sure Mr. Edgar

will excuse me."

"I hate you to be fidgeting in my presence," exclaimed the young lady

imperiously, not allowing her guest time to speak: she had failed to recover

her equanimity since the little dispute with Heathcliff.

"I'm sorry for it, Miss Catherine," was my response, and I proceeded

assiduously with my occupation.

She, supposing Edgar could not see her, snatched the cloth from my hand, and

pinched me, with a prolonged wrench, very spitefully on the arm. I've said I

did not love her, and rather relished mortifying her vanity now and then;

besides, she hurt me extremely; so I started up from my knees, and screamed

out, "Oh, Miss, that's a nasty trick! You have no right to nip me, and I'm not

going to bear it."

"I didn't touch you, you lying creature!" cried she, her fingers tingling to

repeat the act, and her ears red with rage. She never had power to conceal her

passion, it always set her whole complexion in a blaze.

"What's that, then?" I retorted, showing a decided purple witness to refute her.

She stamped her foot, wavered a moment, and then, irresistibly impelled by the

naughty spirit within her, slapped me on the cheek a stinging blow that filled

both eyes with water.

"Catherine, love! Catherine!" interposed Linton, greatly shocked at the double

fault of falsehood and violence which his idol had committed.

"Leave the room, Ellen!" she repeated, trembling all over.

Little Hareton, who followed me everywhere, and was sitting near me on the

floor, at seeing my tears commenced crying himself, and sobbed out complaints

against "wicked aunt Cathy," which drew her fury onto his unlucky head: she

seized his shoulders, and shook him till the poor child waxed livid, and Edgar

thoughtlessly laid hold of her hands to deliver him. In an instant one was

wrung free, and the astonished young man felt it applied over his own ear in a

way that could not be mistaken for jest. He drew back in consternation. I

lifted Hareton in my arms, and walked off to the kitchen with him, leaving the

door of communication open, for I was curious to watch how they would settle

their disagreement. The insulted visitor moved to the spot where he had laid

his hat, pale and with a quivering lip.

"That's right!" I said to myself. "Take warning and begone! It's a kindness to

let you have a glimpse of her genuine disposition."

"Where are you going?" demanded Catherine, advancing to the door.

He swerved aside, and attempted to pass.

"You must not go!" she exclaimed energetically.

"I must and shall!" he replied in a subdued voice.

"No," she persisted, grasping the handle; "not yet, Edgar Linton: sit down,

-you shall not leave me in that temper. I should be miserable all night, and I

won't be miserable for you!"

"Can I stay after you have struck me?" asked Linton.

Catherine was mute.

"You've made me afraid and ashamed of you," he continued; "I'll not come here

again!"

Her eyes began to glisten, and her lids to twinkle.

"And you told a deliberate untruth!" he said.

"I didn't!" she cried, recovering her speech. "I did nothing deliberately.

Well, go, if you please -get away! And now I'll cry -I'll cry myself sick!"

She dropped down on her knees by a chair, and set to weeping in serious

earnest. Edgar persevered in his resolution as far as the court; there he

lingered. I resolved to encourage him.

"Miss is dreadfully wayward, sir," I called out. "As bad as any marred child:

you'd better be riding home, or else she will be sick, only to grieve us."

The soft thing looked askance through the window: he possessed the power to

depart, as much as a cat possesses the power to leave a mouse half killed, or

a bird half eaten. Ah, I thought, there will be no saving him -he's doomed,

and flies to his fate! And so it was: he turned abruptly, hastened into the

house again, shut the door behind him; and when I went in a while after to

inform them that Earnshaw had come home rabid drunk, ready to pull the old

place about our ears (his ordinary frame of mind in that condition), I saw the

quarrel had merely effected a closer intimacy -had broken the outworks of

youthful timidity, and enabled them to forsake the disguise of friendship, and

confess themselves lovers.

Intelligence of Mr. Hindley's arrival drove Linton speedily to his horse, and

Catherine to her chamber. I went to hide little Hareton, and to take the shot

out of the master's fowling-piece, which he was fond of playing with in his

insane excitement, to the hazard of the lives of any who provoked, or even

attracted his notice too much; and I had hit upon the plan of removing it,

that he might do less mischief if he did go the length of firing the gun.

Chapter 9

He entered, vociferating oaths dreadful to hear, and caught me in the act of

stowing his son away in the kitchen cupboard. Hareton was impressed with a

wholesome terror of encountering either his wild-beast's fondness or his

madman's rage; for in one he ran a chance of being squeezed and kissed to

death, and in the other of being flung into the fire, or dashed against the

wall; and the poor thing remained perfectly quiet wherever I chose to put him.

"There, I've found it out at last!" cried Hindley, pulling me back by the skin

of my neck, like a dog. "By heaven and hell, you've sworn between you to

murder that child! I know how it is, now, that he is always out of my way.

But, with the help of Satan, I shall make you swallow the carving-knife,

Nelly! You needn't laugh; for I've just crammed Kenneth, head-downmost, in the

Blackhorse marsh; and two is the same as one -and I want to kill some of you;

I shall have no rest till I do!"

"But I don't like the carving-knife, Mr. Hindley," I answered: "it has been

cutting red herrings. I'd rather be shot, if you please."

"You'd rather be damned!" he said, "and so you shall. No law in England can

hinder a man from keeping his house decent, and mine's abominable! open your

mouth."

He held the knife in his hand, and pushed its point between my teeth; but, for

my part, I was never much afraid of his vagaries. I spat out, and affirmed it

tasted detestably -I would not take it on any account.

"Oh!" said he, releasing me, "I see that hideous little villain is not

Hareton: I beg your pardon, Nell. If it be, he deserves flaying alive for not

running to welcome me, and for screaming as if I were a goblin. Unnatural cub,

come hither! I'll teach thee to impose on a good-hearted, deluded father. Now,

don't you think the lad would be handsomer cropped? It makes a dog fiercer,

and I love something fierce -get me a scissors -something fierce and trim!

Besides, it's infernal affectation -devilish conceit it is, to cherish our

ears -we're asses enough without them. Hush, child, hush! Well then, it is my

darling! wisht, dry thy eyes -there's a joy; kiss me. What! it won't? Kiss me,

Hareton! Damn thee, kiss me! By God, as if I would rear such a monster! As

sure as I'm living, I'll break the brat's neck."

Poor Hareton was squalling and kicking in his father's arms with all his

might, and redoubled his yells when he carried him upstairs and lifted him

over the banister. I cried out that he would frighten the child into fits, and

ran to rescue him. As I reached them, Hindley leant forward on the rails to

listen to a noise below, almost forgetting what he had in his hands. "Who is

that?" he asked, hearing some one approaching the stair's foot. I leant

forward also, for the purpose of signing to Heathcliff, whose step I

recognised, not to come further; and, at the instant when my eye quitted

Hareton, he gave a sudden spring, delivered himself from the careless grasp

that held him, and fell.

There was scarcely time to experience a thrill of horror before we saw that

the little wretch was safe. Heathcliff arrived underneath just at the critical

moment; by a natural impulse, he arrested his descent, and setting him on his

feet, looked up to discover the author of the accident. A miser who has parted

with a lucky lottery ticket for five shillings, and finds next day he has lost

in the bargain five thousand pounds, could not show a blanker countenance than

he did on beholding the figure of Mr. Earnshaw above. It expressed, plainer

than words could do, the intensest anguish at having made himself the

instrument of thwarting his own revenge. Had it been dark, I daresay, he would

have tried to remedy the mistake by smashing Hareton's skull on the steps;

but, we witnessed his salvation; and I was presently below with my precious

charge pressed to my heart. Hindley descended more leisurely, sobered and

abashed.

"It is your fault, Ellen," he said; "you should have kept him out of sight:

you should have taken him from me! Is he injured anywhere?"

"Injured!" I cried angrily; "if he's not killed, he'll be an idiot! Oh! I

wonder his mother does not rise from her grave to see how you use him. You're

worse than a heathen -treating your own flesh and blood in that manner!"

He attempted to touch the child, who, on finding himself with me, sobbed off

his terror directly. At the first finger his father laid on him, however, he

shrieked again louder than before, and struggled as if he would go into

convulsions.

"You shall not meddle with him!" I continued. "He hates you -they all hate you

-that's the truth! A happy family you have; and a pretty state you're come to!"

"I shall come to a prettier, yet, Nelly," laughed the misguided man,

recovering his hardness. "At present, convey yourself and him away. And, hark

you, Heathcliff! clear you too, quite from my reach and hearing. I wouldn't

murder you tonight, unless, perhaps, I set the house on fire; but that's as my

fancy goes."

While saying this he took a pint bottle of brandy from the dresser, and poured

some into a tumbler.

"Nay, don't!" I entreated. "Mr. Hindley, do take warning. Have mercy on this

unfortunate boy, if you care nothing for yourself!"

"Any one will do better for him than I shall," he answered.

"Have mercy on your own soul!" I said, endeavouring to snatch the glass from

his hand.

"Not I! On the contrary, I shall have great pleasure in sending it to

perdition to punish its Maker," exclaimed the blasphemer. "Here's to its

hearty damnation!"

He drank the spirits, and impatiently bade us go; terminating his command with

a sequel of horrid imprecations, too bad to repeat or remember.

"It's a pity he cannot kill himself with drink," observed Heathcliff,

muttering an echo of curses back when the door was shut. "He's doing his very

utmost; but his constitution defies him. Mr. Kenneth says he would wager his

mare that he'll outlive any man on this side Gimmerton, and go to the grave a

hoary sinner; unless some happy chance out of the common course befall him."

I went into the kitchen, and sat down to lull my little lamb to sleep.

Heathcliff, as I thought, walked through to the barn. It turned out afterwards

that he only got as far as the other side the settle, when he flung himself on

a bench by the wall, removed from the fire, and remained silent.

I was rocking Hareton on my knee, and humming a song that began,

"It was far in the night, and the bairnies grat,

The mither beneath the mools heard that,"

when Miss Cathy, who had listened to the hubbub from her room, put her head in

and whispered:

"Are you alone, Nelly?"

"Yes, Miss," I replied.

She entered and approached the hearth. I, supposing she was going to say

something, looked up. The expression of her face seemed disturbed and anxious.

Her lips were half asunder, as if she meant to speak, and she drew a breath;

but it escaped in a sigh instead of a sentence. I resumed my song, not having

forgotten her recent behaviour.

"Where's Heathcliff?" she said, interrupting me.

"About his work in the stable," was my answer.

He did not contradict me; perhaps he had fallen into a doze. There followed

another long pause, during which I perceived a drop or two trickle from

Catherine's cheek to the flags. Is she sorry for her shameful conduct? I asked

myself. That will be a novelty: but she may come to the point as she will -I

shan't help her! No, she felt small trouble regarding any subject, save her

own concerns.

"Oh, dear!" she cried at last. "I'm very unhappy!"

"A pity," observed I. "You're hard to please: so many friends and so few

cares, and can't make yourself content!"

"Nelly, will you keep a secret for me?" she pursued, kneeling down by me, and

lifting her winsome eyes to my face with that sort of look which turns off bad

temper, even when one has all the right in the world to indulge it.

"Is it worth keeping?" I inquired, less sulkily.

"Yes, and it worries me, and I must let it out! I want to know what I should

do. Today, Edgar Linton has asked me to marry him, and I've given him an

answer. Now, before I tell you whether it was a consent or denial, you tell me

which it ought to have been."

"Really, Miss Catherine, how can I know?" I replied. "To be sure, considering

the exhibition you performed in his presence this afternoon, I might say it

would be wise to refuse him; since he asked you after that, he must be either

hopelessly stupid or a venturesome fool."

"If you talk so, I won't tell you any more," she returned peevishly, rising to

her feet. "I accepted him, Nelly. Be quick, and say whether I was wrong!"

"You accepted him! then what good is it discussing the matter? You have

pledged your word, and cannot retract."

"But, say whether I should have done so -do!" she exclaimed in an irritated

tone, chafing her hands together, and frowning.

"There are many things to be considered before that question can be answered

properly," I said sententiously. "First and foremost, do you love Mr. Edgar?"

"Who can help it? Of course I do," she answered.

Then I put her through the following catechism: for a girl of twenty-two it

was not injudicious.

"Why do you love him, Miss Cathy?"

"Nonsense, I do -that's sufficient."

"By no means; you must say why."

"Well, because he is handsome, and pleasant to be with."

"Bad!" was my commentary.

"And because he is young and cheerful."

"Bad, still."

"And because he loves me."

"Indifferent, coming there."

"And he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the

neighbourhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband."

"Worst of all. And now, say how you love him?"

"As everybody loves -You're silly, Nelly."

"Not at all -Answer."

"I love the ground under his feet, and the air over his head, and everything

he touches, and every word he says. I love all his looks, and all his actions,

and him entirely and altogether. There now!"

"And why?"

"Nay, you are making a jest of it; it is exceedingly ill-natured! It's no jest

to me!" said the young lady, scowling, and turning her face to the fire.

"I'm very far from jesting, Miss Catherine," I replied. "You love Mr. Edgar

because he is handsome, and young, and cheerful, and rich, and loves you. The

last, however, goes for nothing: you would love him without that, probably;

and with it you wouldn't, unless he possessed the four former attractions."

"No, to be sure not: I should only pity him -hate him, perhaps, if he were

ugly, and a clown."

"But there are several other handsome, rich young men in the world -handsomer,

possibly, and richer than he is. What should hinder you from loving them?"

"If there be any, they are out of my way. I've seen none like Edgar."

"You may see some; and he won't always be handsome, and young, and may not

always be rich."

"He is now; and I have only to do with the present. I wish you would speak

rationally."

"Well, that settles it: if you have only to do with the present, marry Mr.

Linton."

"I don't want your permission for that -I shall marry him; and yet you have

not told whether I'm right."

"Perfectly right; if people be right to marry only for the present. And now,

let us hear what you are unhappy about. Your brother will be pleased; the old

lady and gentleman will not object, I think; you will escape from a

disorderly, comfortless home into a wealthy, respectable one; and you love

Edgar, and Edgar loves you. All seems smooth and easy: where is the obstacle?"

"Here! and here!" replied Catherine, striking one hand on her forehead and the

other on her breast: "in whichever place the soul lives. In my soul and in my

heart I'm convinced I'm wrong!"

"That's very strange! I cannot make it out."

"It's my secret. But if you will not mock at me, I'll explain it: I can't do

it distinctly; but I'll give you a feeling of how I feel."

She seated herself by me again; her countenance grew sadder and graver, and

her clasped hands trembled.

"Nelly, do you never dream queer dreams?" she said suddenly, after some

minutes' reflection.

"Yes, now and then," I answered.

"And so do I. I've dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever

after, and changed my ideas; they've gone through and through me, like wine

through water, and altered the colour of my mind. And this is one; I'm going

to tell it -but take care not to smile at any part of it."

"Oh! don't, Miss Catherine!" I cried. "We're dismal enough without conjuring

up ghosts and visions to perplex us. Come, come, be merry and like yourself!

Look at little Hareton! he's dreaming nothing dreary. How sweetly he smiles in

his sleep!"

"Yes; and how sweetly his father curses in his solitude! You remember him, I

daresay, when he was just such another as that chubby thing, -nearly as young

and innocent. However, Nelly, I shall oblige you to listen; it's not long, and

I've no power to be merry tonight."

"I won't hear it, I won't hear it!" I repeated hastily.

I was superstitious about dreams then, and am still; and Catherine had an

unusual gloom in her aspect that made me dread something from which I might

shape a prophecy, and foresee a fearful catastrophe. She was vexed, but she

did not proceed. Apparently taking up another subject, she recommenced in a

short time.

"If I were in heaven, Nelly, I should be extremely miserable."

"Because you are not fit to go there," I answered. "All sinners would be

miserable in heaven."

"But it is not for that. I dreamt once that I was there."

"I tell you I won't harken to your dreams, Miss Catherine! I'll go to bed," I

interrupted again.

She laughed, and held me down; for I made a motion to leave my chair.

"This is nothing," cried she: "I was only going to say that heaven did not

seem to be my home, and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth;

and the angels were so angry that they flung me out into the middle of the

heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy. That will

do to explain my secret, as well as the other. I've no more business to marry

Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had

not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would

degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him: and

that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I

am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton's is

as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire."

Ere this speech ended, I became sensible of Heathcliff's presence. Having

noticed a slight movement, I turned my head, and saw him rise from the bench,

and steal out noiselessly. He had listened till he heard Catherine say it

would degrade her to marry him, and then he stayed to hear no farther. My

companion, sitting on the ground, was prevented by the back of the settle from

remarking his presence or departure; but I started, and bade her hush!

"Why?" she asked, gazing nervously round.

"Joseph is here," I answered, catching opportunely the roll of his cartwheels

up the road, "and Heathcliff will come in with him. I'm not sure whether he

were not at the door this moment."

"Oh, he couldn't overhear me at the door!" said she. "Give me Hareton, while

you get the supper, and when it is ready ask me to sup with you. I want to

cheat my uncomfortable conscience, and be convinced that Heathcliff has no

notion of these things. He has not, has he? He does not know what being in

love is?"

"I see no reason that he should not know, as well as you," I returned; "and if

you are his choice, he'll be the most unfortunate creature that ever was born!

As soon as you become Mrs. Linton, he loses friend, and love, and all! Have

you considered how you'll bear the separation, and how he'll bear to be quite

deserted in the world? Because, Miss Catherine -"

"He quite deserted! We separated!" she exclaimed, with an accent of

indignation. "Who is to separate us, pray? They'll meet the fate of Milo! Not

as long as I live, Ellen, -for no mortal creature. Every Linton on the face of

the earth might melt into nothing, before I could consent to forsake

Heathcliff. Oh, that's not what I intend -that's not what I mean! I shouldn't

be Mrs. Linton were such a price demanded! He'll be as much to me as he has

been all his lifetime. Edgar must shake off his antipathy, and tolerate him,

at least. He will, when he learns my true feelings towards him. Nelly, I see

now, you think me a selfish wretch; but did it never strike you that if

Heathcliff and I married, we should be beggars? whereas, if I marry Linton, I

can aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of my brother's power."

"With your husband's money, Miss Catherine?" I asked. "You'll find him not so

pliable as you calculate upon; and, though I'm hardly a judge, I think that's

the worst motive you've given yet for being the wife of young Linton."

"It is not," retorted she; "it is the best! The others were the satisfaction

of my whims; and for Edgar's sake, too, to satisfy him. This is for the sake

of one who comprehends in his person my feelings to Edgar and myself. I cannot

express it; but surely you and everybody have a notion that there is or should

be an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of my creation, if I

were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been

Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning: my

great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and he remained, I

should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were

annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger: I should not seem a

part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will

change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff

resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but

necessary. Nelly, I am Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind -not as a

pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being.

So don't talk of our separation again; it is impracticable, and -"

She paused, and hid her face in the folds of my gown; but I jerked it forcibly

away. I was out of patience with her folly!

"If I can make any sense of your nonsense, Miss," I said, "it only goes to

convince me that you are ignorant of the duties you undertake in marrying, or

else that you are a wicked, unprincipled girl. But trouble me with no more

secrets; I'll not promise to keep them."

"You'll keep that?" she asked eagerly.

"No, I'll not promise," I repeated.

She was about to insist, when the entrance of Joseph finished our

conversation; and Catherine removed her seat to a corner, and nursed Hareton,

while I made the supper. After it was cooked, my fellow-servant and I began to

quarrel who should carry some to Mr. Hindley; and we didn't settle it till all

was nearly cold. Then we came to the agreement that we would let him ask, if

he wanted any; for we feared particularly to go into his presence when he had

been some time alone.

"Und hah isn't that nowt comed in frough th' field, be this time? What is he

abaht? girt eedle seeght!" demanded the old man, looking round for Heathcliff.

"I'll call him," I replied. "He's in the barn, I've no doubt."

I went and called, but got no answer. On returning, I whispered to Catherine

that he had heard a good part of what she said, I was sure; and told how I saw

him quit the kitchen just as she complained of her brother's conduct regarding

him. She jumped up in a fine fright, flung Hareton on to the settle, and ran

to seek for her friend herself, not taking leisure to consider why she was so

flurried, or how her talk would have affected him. She was absent such a while

that Joseph proposed we should wait no longer. He cunningly conjectured they

were staying away in order to avoid hearing his protracted blessing. They were

"ill eneugh for ony fahl manners," he affirmed. And on their behalf he added

that night a special prayer to the usual quarter of an hour's supplication

before meat, and would have tacked another to the end of the grace, had not

his young mistress broken in upon him with a hurried command that he must run

down the road, and, wherever Heathcliff had rambled, find and make him

re-enter directly!

"I want to speak to him, and I must, before I go upstairs," she said. "And the

gate is open: he is somewhere out of hearing, for he would not reply, though I

shouted at the top of the fold as loud as I could."

Joseph objected at first; she was too much in earnest, however, to suffer

contradiction; and at last he placed his hat on his head, and walked grumbling

forth. Meantime, Catherine paced up and down the floor, exclaiming -

"I wonder where he is -I wonder where he can be! What did I say, Nelly? I've

forgotten. Was he vexed at my bad humour this afternoon? Dear! tell me what

I've said to grieve him? I do wish he'd come. I do wish he would!"

"What a noise for nothing!" I cried, though rather uneasy myself. "What a

trifle scares you! It's surely no great cause of alarm that Heathcliff should

take a moonlight saunter on the moors, or even lie too sulky to speak to us in

the hayloft. I'll engage he's lurking there. See if I don't ferret him out!"

I departed to renew my search; its result was disappointment, and Joseph's

quest ended in the same.

"Yon lad gets war un war!" observed he on re-entering. "He's left th' yate ut

t' full swing, and miss's pony has trodden dahn two rigs uh corn, un plottered

through, raight o'er intuh t' meadow! Hahsomdiver, t' maister 'ull play t'

devil to-morn, and he'll do weel. He's patience itsseln wi' sich careless,

offald craters -patience itsseln he is! Bud he'll nut be soa allus -yah's see,

all on ye! Yah mumn't drive him aht uf his heead fur nowt!"

"Have you found Heathcliff, you ass?" interrupted Catherine. "Have you been

looking for him, as I ordered?"

"Aw sud more likker look for th' horse," he replied. "It 'ud be tuh more

sense. Bud, Aw can look for norther horse nur man uf a neeght loike this -as

black as t' chimbley! und Hathecliff's noan t' chap tuh coom ut maw whistle

-happen he'll be less hard uh hearing wi' ye!"

It was a very dark evening for summer: the clouds appeared inclined to

thunder, and I said we had better all sit down; the approaching rain would be

certain to bring him home without further trouble. However, Catherine would

not be persuaded into tranquillity. She kept wandering to and fro, from the

gate to the door, in a state of agitation which permitted no repose; and at

length took up a permanent position on one side of the wall, near the road;

where, heedless of my expostulations and the growling thunder, and the great

drops that began to plash around her, she remained, calling at intervals, and

then listening, and then crying outright. She beat Hareton, or any child, at a

good passionate fit of crying.

About midnight, while we still sat up, the storm came rattling over the

Heights in full fury. There was a violent wind, as well as thunder, and either

one or the other split a tree off at the corner of the building: a huge bough

fell across the roof, and knocked down a portion of the east chimney-stack,

sending a clatter of stones and soot into the kitchen fire. We thought a bolt

had fallen in the middle of us, and Joseph swung on to his knees, beseeching

the Lord to remember the patriarchs Noah and Lot, and, as in former times,

spare the righteous, though He smote the ungodly. I felt some sentiment that

it must be a judgment on us also. The Jonah, in my mind, was Mr. Earnshaw; and

I shook the handle of his den that I might ascertain if he were yet living. He

replied audibly enough, in a fashion which made my companion vociferate, more

clamorously than before, that a wide distinction might be drawn between saints

like himself and sinners like his master. But the uproar passed away in twenty

minutes, leaving us all unharmed; excepting Cathy, who got thoroughly drenched

for her obstinacy in refusing to take shelter, and standing bonnetless and

shawlless to catch as much water as she could with her hair and clothes. She

came in and lay down on the settle, all soaked as she was, turning her face to

the back, and putting her hands before it.

"Well, Miss!" I exclaimed, touching her shoulder; "you are not bent on getting

your death, are you? Do you know what o'clock it is? Half-past twelve. Come,

come to bed! there's no use waiting longer on that foolish boy: he'll be gone

to Gimmerton, and he'll stay there now. He guesses we shouldn't wait for him

till this late hour; at least, he guesses that only Mr. Hindley would be up;

and he'd rather avoid having the door opened by the master."

"Nay, nay, he's noan at Gimmerton!" said Joseph. "Aw's niver wonder, bud he's

at t' bothom of a bog-hoile. This visitation worn't for nowt, und Aw wod hev

ye tuh look aht, Miss -yah muh be t' next. Thank Hivin for all! All warks

togither for gooid tuh them as is chozzen, and piked aht froo' th' rubbidge!

Yah knaw whet t' Scripture ses -" And he began quoting several texts,

referring us to the chapters and verses where we might find them.

I, having vainly begged the wilful girl to rise and remove her wet things,

left him preaching and her shivering, and betook myself to bed with little

Hareton, who slept as fast as if every one had been sleeping round him. I

heard Joseph read on a while afterwards; then I distinguished his slow step on

the ladder, and then I dropped asleep.

Coming down somewhat later than usual, I saw, by the sunbeams piercing the

chinks of the shutters, Miss Catherine still seated near the fireplace. The

house door was ajar, too; light entered from its unclosed windows; Hindley had

come out, and stood on the kitchen hearth, haggard and drowsy.

"What ails you, Cathy?" he was saying when I entered; "you look as dismal as a

drowned whelp. Why are you so damp and pale, child?"

"I've been wet," she answered reluctantly, "and I'm cold, that's all."

"Oh, she is naughty!" I cried, perceiving the master to be tolerably sober.

"She got steeped in the shower of yesterday evening, and there she has sat the

night through, and I couldn't prevail on her to stir."

Mr. Earnshaw stared at us in surprise. "The night through," he repeated. "What

kept her up? not fear of the thunder, surely? That was over hours since."

Neither of us wished to mention Heathcliff's absence, as long as we could

conceal it; so I replied, I didn't know how she took it into her head to sit

up; and she said nothing. The morning was fresh and cool; I threw back the

lattice, and presently the room filled with sweet scents from the garden; but

Catherine called peevishly to me, "Ellen, shut the window. I'm starving!" And

her teeth chattered as she shrunk closer to the almost extinguished embers.

"She's ill," said Hindley, taking her wrist; "I suppose that's the reason she

would not go to bed. Damn it! I don't want to be troubled with more sickness

here. What took you into the rain?"

"Running after t' lads, as usuald!" croaked Joseph, catching an opportunity,

from our hesitation, to thrust in his evil tongue. "If Aw wur yah, maister,

Aw'd just slam t' boards i' their faces all on 'em, gentle and simple! Never a

day ut yah're off, but yon cat uh Linton comes sneaking hither; and Miss

Nelly, shoo's a fine lass! shoo sits watching for ye i' t' kitchen; and as

yah're in at one door, he's aht at t' other; und, then, wer grand lady goes a

coorting uf hor side! It's bonny behaviour, lurking amang t' fields, after

twelve ut' night, wi' that fahl, flaysome divil uf a gypsy, Heathcliff! They

think Aw'm blind; but Aw'm noan, nowt ut t' soart! Aw seed young Linton, boath

coming and going, and Aw seed yah" (directing his discourse to me), "yah gooid

fur nowt, slattenly witch! nip up und bolt intuh th' hahs, t' minute yah heard

t' maister's horse fit clatter up t' road."

"Silence, eavesdropper!" cried Catherine; "none of your insolence, before me!

Edgar Linton came yesterday, by chance, Hindley; and it was I who told him to

be off; because I knew you would not like to have met him as you were."

"You lie, Cathy, no doubt," answered her brother, "and you are a confounded

simpleton! But never mind Linton at present: tell me, were you not with

Heathcliff last night? Speak the truth, now. You need not be afraid of harming

him: though I hate him as much as ever, he did me a good turn a short time

since, that will make my conscience tender of breaking his neck. To prevent

it, I shall send him about his business, this very morning; and after he's

gone, I'd advise you to look sharp: I shall only have the more humour for you."

"I never saw Heathcliff last night," answered Catherine, beginning to sob

bitterly; "and if you do turn him out of doors, I'll go with him. But,

perhaps, you'll never have an opportunity: perhaps he's gone." Here she burst

into uncontrollable grief, and the remainder of her words were inarticulate.

Hindley lavished on her a torrent of scornful abuse, and bade her get to her

room immediately, or she shouldn't cry for nothing! I obliged her to obey; and

I shall never forget what a scene she acted when we reached her chamber: it

terrified me. I thought she was going mad, and I begged Joseph to run for the

doctor. It proved the commencement of delirium; Mr. Kenneth, as soon as he saw

her, pronounced her dangerously ill; she had a fever. He bled her, and he told

me to let her live on whey and water-gruel, and take care she did not throw

herself downstairs or out of the window; and then he left, for he had enough

to do in the parish, where two or three miles was the ordinary distance

between cottage and cottage.

Though I cannot say I made a gentle nurse, and Joseph and the master were no

better, and though our patient was as wearisome and headstrong as a patient

could be, she weathered it through. Old Mrs. Linton paid us several visits, to

be sure, and set things to rights, and scolded and ordered us all; and when

Catherine was convalescent, she insisted on conveying her to Thrushcross

Grange; for which deliverance we were very grateful. But the poor dame had

reason to repent of her kindness: she and her husband both took the fever, and

died within a few days of each other.

Our young lady returned to us, saucier and more passionate, and haughtier than

ever. Heathcliff had never been heard of since the evening of the

thunderstorm; and one day I had the misfortune, when she had provoked me

exceedingly, to lay the blame of his disappearance on her, -where indeed it

belonged, as she well knew. From that period, for several months, she ceased

to hold any communication with me, save in the relation of a mere servant.

Joseph fell under a ban also: he would speak his mind, and lecture her all the

same as if she were a little girl; and she esteemed herself a woman, and our

mistress, and thought that her recent illness gave her a claim to be treated

with consideration. Then the doctor had said that she would not bear crossing

much, she ought to have her own way; and it was nothing less than murder in

her eyes for any one to presume to stand up and contradict her. From Mr.

Earnshaw and his companions she kept aloof; and tutored by Kenneth, and

serious threats of a fit that often attended her rages, her brother allowed

her whatever she pleased to demand, and generally avoided aggravating her

fiery temper. He was rather too indulgent in humouring her caprices; not from

affection, but from pride: he wished earnestly to see her bring honour to the

family by an alliance with the Lintons, and as long as she let him alone she

might trample us like slaves, for aught he cared! Edgar Linton, as multitudes

have been before and will be after him, was infatuated; and believed himself

the happiest man alive on the day he led her to Gimmerton Chapel, three years

subsequent to his father's death.

Much against my inclination, I was persuaded to leave Wuthering Heights and

accompany her here. Little Hareton was nearly five years old, and I had just

begun to teach him his letters. We made a sad parting; but Catherine's tears

were more powerful than ours. When I refused to go, and when she found her

entreaties did not move me, she went lamenting to her husband and brother. The

former offered me munificent wages; the latter ordered me to pack up: he

wanted no women in the house, he said, now that there was no mistress; and as

to Hareton, the curate should take him in hand, by and bye. And so I had but

one choice left: to do as I was ordered. I told the master he got rid of all

decent people only to run to ruin a little faster; I kissed Hareton good-bye;

and since then he has been a stranger, -and it's very queer to think it, but

I've no doubt he has completely forgotten all about Ellen Dean, and that he

was ever more than all the world to her, and she to him!

At this point of the housekeeper's story, she chanced to glance towards the

timepiece over the chimney; and was in amazement on seeing the minute-hand

measure half-past one. She would not hear of staying a second longer; in

truth, I felt rather disposed to defer the sequel of her narrative myself. And

now that she is vanished to her rest, and I have meditated for another hour or

two, I shall summon courage to go, also, in spite of aching laziness of head

and limbs.

Chapter 10

A charming introduction to a hermit's life! Four weeks' torture, tossing, and

sickness! Oh, these bleak winds and bitter northern skies, and impassable

roads, and dilatory country surgeons! And, oh, this dearth of the human

physiognomy! and, worse than all, the terrible intimation of Kenneth that I

need not expect to be out of doors till spring!

Mr. Heathcliff has just honoured me with a call. About seven days ago he sent

me a brace of grouse -the last of the season. Scoundrel! He is not altogether

guiltless in this illness of mine; and that I had a great mind to tell him.

But, alas! how could I offend a man who was charitable enough to sit at my

bedside a good hour, and talk on some other subject than pills and draughts,

blisters and leeches? This is quite an easy interval. I am too weak to read;

yet I feel as if I could enjoy something interesting. Why not have up Mrs.

Dean to finish her tale? I can recollect its chief incidents, as far as she

had gone. Yes, I remember her hero had run off, and never been heard of for

three years; and the heroine was married. I'll ring; she'll be delighted to

find me capable of talking cheerfully.

Mrs. Dean came.

"It wants twenty minutes, sir, to taking the medicine," she commenced.

"Away, away with it!" I replied; "I desire to have -"

"The doctor says you must drop the powders."

"With all my heart! Don't interrupt me. Come and take your seat here. Keep

your fingers from that bitter phalanx of vials. Draw your knitting out of your

pocket -that will do -now continue the history of Mr. Heathcliff, from where

you left off, to the present day. Did he finish his education on the

Continent, and come back a gentleman? or did he get a sizar's place at

college, or escape to America, and earn honours by drawing blood from his

foster-country? or make a fortune more promptly, on the English highways?"

"He may have done a little in all these vocations, Mr. Lockwood; but I

couldn't give my word for any. I stated before that I didn't know how he

gained his money; neither am I aware of the means he took to raise his mind

from the savage ignorance into which it was sunk; but, with your leave, I'll

proceed in my own fashion, if you think it will amuse and not weary you. Are

you feeling better this morning?"

"Much."

"That's good news."

I got Miss Catherine and myself to Thrushcross Grange; and, to my agreeable

disappointment, she behaved infinitely better than I dared to expect. She

seemed almost overfond of Mr. Linton; and even to his sister she showed plenty

of affection. They were both very attentive to her comfort, certainly. It was

not the thorn bending to the honeysuckles, but the honeysuckles embracing the

thorn. There were no mutual concessions, -one stood erect, and the other

yielded; and who can be ill-natured and bad-tempered when they encounter

neither opposition nor indifference? I observed that Mr. Edgar had a

deep-rooted fear of ruffling her humour. He concealed it from her; but if ever

he heard me answer sharply, or saw any other servant grow cloudy at some

imperious order of hers, he would show his trouble by a frown of displeasure

that never darkened on his own account. He many a time spoke sternly to me

about my pertness, and averred that the stab of a knife could not inflict a

worse pang than he suffered at seeing his lady vexed. Not to grieve a kind

master, I learned to be less touchy; and, for the space of half a year, the

gunpowder lay as harmless as sand, because no fire came near to explode it.

Catherine had seasons of gloom and silence now and then: they were respected

with sympathizing silence by her husband, who ascribed them to an alteration

in her constitution, produced by her perilous illness, as she was never

subject to depression of spirits before. The return of sunshine was welcomed

by answering sunshine from him. I believe I may assert that they were really

in possession of deep and growing happiness.

It ended. Well, we must be for ourselves in the long run; the mild and

generous are only more justly selfish than the domineering; and it ended when

circumstances caused each to feel that the one's interest was not the chief

consideration in the other's thoughts. On a mellow evening in September, I was

coming from the garden with a heavy basket of apples which I had been

gathering. It had got dusk, and the moon looked over the high wall of the

court, causing undefined shadows to lurk in the corners of the numerous

projecting portions of the building. I set my burden on the house steps by the

kitchen door, and lingered to rest, and drew in a few more breaths of the

soft, sweet air; my eyes were on the moon, and my back to the entrance, when I

heard a voice behind me say -

"Nelly, is that you?"

It was a deep voice, and foreign in tone; yet there was something in the

manner of pronouncing my name which made it sound familiar. I turned about to

discover who spoke, fearfully; for the doors were shut, and I had seen nobody

on approaching the steps. Something stirred in the porch, and, moving nearer,

I distinguished a tall man dressed in dark clothes, with dark face and hair.

He leant against the side, and held his fingers on the latch as if intending

to open for himself. "Who can it be?" I thought. "Mr. Earnshaw? Oh, no! The

voice has no resemblance to his."

"I have waited here an hour," he resumed, while I continued staring, "and the

whole of that time all round has been as still as death. I dared not enter.

You do not know me? Look, I'm not a stranger!"

A ray fell on his features; the cheeks were sallow, and half covered with

black whiskers; the brows lowering, the eyes deep set and singular. I

remembered the eyes.

"What!" I cried, uncertain whether to regard him as a worldly visitor, and I

raised my hands in amazement. "What! you come back? Is it really you? Is it?"

"Yes, Heathcliff," he replied, glancing from me up to the windows, which

reflected a score of glittering moons, but showed no lights from within. "Are

they at home? where is she? Nelly, you are not glad! you needn't be so

disturbed. Is she here? Speak! I want to have one word with her -your

mistress. Go, and say some person from Gimmerton desires to see her."

"How will she take it?" I exclaimed. "What will she do? The surprise bewilders

me -it will put her out of her head! And you are Heathcliff! But altered! Nay,

there's no comprehending it. Have you been for a soldier?"

"Go and carry my message," he interrupted impatiently. "I'm in hell till you

do!"

He lifted the latch, and I entered; but when I got to the parlour where Mr.

and Mrs. Linton were, I could not persuade myself to proceed. At length, I

resolved on making an excuse to ask if they would have the candles lighted,

and I opened the door.

They sat together in a window whose lattice lay back against the wall, and

displayed, beyond the garden trees and the wild green park, the valley of

Gimmerton, with a long line of mist winding nearly to its top (for very soon

after you pass the chapel, as you may have noticed, the sough that runs from

the marshes joins a beck which follows the bend of the glen). Wuthering

Heights rose above this silvery vapour; but our old house was invisible; it

rather dips down on the other side. Both the room and its occupants, and the

scene they gazed on, looked wondrously peaceful. I shrank reluctantly from

performing my errand, and was actually going away leaving it unsaid, after

having put my question about the candles, when a sense of my folly compelled

me to return, and mutter, "A person from Gimmerton wishes to see you, ma'am."

"What does he want?" asked Mrs. Linton.

"I did not question him," I answered.

"Well, close the curtains, Nelly," she said; "and bring up tea. I'll be back

again directly."

She quitted the apartment; Mr. Edgar inquired, carelessly, who it was.

"Some one mistress does not expect," I replied. "That Heathcliff -you

recollect him, sir -who used to live at Mr. Earnshaw's."

"What! the gypsy -the ploughboy?" he cried. "Why did you not say so to

Catherine?"

"Hush! you must not call him by those names, master," I said. "She'd be sadly

grieved to hear you. She was nearly heartbroken when he ran off. I guess his

return will make a jubilee to her."

Mr. Linton walked to a window on the other side of the room that overlooked

the court. He unfastened it, and leant out. I suppose they were below, for he

exclaimed quickly, "Don't stand there, love! Bring the person in, if it be any

one particular." Ere long, I heard the click of the latch, and Catherine flew

upstairs, breathless and wild; too excited to show gladness: indeed, by her

face, you would rather have surmised an awful calamity.

"Oh, Edgar, Edgar!" she panted, flinging her arms round his neck. "Oh, Edgar,

darling! Heathcliff's come back -he is!" And she tightened her embrace to a

squeeze.

"Well, well," cried her husband crossly, "don't strangle me for that! He never

struck me as such a marvellous treasure. There is no need to be frantic!"

"I know you didn't like him," she answered, repressing a little the intensity

of her delight. "Yet, for my sake, you must be friends now. Shall I tell him

to come up?"

"Here?" he said. "Into the parlour?"

"Where else?" she asked.

He looked vexed, and suggested the kitchen as a more suitable place for him.

Mrs. Linton eyed him with a droll expression -half angry, half laughing at his

fastidiousness.

"No," she added, after a while; "I cannot sit in the kitchen. Set two tables

here, Ellen: one for your master and Miss Isabella, being gentry; the other

for Heathcliff and myself, being of the lower orders. Will that please you,

dear? Or must I have a fire lighted elsewhere? If so, give directions. I'll

run down and secure my guest. I'm afraid the joy is too great to be real!"

She was about to dart off again; but Edgar arrested her.

"You bid him step up," he said, addressing me; "and, Catherine, try to be

glad, without being absurd! the whole household need not witness the sight of

your welcoming a runaway servant as a brother."

I descended, and found Heathcliff waiting under the porch, evidently

anticipating an invitation to enter. He followed my guidance without waste of

words, and I ushered him into the presence of the master and mistress, whose

flushed cheeks betrayed signs of warm talking. But the lady's glowed with

another feeling when her friend appeared at the door; she sprang forward, took

both his hands, and led him to Linton; and then she seized Linton's reluctant

fingers and crushed them into his. Now fully revealed by the fire and

candlelight, I was amazed, more than ever, to behold the transformation of

Heathcliff. He had grown a tall, athletic, well-formed man, beside whom my

master seemed quite slender and youthlike. His upright carriage suggested the

idea of his having been in the army. His countenance was much older in

expression and decision of feature than Mr. Linton's; it looked intelligent,

and retained no marks of former degradation. A half-civilized ferocity lurked

yet in the depressed brows and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued;

and his manner was even dignified, -quite divested of roughness, though too

stern for grace. My master's surprise equalled or exceeded mine: he remained

for a minute at a loss how to address the ploughboy, as he had called him.

Heathcliff dropped his slight hand, and stood looking at him coolly till he

chose to speak.

"Sit down, sir," he said, at length. "Mrs. Linton, recalling old times, would

have me give you a cordial reception; and, of course, I am gratified when

anything occurs to please her."

"And I also," answered Heathcliff; "especially if it be anything in which I

have a part. I shall stay an hour or two willingly."

He took a seat opposite Catherine, who kept her gaze fixed on him as if she

feared he would vanish were she to remove it. He did not raise his to her

often: a quick glance now and then sufficed; but it flashed back, each time

more confidently, the undisguised delight he drank from hers. They were too

much absorbed in their mutual joy to suffer embarrassment. Not so Mr. Edgar:

he grew pale with pure annoyance, -a feeling that reached its climax when his

lady rose, and stepping across the rug, seized Heathcliff's hands again, and

laughed like one beside herself.

"I shall think it a dream tomorrow!" she cried. "I shall not be able to

believe that I have seen, and touched, and spoken to you once more. And yet,

cruel Heathcliff! you don't deserve this welcome. To be absent and silent for

three years, and never to think of me!"

"A little more than you have thought of me," he murmured. "I heard of your

marriage, Cathy, not long since; and, while waiting in the yard below, I

meditated this plan: -just to have one glimpse of your face, a stare of

surprise, perhaps, and pretended pleasure; afterwards settle my score with

Hindley; and then prevent the law by doing execution on myself. Your welcome

has put these ideas out of my mind; but beware of meeting me with another

aspect next time! Nay, you'll not drive me off again. You were really sorry

for me, were you? Well, there was cause. I've fought through a bitter life

since I last heard your voice; and you must forgive me, for I struggled only

for you!"

"Catherine, unless we are to have cold tea, please to come to the table,"

interrupted Linton, striving to preserve his ordinary tone, and a due measure

of politeness. "Mr. Heathcliff will have a long walk, wherever he may lodge

tonight; and I'm thirsty."

She took her post before the urn; and Miss Isabella came, summoned by the

bell; then, having handed their chairs forward, I left the room. The meal

hardly endured ten minutes. Catherine's cup was never filled, -she could

neither eat nor drink. Edgar had made a slop in his saucer, and scarcely

swallowed a mouthful. Their guest did not protract his stay that evening above

an hour longer. I asked, as he departed, if he went to Gimmerton.

"No, to Wuthering Heights," he answered: "Mr. Earnshaw invited me, when I

called this morning."

Mr. Earnshaw invited him! and he called on Mr. Earnshaw! I pondered this

sentence painfully, after he was gone. Is he turning out a bit of a hypocrite,

and coming into the country to work mischief under a cloak? I mused: I had a

presentiment in the bottom of my heart that he had better have remained away.

About the middle of the night, I was awakened from my first nap by Mrs. Linton

gliding into my chamber, taking a seat on my bedside, and pulling me by the

hair to rouse me.

"I cannot rest, Ellen," she said, by way of apology. "And I want some living

creature to keep me company in my happiness! Edgar is sulky, because I'm glad

of a thing that does not interest him: he refuses to open his mouth, except to

utter pettish, silly speeches; and he affirmed I was cruel and selfish for

wishing to talk when he was so sick and sleepy. He always contrives to be sick

at the least cross! I gave a few sentences of commendation to Heathcliff, and

he, either for a headache or a pang of envy, began to cry; so I got up and

left him."

"What use is it praising Heathcliff to him?" I answered. "As lads they had an

aversion to each other, and Heathcliff would hate just as much to hear him

praised: it's human nature. Let Mr. Linton alone about him, unless you would

like an open quarrel between them."

"But does it not show great weakness?" pursued she. "I'm not envious; I never

feel hurt at the brightness of Isabella's yellow hair and the whiteness of her

skin, at her dainty elegance, and the fondness all the family exhibit for her.

Even you, Nelly, if we have a dispute sometimes, you back Isabella at once;

and I yield like a foolish mother, -I call her a darling, and flatter her into

a good temper. It pleases her brother to see us cordial, and that pleases me.

But they are very much alike: they are spoiled children, and fancy the world

was made for their accommodation; and though I humour both, I think a smart

chastisement might improve them, all the same."

"You're mistaken, Mrs. Linton," said I. "They humour you: I know what there

would be to do if they did not. You can well afford to indulge their passing

whims as long as their business is to anticipate all your desires. You may,

however, fall out, at last, over something of equal consequence to both sides;

and then those you term weak are very capable of being as obstinate as you."

"And then we shall fight to the death, shan't we, Nelly?" she returned,

laughing. "No! I tell you, I have such faith in Linton's love, that I believe

I might kill him, and he wouldn't wish to retaliate."

I advised her to value him the more for his affection.

"I do," she answered; "but he needn't resort to whining for trifles. It is

childish; and, instead of melting into tears because I said that Heathcliff

was now worthy of any one's regard, and it would honour the first gentleman in

the country to be his friend, he ought to have said it for me, and been

delighted from sympathy. He must get accustomed to him, and he may as well

like him: considering how Heathcliff has reason to object to him, I'm sure he

behaved excellently!"

"What do you think of his going to Wuthering Heights?" I inquired. "He is

reformed in every respect, apparently: quite a Christian, offering the right

hand of fellowship to his enemies all around!"

"He explained it," she replied. "I wondered as much as you. He said he called

to gather information concerning me from you, supposing you resided there

still; and Joseph told Hindley, who came out and fell to questioning him of

what he had been doing, and how he had been living; and finally, desired him

to walk in. There were some persons sitting at cards; Heathcliff joined them;

my brother lost some money to him, and, finding him plentifully supplied, he

requested that he would come again in the evening, to which he consented.

Hindley is too reckless to select his acquaintance prudently: he doesn't

trouble himself to reflect on the causes he might have for mistrusting one

whom he has basely injured. But Heathcliff affirms his principal reason for

resuming a connection with his ancient persecutor is a wish to install himself

in quarters at walking distance from the Grange, and an attachment to the

house where we lived together; and likewise a hope that I shall have more

opportunities of seeing him there than I could have if he settled in

Gimmerton. He means to offer liberal payment for permission to lodge at the

Heights; and doubtless my brother's covetousness will prompt him to accept the

terms, -he was always greedy; though what he grasps with one hand he flings

away with the other."

"It's a nice place for a young man to fix his dwelling in!" said I. "Have you

no fear of the consequences, Mrs. Linton?"

"None for my friend," she replied; "his strong head will keep him from danger;

a little for Hindley, but he can't be made morally worse than he is; and I

stand between him and bodily harm. The event of this evening has reconciled me

to God and humanity! I had risen in angry rebellion against Providence. Oh,

I've endured very, very bitter misery, Nelly! If that creature knew how

bitter, he'd be ashamed to cloud its removal with idle petulance. It was

kindness for him which induced me to bear it alone: had I expressed the agony

I frequently felt, he would have been taught to long for its alleviation as

ardently as I. However, it's over, and I'll take no revenge on his folly; I

can afford to suffer anything hereafter! Should the meanest thing alive slap

me on the cheek, I'd not only turn the other, but I'd ask pardon for provoking

it; and, as a proof, I'll go make my peace with Edgar instantly. Good-night!

I'm an angel!"

In this self-complacent conviction she departed; and the success of her

fulfilled resolution was obvious on the morrow: Mr. Linton had not only

abjured his peevishness (though his spirits seemed still subdued by

Catherine's exuberance of vivacity), but he ventured no objection to her

taking Isabella with her to Wuthering Heights in the afternoon; and she

regarded him with such a summer of sweetness and affection in return, as made

the house a paradise for several days; both master and servants profiting from

the perpetual sunshine.

Heathcliff -Mr. Heathcliff I should say in future -used the liberty of

visiting at Thrushcross Grange cautiously, at first: he seemed estimating how

far its owner would bear his intrusion. Catherine, also, deemed it judicious

to moderate her expressions of pleasure in receiving him; and he gradually

established his right to be expected. He retained a great deal of the reserve

for which his boyhood was remarkable; and that served to repress all startling

demonstrations of feeling. My master's uneasiness experienced a lull, and

further circumstances diverted it into another channel for a space.

His new source of trouble sprang from the not anticipated misfortune of

Isabella Linton evincing a sudden and irresistible attraction towards the

tolerated guest. She was at that time a charming young lady of eighteen;

infantile in manners, though possessed of keen wit, keen feelings, and a keen

temper, too, if irritated. Her brother, who loved her tenderly, was appalled

at this fantastic preference. Leaving aside the degradation of an alliance

with a nameless man, and the possible fact that his property, in default of

heirs male, might pass into such a one's power, he had sense to comprehend

Heathcliff's disposition, -to know that, though his exterior was altered, his

mind was unchangeable, and unchanged. And he dreaded that mind, -it revolted

him; he shrank forebodingly from the idea of committing Isabella to its

keeping. He would have recoiled still more had he been aware that her

attachment rose unsolicited, and was bestowed where it awakened no

reciprocation of sentiment; for the minute he discovered its existence, he

laid the blame on Heathcliff's deliberate designing.

We had all remarked, during some time, that Miss Linton fretted and pined over

something. She grew cross and wearisome, snapping at and teasing Catherine

continually, at the imminent risk of exhausting her limited patience. We

excused her, to a certain extent, on the plea of ill-health: she was dwindling

and fading before our eyes. But one day, when she had been particularly

wayward, rejecting her breakfast, complaining that the servants did not do

what she told them; that the mistress would allow her to be nothing in the

house, and Edgar neglected her; that she had caught a cold with the doors

being left open, and we let the parlour fire go out on purpose to vex her,

with a hundred yet more frivolous accusations, Mrs. Linton peremptorily

insisted that she should go to bed; and, having scolded her heartily,

threatened to send for the doctor. Mention of Kenneth caused her to exclaim,

instantly, that her health was perfect, and it was only Catherine's harshness

which made her unhappy.

"How can you say I am harsh, you naughty fondling?" cried the mistress, amazed

at the unreasonable assertion. "You are surely losing your reason. When have I

been harsh, tell me?"

"Yesterday," sobbed Isabella, "and now!"

"Yesterday!" said her sister-in-law. "On what occasion?"

"In our walk along the moor: you told me to ramble where I pleased, while you

sauntered on with Mr. Heathcliff!"

"And that's your notion of harshness?" said Catherine, laughing. "It was no

hint that your company was superfluous: we didn't care whether you kept with

us or not; I merely thought Heathcliff's talk would have nothing entertaining

for your ears."

"Oh no," wept the young lady; "you wished me away, because you know I liked to

be there!"

"Is she sane?" asked Mrs. Linton, appealing to me. "I'll repeat our

conversation, word for word, Isabella, and you point out any charm it could

have had for you."

"I don't mind the conversation," she answered. "I wanted to be with -"

"Well!" said Catherine, perceiving her hesitate to complete the sentence.

"With him; and I won't be always sent off!" she continued, kindling up. "You

are a dog in the manger, Cathy, and desire no one to be loved but yourself!"

"You are an impertinent little monkey!" exclaimed Mrs. Linton, in surprise.

"But I'll not believe this idiocy! It is impossible that you can covet the

admiration of Heathcliff -that you can consider him an agreeable person! I

hope I have misunderstood you, Isabella?"

"No, you have not," said the infatuated girl. "I love him more than ever you

loved Edgar; and he might love me, if you would let him!"

"I wouldn't be you for a kingdom, then!" Catherine declared, emphatically; and

she seemed to speak sincerely. "Nelly, help me to convince her of her madness.

Tell her what Heathcliff is, -an unreclaimed creature, without refinement,

without cultivation; an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone. I'd as soon

put that little canary into the park on a winter's day, as recommend you to

bestow your heart on him! It is deplorable ignorance of his character, child,

and nothing else, which makes that dream enter your head. Pray, don't imagine

that he conceals depths of benevolence and affection beneath a stern exterior!

He's not a rough diamond -a pearl-containing oyster of a rustic: he's a

fierce, pitiless, wolfish man. I never say to him, `Let this or that enemy

alone, because it would be ungenerous or cruel to harm them'; I say, `Let them

alone, because I should hate them to be wronged'; and he'd crush you like a

sparrow's egg, Isabella, if he found you a troublesome charge. I know he

couldn't love a Linton; and yet he'd be quite capable of marrying your fortune

and expectations! avarice is growing with him a besetting sin. There's my

picture; and I'm his friend -so much so, that had he thought seriously to

catch you, I should, perhaps, have held my tongue, and let you fall into his

trap."

Miss Linton regarded her sister-in-law with indignation.

"For shame! for shame!" she repeated angrily, "you are worse than twenty foes,

you poisonous friend!"

"Ah! you won't believe me, then?" said Catherine. "You think I speak from

wicked selfishness?"

"I'm certain you do," retorted Isabella, "and I shudder at you!"

"Good!" cried the other. "Try for yourself, if that be your spirit: I have

done, and yield the argument to your saucy insolence."

"And I must suffer for her egotism!" she sobbed, as Mrs. Linton left the room.

"All, all is against me; she has blighted my single consolation. But she

uttered falsehoods, didn't she? Mr. Heathcliff is not a fiend; he has an

honourable soul, and a true one, or how could he remember her?"

"Banish him from your thoughts, Miss," I said. "He's a bird of bad omen: no

mate for you. Mrs. Linton spoke strongly, and yet I can't contradict her. She

is better acquainted with his heart than I, or any one besides, and she never

would represent him as worse than he is. Honest people don't hide their deeds.

How has he been living? how has he got rich? why is he staying at Wuthering

Heights, the house of a man whom he abhors? They say Mr. Earnshaw is worse and

worse since he came. They sit up all night together continually, and Hindley

has been borrowing money on his land, and does nothing but play and drink: I

heard only a week ago -it was Joseph who told me -I met him at Gimmerton:

`Nelly,' he said, `we's hae a Crahnr's 'quest enah, at ahr folks. One on 'em's

a'most getten his finger cut off wi' hauding t' other froo' sticking hisseln

loike a cawlf. That's maister, yah knaw, ut's soa up uh going tuh t' grand

'sizes. He's noan feard uh t' Bench uh judges, norther Paul, nur Peter, nur

John, nor Matthew, nor noan on 'em, nut he! He fair likes he langs tuh set his

brazened face agean 'em! And yon bonny lad Heathcliff, yah mind, he's a rare

un! He can girn a laugh as well's onybody at a raight divil's jest. Does he

niver say nowt of his fine living amang us, when he goas tuh t' Grange? This

is t' way on 't: -up at sun-dahn; dice, brandy, cloised shutters, und

can'le-leeght till next day, at nooin; then, t' fooil gangs banning un raving

tuh his cham'er, makking dacent fowks dig thur fingers i' thur lugs fur varry

shaume; un the knave, wah, he can cahnt his brass, un ate, un sleep, un off

tuh his neighbour's tuh gossip wi' t' wife. I' course, he tells Dame Catherine

hah hor father's goold runs intuh his pocket, and her fathur's son gallops

dahn t' Broad road, while he flees afore tuh oppen t' pikes?' Now, Miss

Linton, Joseph is an old rascal, but no liar; and, if his account of

Heathcliff's conduct be true, you would never think of desiring such a

husband, would you?"

"You are leagued with the rest, Ellen!" she replied. "I'll not listen to your

slanders. What malevolence you must have to wish to convince me that there is

no happiness in the world!"

Whether she would have got over this fancy if left to herself, or persevered

in nursing it perpetually, I cannot say: she had little time to reflect. The

day after, there was a justice-meeting at the next town; my master was obliged

to attend; and Mr. Heathcliff, aware of his absence, called rather earlier

than usual. Catherine and Isabella were sitting in the library, on hostile

terms, but silent. The latter alarmed at her recent indiscretion, and the

disclosure she had made of her secret feelings in a transient fit of passion;

the former, on mature consideration, really offended with her companion; and,

if she laughed again at her pertness, inclined to make it no laughing matter

to her. She did laugh as she saw Heathcliff pass the window. I was sweeping

the hearth, and I noticed a mischievous smile on her lips. Isabella, absorbed

in her meditations, or a book, remained till the door opened; and it was too

late to attempt an escape, which she would gladly have done had it been

practicable.

"Come in, that's right!" exclaimed the mistress gaily, pulling a chair to the

fire. "Here are two people sadly in need of a third to thaw the ice between

them; and you are the very one we should both of us choose. Heathcliff, I'm

proud to show you, at last, somebody that dotes on you more than myself. I

expect you to feel flattered. Nay, it's not Nelly; don't look at her! My poor

little sister-in-law is breaking her heart by mere contemplation of your

physical and moral beauty. It lies in your own power to be Edgar's brother!

No, no, Isabella, you shan't run off," she continued, arresting, with feigned

playfulness, the confounded girl, who had risen indignantly. "We were

quarrelling like cats about you, Heathcliff; and I was fairly beaten in

protestations of devotion and admiration; and, moreover, I was informed that

if I would but have the manners to stand aside, my rival, as she will have

herself to be, would shoot a shaft into your soul that would fix you for ever,

and send my image into eternal oblivion!"

"Catherine!" said Isabella, calling up her dignity, and disdaining to struggle

from the tight grasp that held her. "I'd thank you to adhere to the truth and

not slander me, even in joke! Mr. Heathcliff, be kind enough to bid this

friend of yours release me: she forgets that you and I are not intimate

acquaintances; and what amuses her is painful to me beyond expression."

As the guest answered nothing, but took his seat, and looked thoroughly

indifferent what sentiments she cherished concerning him, she turned and

whispered an earnest appeal for liberty to her tormentor.

"By no means!" cried Mrs. Linton in answer. "I won't be named a dog in the

manger again. You shall stay: now then! Heathcliff, why don't you evince

satisfaction at my pleasant news? Isabella swears that the love Edgar has for

me is nothing to that she entertains for you. I'm sure she made some speech of

the kind; did she not, Ellen? And she has fasted ever since the day before

yesterday's walk, from sorrow and rage that I despatched her out of your

society under the idea of its being unacceptable."

"I think you belie her," said Heathcliff, twisting his chair to face them.

"She wishes to be out of my society now, at any rate!"

And he stared hard at the object of discourse, as one might do at a strange

repulsive animal, -a centipede from the Indies, for instance, which curiosity

leads one to examine in spite of the aversion it raises. The poor thing

couldn't bear that: she grew white and red in rapid succession, and, while

tears beaded her lashes, bent the strength of her small fingers to loosen the

firm clutch of Catherine; and perceiving that as fast as she raised one finger

off her arm another closed down, and she could not remove the whole together,

she began to make use of her nails, and their sharpness presently ornamented

the detainer's with crescents of red.

"There's a tigress!" exclaimed Mrs. Linton, setting her free, and shaking her

hand with pain. "Begone, for God's sake, and hide your vixen face! How foolish

to reveal those talons to him. Can't you fancy the conclusions he'll draw?

Look, Heathcliff! they are instruments that will do execution -you must beware

of your eyes."

"I'd wrench them off her fingers, if they ever menaced me," he answered

brutally, when the door had closed after her. "But what did you mean by

teasing the creature in that manner, Cathy? You were not speaking the truth,

were you?"

"I assure you I was," she returned. "She has been pining for your sake several

weeks; and raving about you this morning, and pouring forth a deluge of abuse,

because I represented your failings in a plain light, for the purpose of

mitigating her adoration. But don't notice it further: I wished to punish her

sauciness, that's all. I like her too well, my dear Heathcliff, to let you

absolutely seize and devour her up."

"And I like her too ill to attempt it," said he, "except in a very ghoulish

fashion. You'd hear of odd things if I lived alone with that mawkish, waxen

face; the most ordinary would be painting on its white the colours of the

rainbow, and turning the blue eyes black, every day or two: they detestably

resemble Linton's."

"Delectably!" observed Catherine. "They are dove's eyes -angel's!"

"She's her brother's heir, is she not?" he asked, after a brief silence.

"I should be sorry to think so," returned his companion. "Half-a-dozen nephews

shall erase her title, please heaven! Abstract your mind from the subject at

present, -you are too prone to covet your neighbour's goods; remember this

neighbour's goods are mine."

"If they were mine, they would be none the less that," said Heathcliff; "but

though Isabella Linton may be silly, she is scarcely mad; and, in short, we'll

dismiss the matter, as you advise."

From their tongues, they did dismiss it; and Catherine, probably, from her

thoughts. The other, I felt certain, recalled it often in the course of the

evening. I saw him smile to himself -grin rather -and lapse into ominous

musing whenever Mrs. Linton had occasion to be absent from the apartment.

I determined to watch his movements. My heart invariably cleaved to the

master's, in preference to Catherine's side, -with reason I imagined, for he

was kind, and trustful, and honourable; and she -she could not be called the

opposite, yet she seemed to allow herself such wide latitude, that I had

little faith in her principles, and still less sympathy for her feelings. I

wanted something to happen which might have the effect of freeing both

Wuthering Heights and the Grange of Mr. Heathcliff, quietly; leaving us as we

had been prior to his advent. His visits were a continual nightmare to me;

and, I suspected, to my master also. His abode at the Heights was an

oppression past explaining. I felt that God had forsaken the stray sheep there

to its own wicked wanderings, and an evil beast prowled between it and the

fold, waiting his time to spring and destroy.

Chapter 11

Sometimes, while meditating on these things in solitude, I've got up in a

sudden terror, and put on my bonnet to go and see how all was at the farm.

I've persuaded my conscience that it was a duty to warn him how people talked

regarding his ways; and then I've recollected his confirmed bad habits, and,

hopeless of benefiting him, have flinched from re-entering the dismal house,

doubting if I could bear to be taken at my word.

One time I passed the old gate, going out of my way, on a journey to

Gimmerton. It was about the period that my narrative has reached: a bright

frosty afternoon, the ground bare, and the road hard and dry. I came to a

stone where the highway branches off on to the moor at your left hand; a rough

sand-pillar, with the letters W.H. cut on its north side, on the east, G., and

on the southwest, T. G. It serves as guide-post to the Grange, and Heights,

and village. The sun shone yellow on its grey head, reminding me of summer;

and I cannot say why, but all at once a gush of child's sensations flowed into

my heart. Hindley and I held it a favourite spot twenty years before. I gazed

long at the weather-worn block, and, stooping down, perceived a hole near the

bottom still full of snail-shells and pebbles, which we were fond of storing

there with more perishable things; and, as fresh as reality, it appeared that

I beheld my early playmate seated on the withered turf: his dark, square head

bent forward, and his little hand scooping out the earth with a piece of

slate. "Poor Hindley!" I exclaimed involuntarily. I started: my bodily eye was

cheated into a momentary belief that the child lifted its face and stared

straight into mine! It vanished in a twinkling; but immediately I felt an

irrestible yearning to be at the Heights. Superstition urged me to comply with

this impulse: supposing he should be dead! I thought -or should die soon!

-supposing it were a sign of death! The nearer I got to the house the more

agitated I grew; and on catching sight of it I trembled in every limb. The

apparition had outstripped me: it stood looking through the gate. That was my

first idea on observing an elf-locked, brown-eyed boy setting his ruddy

countenance against the bars. Further reflection suggested this must be

Hareton, my Hareton, not altered greatly since I left him, ten months since.

"God bless thee, darling!" I cried, forgetting instantaneously my foolish

fears. "Hareton, it's Nelly! Nelly, thy nurse."

He retreated out of arm's length, and picked up a large flint.

"I am come to see thy father, Hareton," I added, guessing from the action that

Nelly, if she lived in his memory at all, was not recognized as one with me.

He raised his missile to hurl it; I commenced a soothing speech, but could not

stay the hand: the stone struck my bonnet; and then ensued, from the

stammering lips of the little fellow, a string of curses, which, whether he

comprehended them or not, were delivered with practised emphasis, and

distorted his baby features into a shocking expression of malignity. You may

be certain this grieved more than angered me. Fit to cry, I took an orange

from my pocket, and offered it to propitiate him. He hesitated, and then

snatched it from my hold, as if he fancied I only intended to tempt and

disappoint him. I showed another, keeping it out of his reach.

"Who has taught you those fine words, my bairn?" I inquired. "The curate?"

"Damn the curate, and thee! Gie me that," he replied.

"Tell us where you got your lessons, and you shall have it," said I. "Who's

your master?"

"Devil daddy," was his answer.

"And what do you learn from daddy?" I continued.

He jumped at the fruit; I raised it higher. "What does he teach you?" I asked.

"Naught," said he, "but to keep out of his gait. Daddy cannot bide me, because

I swear at him."

"Ah! and the devil teaches you to swear at daddy?" I observed.

"Ay -nay," he drawled.

"Who, then?"

"Heathcliff."

I asked if he liked Mr. Heathcliff.

"Ay!" he answered again.

Desiring to have his reasons for liking him, I could only gather the sentences

-"I known't: he pays dad back what he gies to me -he curses daddy for cursing

me. He says I mun do as I will."

"And the curate does not teach you to read and write, then?" I pursued.

"No, I was told the curate should have his -- teeth dashed down his -- throat,

if he stepped over the threshold -Heathcliff had promised that!"

I put the orange in his hand, and bade him tell his father that a woman called

Nelly Dean was waiting to speak with him, by the garden gate. He went up the

walk, and entered the house; but, instead of Hindley, Heathcliff appeared on

the doorstones; and I turned directly and ran down the road as hard as ever I

could race, making no halt till I gained the guide-post, and feeling as scared

as if I had raised a goblin. This is not much connected with Miss Isabella's

affair; except that it urged me to resolve further on mounting vigilant guard,

and doing my utmost to check the spread of such bad influence at the Grange,

even though I should wake a domestic storm, by thwarting Mrs. Linton's pleasure.

The next time Heathcliff came, my young lady chanced to be feeding some

pigeons in the court. She had never spoken a word to her sister-in-law for

three days; but she had likewise dropped her fretful complaining, and we found

it a great comfort. Heathcliff had not the habit of bestowing a single

unnecessary civility on Miss Linton, I knew. Now, as soon as he beheld her,

his first precaution was to take a sweeping survey of the house-front. I was

standing by the kitchen window, but I drew out of sight. He then stepped

across the pavement to her, and said something; she seemed embarrassed, and

desirous of getting away; to prevent it, he laid his hand on her arm. She

averted her face: he apparently put some question which she had no mind to

answer. There was another rapid glance at the house, and supposing himself

unseen, the scoundrel had the impudence to embrace her.

"Judas! traitor!" I ejaculated. "You are a hypocrite, too, are you? A

deliberate deceiver."

"Who is, Nelly?" said Catherine's voice at my elbow; I had been over-intent on

watching the pair outside to mark her entrance.

"Your worthless friend!" I answered warmly; "the sneaking rascal yonder. Ah,

he has caught a glimpse of us -he is coming in! I wonder will he have the art

to find a plausible excuse for making love to Miss, when he told you he hated

her?"

Mrs. Linton saw Isabella tear herself free, and run into the garden; and a

minute after, Heathcliff opened the door. I couldn't withhold giving some

loose to my indignation; but Catherine angrily insisted on silence, and

threatened to order me out of the kitchen, if I dared to be so presumptuous as

to put in my insolent tongue.

"To hear you, people might think you were the mistress!" she cried. "You want

setting down in your right place! Heathcliff, what are you about, raising this

stir? I said you must let Isabella alone! -I beg you will, unless you are

tired of being received here, and wish Linton to draw the bolts against you!"

"God forbid that he should try!" answered the black villain. I detested him

just then. "God keep him meek and patient! Every day I grow madder after

sending him to heaven!"

"Hush!" said Catherine, shutting the inner door. "Don't vex me. Why have you

disregarded my request? Did she come across you on purpose?"

"What is it to you?" he growled. "I have a right to kiss her, if she chooses;

and you have no right to object. I'm not your husband: you needn't be jealous

of me!"

"I'm not jealous of you," replied the mistress; "I'm jealous for you. Clear

your face; you shan't scowl at me! If you like Isabella, you shall marry her.

But do you like her? Tell the truth, Heathcliff! There, you won't answer. I'm

certain you don't!"

"And would Mr. Linton approve of his sister marrying that man?" I inquired.

"Mr. Linton should approve," returned my lady decisively.

"He might spare himself the trouble," said Heathcliff: "I could do as well

without his approbation. And as to you, Catherine, I have a mind to speak a

few words now, while we are at it. I want you to be aware that I know you have

treated me infernally -infernally! Do you hear? And if you flatter yourself

that I don't perceive it, you are a fool; and if you think I can be consoled

by sweet words, you are an idiot; and if you fancy I'll suffer unrevenged,

I'll convince you of the contrary, in a very little while! Meantime, thank you

for telling me your sister-in-law's secret: I swear I'll make the most of it.

And stand you aside!"

"What new phase of his character is this?" exclaimed Mrs. Linton, in

amazement. "I've treated you infernally -and you'll take revenge! How will you

take it, ungrateful brute? How have I treated you infernally?"

"I seek no revenge on you," replied Heathcliff less vehemently. "That's not

the plan. The tyrant grinds down his slaves and they don't turn against him;

they crush those beneath them. You are welcome to torture me to death for your

amusement, only allow me to amuse myself a little in the same style, and

refrain from insult as much as you are able. Having levelled my palace, don't

erect a hovel and complacently admire your own charity in giving me that for a

home. If I imagined you really wished me to marry Isabella, I'd cut my throat!"

"Oh, the evil is that I am not jealous, is it?" cried Catherine. "Well, I

won't repeat my offer of a wife: it is as bad as offering Satan a lost soul.

Your bliss lies, like his, in inflicting misery. You prove it. Edgar is

restored from the ill-temper he gave way to at your coming; I begin to be

secure and tranquil; and you, restless to know us at peace, appear resolved on

exciting a quarrel. Quarrel with Edgar, if you please, Heathcliff, and deceive

his sister: you'll hit on exactly the most efficient method of revenging

yourself on me."

The conversation ceased. Mrs. Linton sat down by the fire, flushed and gloomy.

The spirit which served her was growing intractable, -she could neither lay

nor control it. He stood on the hearth with folded arms, brooding on his evil

thoughts; and in this position I left them to seek the master, who was

wondering what kept Catherine below so long.

"Ellen," said he, when I entered. "have you seen your mistress?"

"Yes; she's in the kitchen, sir," I answered. "She's sadly put out by Mr.

Heathcliff's behaviour; and, indeed, I do think it's time to arrange his

visits on another footing. There's harm in being too soft, and now it's come

to this -" And I related the scene in the court, and, as near as I dared, the

whole subsequent dispute. I fancied it could not be very prejudicial to Mrs.

Linton, unless she made it so afterwards, by assuming the defensive for her

guest. Edgar Linton had difficulty in hearing me to the close. His first words

revealed that he did not clear his wife of blame.

"This is insufferable!" he exclaimed. "It is disgraceful that she should own

him for a friend, and force his company on me! Call me two men out of the

hall, Ellen. Catherine shall linger no longer to argue with the low ruffian -I

have humoured her enough."

He descended, and bidding the servants wait in the passage, went, followed by

me, to the kitchen. Its occupants had recommenced their angry discussion: Mrs.

Linton, at least, was scolding with renewed vigour; Heathcliff had moved to

the window, and hung his head, somewhat cowed by her violent rating

apparently. He saw the master first, and made a hasty motion that she should

be silent; which she obeyed, abruptly, on discovering the reason of his

intimation.

"How is this?" said Linton, addressing her; "what notion of propriety must you

have to remain here, after the language which has been held to you by that

blackguard? I suppose, because it is his ordinary talk, you think nothing of

it; you are habituated to his baseness, and, perhaps, imagine I can get used

to it too!"

"Have you been listening at the door, Edgar?" asked the mistress, in a tone

particularly calculated to provoke her husband, implying both carelessness and

contempt of his irritation. Heathcliff, who had raised his eyes at the former

speech, gave a sneering laugh at the latter; on purpose, it seemed, to draw

Mr. Linton's attention to him. He succeeded; but Edgar did not mean to

entertain him with any high flights of passion.

"I have been so far forbearing with you, sir," he said quietly; "not that I

was ignorant of your miserable, degraded character, but I felt you were only

partly responsible for that; and Catherine wishing to keep up your

acquaintance, I acquiesced -foolishly. Your presence is a moral poison that

would contaminate the most virtuous: for that cause, and to prevent worse

consequences, I shall deny you hereafter admission into this house, and give

notice now that I require your instant departure. Three minutes' delay will

render it involuntary and ignominious."

Heathcliff measured the height and breadth of the speaker with an eye full of

derision.

"Cathy, this lamb of yours threatens like a bull!" he said. "It is in danger

of splitting its skull against my knuckles. By God! Mr. Linton, I'm mortally

sorry that you are not worth knocking down!"

My master glanced towards the passage, and signed me to fetch the men: he had

no intention of hazarding a personal encounter. I obeyed the hint; but Mrs.

Linton, suspecting something, followed; and when I attempted to call them, she

pulled me back, slammed the door to, and locked it.

"Fair means!" she said, in answer to her husband's look of angry surprise. "If

you have not the courage to attack him, make an apology, or allow yourself to

be beaten. It will correct you of feigning more valour than you possess. No,

I'll swallow the key before you shall get it! I'm delightfully rewarded for my

kindness to each! After constant indulgence of one's weak nature, and the

other's bad one, I earn, for thanks, two samples of blind ingratitude, stupid

to absurdity! Edgar, I was defending you and yours; and I wish Heathcliff may

flog you sick, for daring to think an evil thought of me!"

It did not need the medium of a flogging to produce that effect on the master.

He tried to wrest the key from Catherine's grasp, and for safety she flung it

into the hottest part of the fire; whereupon Mr. Edgar was taken with a

nervous trembling, and his countenance grew deadly pale. For his life he could

not avert that access of emotion; mingled anguish and humiliation overcame him

completely. He leant on the back of a chair, and covered his face.

"Oh, heavens! In old days this would win you knighthood!" exclaimed Mrs.

Linton. "We are vanquished! we are vanquished! Heathcliff would as soon lift a

finger at you as a king would march his army against a colony of mice. Cheer

up! you shan't be hurt! Your type is not a lamb, it's a sucking leveret."

"I wish you joy of the mild-blooded coward, Cathy!" said her friend. "I

compliment you on your taste. And that is the slavering, shivering thing you

preferred to me! I would not strike him with my fist, but I'd kick him with my

foot, and experience considerable satisfaction. Is he weeping, or is he going

to faint for fear?"

The fellow approached and gave the chair on which Linton rested a push. He'd

better have kept his distance; my master quickly sprang erect, and struck him

full on the throat a blow that would have levelled a slighter man. It took his

breath for a minute; and, while he choked, Mr. Linton walked out by the back

door into the yard, and from thence to the front entrance.

"There! you've done with coming here," cried Catherine. "Get away, now; he'll

return with a brace of pistols, and half-a-dozen assistants. If he did

overhear us, of course he'd never forgive you. You've played me an ill turn,

Heathcliff! But, go -make haste! I'd rather see Edgar at bay than you."

"Do you suppose I'm going with that blow burning in my gullet?" he thundered.

"By hell, no! I'll crush his ribs in like a rotten hazelnut before I cross the

threshold! If I don't floor him now, I shall murder him some time; so, as you

value his existence, let me get at him!"

"He is not coming," I interposed, framing a bit of a lie. "There's the

coachman, and the two gardeners; you'll surely not wait to be thrust into the

road by them! Each has a bludgeon; and master will, very likely, be watching

from the parlour windows to see that they fulfill his orders."

The gardeners and coachman were there; but Linton was with them. They had

already entered the court. Heathcliff, on second thoughts, resolved to avoid a

struggle against three underlings: he seized the poker, smashed the lock from

the inner door, and made his escape as they tramped in.

Mrs. Linton, who was very much excited, bade me accompany her upstairs. She

did not know my share in contributing to the disturbance, and I was anxious to

keep her in ignorance.

"I'm nearly distracted, Nelly!" she exclaimed, throwing herself on the sofa.

"A thousand smiths' hammers are beating in my head! Tell Isabella to shun me;

this uproar is owing to her; and should she or any one else aggravate my anger

at present, I shall get wild. And, Nelly, say to Edgar, if you see him again

tonight, that I'm in danger of being seriously ill. I wish it may prove true.

He has startled and distressed me shockingly! I want to frighten him. Besides,

he might come and begin a string of abuse or complainings; I'm certain I

should recriminate, and God knows where we should end! Will you do so, my good

Nelly? You are aware that I am no way blameable in this matter. What possessed

him to turn listener? Heathcliff's talk was outrageous, after you left us; but

I could soon have diverted him from Isabella, and the rest meant nothing. Now,

all is dashed wrong by the fool's craving to hear evil of self that haunts

some people like a demon! Had Edgar never gathered our conversation, he would

never have been the worse for it. Really, when he opened on me in that

unreasonable tone of displeasure, after I had scolded Heathcliff till I was

hoarse for him, I did not care, hardly, what they did to each other;

especially as I felt that, however the scene closed, we should all be driven

asunder for nobody knows how long! Well, if I cannot keep Heathcliff for my

friend -if Edgar will be mean and jealous, I'll try to break their hearts by

breaking my own. That will be a prompt way of finishing all, when I am pushed

to extremity! But it's a deed to be reserved for a forlorn hope; I'd not take

Linton by surprise with it. To this point he has been discreet in dreading to

provoke me; you must represent the peril of quitting that policy, and remind

him of my passionate temper, verging, when kindled, on frenzy. I wish you

could dismiss that apathy out of your countenance, and look rather more

anxious about me!"

The stolidity with which I received these instructions was, no doubt, rather

exasperating; for they were delivered in perfect sincerity; but I believed a

person who could plan the turning of her fits of passion to account,

beforehand, might, by exerting her will, manage to control herself tolerably,

even while under their influence; and I did not wish to "frighten" her

husband, as she said, and multiply his annoyances for the purpose of serving

her selfishness. Therefore I said nothing when I met the master coming towards

the parlour; but I took the liberty of turning back to listen whether they

would resume their quarrel together. He began to speak first.

"Remain where you are, Catherine," he said, without any anger in his voice,

but with much sorrowful despondency. "I shall not stay. I am neither come to

wrangle nor be reconciled; but I wish just to learn whether, after this

evening's events, you intend to continue your intimacy with -"

"Oh, for mercy's sake," interrupted the mistress, stamping her foot, "for

mercy's sake, let us hear no more of it now! Your cold blood cannot be worked

into a fever, -your veins are full of ice-water; but mine are boiling, and the

sight of such chillness makes them dance."

"To get rid of me, answer my question," persevered Mr. Linton. "You must

answer it; and that violence does not alarm me. I have found that you can be

as stoical as any one, when you please. Will you give up Heathcliff hereafter,

or will you give up me? It is impossible for you to be my friend and his at

the same time, and I absolutely require to know which you choose."

"I require to be let alone!" exclaimed Catherine furiously. "I demand it!

Don't you see I can scarcely stand? Edgar, you -you leave me!"

She rung the bell till it broke with a twang; I entered leisurely. It was

enough to try the temper of a saint, such senseless, wicked rages! There she

lay dashing her head against the arm of the sofa, and grinding her teeth, so

that you might fancy she would crash them to splinters! Mr. Linton stood

looking at her in sudden compunction and fear. He told me to fetch some water.

She had no breath for speaking. I brought a glass full; and, as she would not

drink, I sprinkled it on her face. In a few seconds she stretched herself out

stiff, and turned up her eyes, while her cheeks, at once blanched and livid,

assumed the aspect of death. Linton looked terrified.

"There is nothing in the world the matter," I whispered. I did not want him to

yield, though I could not help being afraid in my heart.

"She has blood on her lips!" he said, shuddering.

"Never mind!" I answered tartly. And I told him how she had resolved, previous

to his coming, on exhibiting a fit of frenzy. I incautiously gave the account

aloud, and she heard me; for she started up -her hair flying over her

shoulders, her eyes flashing, the muscles of her neck and arms standing out

preternaturally. I made up my mind for broken bones, at least; but she only

glared about her for an instant, and then rushed from the room. The master

directed me to follow; I did, to her chamber door: she hindered me from going

further by securing it against me.

As she never offered to descend to breakfast next morning, I went to ask

whether she would have some carried up. "No!" she replied peremptorily. The

same question was repeated at dinner and tea; and again on the morrow after,

and received the same answer. Mr. Linton, on his part, spent his time in the

library, and did not inquire concerning his wife's occupations. Isabella and

he had had an hour's interview, during which he tried to elicit from her some

sentiment of proper horror for Heathcliff's advances; but he could make

nothing of her evasive replies, and was obliged to close the examination

unsatisfactorily, adding, however, a solemn warning, that if she were so

insane as to encourage that worthless suitor, it would dissolve all bonds of

relationship between herself and him.

Chapter 12

While Miss Linton moped about the park and garden, always silent, and almost

always in tears; and her brother shut himself up among books that he never

opened -wearying, I guessed, with a continual vague expectation that

Catherine, repenting her conduct, would come of her own accord to ask pardon,

and seek a reconciliation -and she fasted pertinaciously, under the idea,

probably, that at every meal Edgar was ready to choke for her absence, and

pride alone held him from running to cast himself at her feet; I went about my

household duties, convinced that the Grange had but one sensible soul in its

walls, and that lodged in my body. I wasted no condolences on Miss, nor any

expostulations on my mistress; nor did I pay attention to the sighs of my

master, who yearned to hear his lady's name, since he might not hear her

voice. I determined they should come about as they pleased for me; and though

it was a tiresomely slow process, I began to rejoice at length in a faint dawn

of its progress -as I thought at first.

Mrs. Linton, on the third day, unbarred her door, and having finished the

water in her pitcher and decanter, desired a renewed supply, and a basin of

gruel, for she believed she was dying. That I set down as a speech meant for

Edgar's ears; I believed no such thing, so I kept it to myself, and brought

her some tea and dry toast. She ate and drank eagerly; and sank back on her

pillow again, clenching her hands and groaning. "Oh, I will die," she

exclaimed, "since no one cares anything about me. I wish I had not taken

that." Then a good while after I heard her murmur, "No, I'll not die -he'd be

glad -he does not love me at all -he would never miss me!"

"Did you want anything, ma'am?" I inquired, still preserving my external

composure, in spite of her ghastly countenance and strange exaggerated manner.

"What is that apathetic being doing?" she demanded, pushing the thick

entangled locks from her wasted face. "Has he fallen into a lethargy, or is he

dead?"

"Neither," replied I; "if you mean Mr. Linton. He's tolerably well, I think;

though his studies occupy him rather more than they ought: he is continually

among his books, since he has no other society."

I should not have spoken so, if I had known her true condition, but I could

not get rid of the notion that she acted a part of her disorder.

"Among his books!" she cried, confounded. "And I dying! I on the brink of the

grave! My God! does he know how I'm altered?" continued she, staring at her

reflection in a mirror hanging against the opposite wall. "Is that Catherine

Linton? He imagines me in a pet -in play, perhaps. Cannot you inform him that

it is frightful earnest? Nelly, if it be not too late, as soon as I learn how

he feels, I'll choose between these two: either to starve at once -that would

be no punishment unless he had a heart -or to recover, and leave the country.

Are you speaking the truth about him now? Take care. Is he actually so utterly

indifferent for my life?"

"Why, ma'am," I answered, "the master has no idea of your being deranged; and

of course he does not fear that you will let yourself die of hunger."

"You think not? Cannot you tell him I will?" she returned. "Persuade him!

speak of your own mind: say you are certain I will!"

"No, you forget, Mrs. Linton," I suggested, "that you have eaten some food

with a relish this evening, and tomorrow you will perceive its good effects."

"If I were only sure it would kill him," she interrupted, "I'd kill myself

directly! These three awful nights, I've never closed my lids -and oh, I've

been tormented! I've been haunted, Nelly! But I begin to fancy you don't like

me. How strange! I thought, though everybody hated and despised each other,

they could not avoid loving me. And they have all turned to enemies in a few

hours: they have, I'm positive, -the people here. How dreary to meet death,

surrounded by their cold faces! Isabella, terrified and repelled, afraid to

enter the room, it would be so terrible to watch Catherine go. And Edgar

standing solemnly by to see it over; then offering prayers of thanks to God

for restoring peace to his house, and going back to his books! What in the

name of all that feels has he to do with books, when I am dying?"

She could not bear the notion which I had put into her head of Mr. Linton's

philosophical resignation. Tossing about, she increased her feverish

bewilderment to madness, and tore the pillow with her teeth; then raising

herself up all burning, desired that I would open the window. We were in the

middle of winter, the wind blew strong from the northeast, and I objected.

Both the expressions flitting over her face, and the changes of her moods,

began to alarm me terribly, and brought to my recollection her former illness,

and the doctor's injunction that she should not be crossed. A minute

previously she was violent; now, supported on one arm, and not noticing my

refusal to obey her, she seemed to find childish diversion in pulling the

feathers from the rents she had just made, and ranging them on the sheet

according to their different species: her mind had strayed to other

associations.

"That's a turkey's," she murmured to herself, "and this is a wild duck's, and

this is a pigeon's. Ah, they put pigeon's feathers in the pillows -no wonder I

couldn't die! Let me take care to throw it on the floor when I lie down. And

here is a moorcock's; and this -I should know it among a thousand -it's a

lapwing's. Bonny bird, -wheeling over our heads in the middle of the moor. It

wanted to get to its nest, for the clouds had touched the swells, and it felt

rain coming. This feather was picked up from the heath, the bird was not shot;

we saw its nest in the winter, full of little skeletons. Heathcliff set a trap

over it, and the old ones dare not come. I made him promise he'd never shoot a

lapwing after that, and he didn't. Yes, here are more! Did he shoot my

lapwings, Nelly? Are they red, any of them? Let me look."

"Give over with that baby-work!" I interrupted, dragging the pillow away, and

turning the holes towards the mattress, for she was removing its contents by

handfuls. "Lie down and shut your eyes: you're wandering. There's a mess! The

down is flying about like snow."

I went here and there collecting it.

"I see in you, Nelly," she continued dreamily, "an aged woman: you have grey

hair and bent shoulders. This bed is the fairy cave under Penistone Crag, and

you are gathering elf-bolts to hurt our heifers, pretending, while I am near,

that they are only locks of wool. That's what you'll come to fifty years

hence: I know you are not so now. I'm not wandering, you're mistaken, or else

I should believe you really were that withered hag, and I should think I was

under Penistone Crag; and I'm conscious it's night, and there are two candles

on the table making the black press shine like jet."

"The black press? where is that?" I asked. "You are talking in your sleep!"

"It's against the wall, as it always is," she replied. "It does appear odd -I

see a face in it!"

"There is no press in the room, and never was," said I, resuming my seat, and

looping up the curtain that I might watch her.

"Don't you see that face?" she inquired, gazing earnestly at the mirror.

And say what I could, I was incapable of making her comprehend it to be her

own; so I rose and covered it with a shawl.

"It's behind there still!" she pursued anxiously. "And it stirred. Who is it?

I hope it will not come out when you are gone! Oh! Nelly, the room is haunted!

I'm afraid of being alone!"

I took her hand in mine, and bid her be composed; for a succession of shudders

convulsed her frame, and she would keep straining her gaze towards the glass.

"There's nobody here!" I insisted. It was yourself, Mrs. Linton, -you knew it

a while since."

"Myself!" she gasped, "and the clock is striking twelve! It's true, then!

That's dreadful!"

Her fingers clutched the clothes, and gathered them over her eyes. I attempted

to steal to the door with an intention of calling her husband; but I was

summoned back by a piercing shriek -the shawl had dropped from the frame.

"Why, what is the matter?" cried I. "Who is coward now? Wake up! That is the

glass -the mirror, Mrs. Linton; and you see yourself in it, and there am I

too, by your side."

Trembling and bewildered, she held me fast, but the horror gradually passed

from her countenance; its paleness gave place to a glow of shame.

"Oh, dear! I thought I was at home," she sighed. "I thought I was lying in my

chamber at Wuthering Heights. Because I'm weak, my brain got confused, and I

screamed unconsciously. Don't say anything; but stay with me. I dread

sleeping: my dreams appal me."

"A sound sleep would do you good, ma'am," I answered; "and I hope this

suffering will prevent your trying starving again."

"Oh, if I were but in my own bed in the old house!" she went on bitterly,

wringing her hands. "And that wind sounding in the firs by the lattice. Do let

me feel it -it comes straight down the moor -do let me have one breath!"

To pacify her, I held the casement ajar a few seconds. A cold blast rushed

through; I closed it, and returned to my post. She lay still now, her face

bathed in tears. Exhaustion of body had entirely subdued her spirit, -our

fiery Catherine was no better than a wailing child.

"How long is it since I shut myself in here?" she asked, suddenly reviving.

"It was Monday evening," I replied, "and this is Thursday night, or rather

Friday morning, at present."

"What! of the same week?" she exclaimed. "Only that brief time?"

"Long enough to live on nothing but cold water and ill-temper," observed I.

"Well, it seems a weary number of hours," she muttered doubtfully; "it must be

more. I remember being in the parlour after they had quarrelled, and Edgar

being cruelly provoking, and me running into this room desperate. As soon as

ever I had barred the door, utter blackness overwhelmed me, and I fell on the

floor. I couldn't explain to Edgar how certain I felt of having a fit, or

going raging mad, if he persisted in teasing me! I had no command of tongue,

or brain, and he did not guess my agony, perhaps; it barely left me sense to

try to escape from him and his voice. Before I recovered sufficiently to see

and hear, it began to be dawn, and, Nelly, I'll tell you what I thought, and

what has kept recurring and recurring till I feared for my reason. I thought

as I lay there, with my head against that table leg, and my eyes dimly

discerning the grey square of the window, that I was enclosed in the

oak-panelled bed at home; and my heart ached with some great grief which, just

waking, I could not recollect. I pondered, and worried myself to discover what

it could be, and, most strangely, the whole last seven years of my life grew a

blank! I did not recall that they had been at all. I was a child; my father

was just buried, and my misery arose from the separation that Hindley had

ordered between me and Heathcliff. I was laid alone, for the first time; and,

rousing from a dismal doze after a night of weeping, I lifted my hand to push

the panels aside, -it struck the tabletop! I swept it along the carpet, and

then memory burst in -my late anguish was swallowed in a paroxysm of despair.

I cannot say why I felt so wildly wretched, -it must have been temporary

derangement, for there is scarcely cause. But, supposing at twelve years old I

had been wrenched from the Heights, and every early association, and my all in

all, as Heathcliff was at that time, and been converted at a stroke into Mrs.

Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange, and the wife of a stranger, -an exile,

and outcast, thenceforth, from what had been my world -You may fancy a glimpse

of the abyss where I grovelled! Shake your head as you will, Nelly, you have

helped to unsettle me! You should have spoken to Edgar, indeed you should, and

compelled him to leave me quiet! Oh, I'm burning! I wish I were out of doors!

I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free; and laughing at

injuries, not maddening under them! Why am I so changed? why does my blood

rush into a hell of tumult at a few words? I'm sure I should be myself were I

once among the heather on those hills. Open the window again wide, fasten it

open! Quick, why don't you move?"

"Because I won't give you your death of cold," I answered.

"You won't give me a chance of life, you mean," she said sullenly. "However,

I'm not helpless yet; I'll open it myself."

And sliding from the bed before I could hinder her, she crossed the room,

walking very uncertainly, threw it back, and bent out, careless of the frosty

air that cut about her shoulders as keen as a knife. I entreated, and finally

attempted to force her to retire. But I soon found her delirious strength much

surpassed mine (she was delirious, I became convinced by her subsequent

actions and ravings). There was no moon, and everything beneath lay in misty

darkness: not a light gleamed from any house, far or near -all had been

extinguished long ago; and those at Wuthering Heights were never visible

-still she asserted she caught their shining.

"Look!" she cried eagerly, "that's my room with the candle in it, and the

trees swaying before it; and the other candle is in Joseph's garret. Joseph

sits up late, doesn't he? He's waiting till I come home that he may lock the

gate. Well, he'll wait a while yet. It's a rough journey, and a sad heart to

travel it; and we must pass by Gimmerton Kirk, to go that journey! We've

braved its ghosts often together, and dared each other to stand among the

graves and ask them to come. But Heathcliff, if I dare you now, will you

venture? If you do, I'll keep you. I'll not lie there by myself: they may bury

me twelve feet deep, and throw the church down over me, but I won't rest till

you are with me. I never will!"

She paused, and resumed with a strange smile. "He's considering -he'd rather

I'd come to him! Find a way, then! not through that kirkyard. You are slow! Be

content, you always followed me!"

Perceiving it vain to argue against her insanity, I was planning how I could

reach something to wrap about her, without quitting my hold of herself (for I

could not trust her alone by the gaping lattice), when, to my consternation, I

heard the rattle of the door-handle, and Mr. Linton entered. He had only then

come from the library; and, in passing through the lobby, had noticed our

talking and been attracted by curiosity, or fear, to examine what it

signified, at that late hour.

"Oh, sir!" I cried, checking the exclamation risen to his lips at the sight

which met him, and the bleak atmosphere of the chamber. "My poor Mistress is

ill, and she quite masters me; I cannot manage her at all; pray, come and

persuade her to go to bed. Forget your anger, for she's hard to guide any way

but her own."

"Catherine ill?" he said, hastening to us. "Shut the window, Ellen! Catherine!

why -"

He was silent. The haggardness of Mrs. Linton's appearance smote him

speechless, and he could only glance from her to me in horrified astonishment.

"She's been fretting here," I continued, "and eating scarcely anything, and

never complaining; she would admit none of us till this evening, and so we

couldn't inform you of her state, as we were not aware of it ourselves; but it

is nothing."

I felt I uttered my explanations awkwardly; the master frowned. "It is

nothing, is it, Ellen Dean?" he said sternly. "You shall account more clearly

for keeping me ignorant of this!" And he took his wife in his arms, and looked

at her with anguish.

At first she gave him no glance of recognition; he was invisible to her

abstracted gaze. The delirium was not fixed, however; having weaned her eyes

from contemplating the outer darkness, by degrees she centred her attention on

him, and discovered who it was that held her.

"Ah! you are come, are you, Edgar Linton?" she said with angry animation. "You

are one of those things that are ever found when least wanted, and when you

are wanted, never! I suppose we shall have plenty of lamentations now -I see

we shall -but they can't keep me from my narrow home out yonder: my resting

place, where I'm bound before spring is over! There it is: not among the

Lintons, mind, under the chapel-roof, but in the open air, with a headstone;

and you may please yourself, whether you go to them or come to me!"

"Catherine, what have you done?" commenced the master. "Am I nothing to you

any more? Do you love that wretch Heath -"

"Hush!" cried Mrs. Linton. "Hush, this moment! You mention that name and I end

the matter instantly, by a spring from the window! What you touch at present

you may have; but my soul will be on that hilltop before you lay hands on me

again. I don't want you, Edgar, -I'm past wanting you. Return to your books.

I'm glad you possess a consolation, for all you had in me is gone."

"Her mind wanders, sir," I interposed. "She has been talking nonsense the

whole evening; but let her have quiet, and proper attendance, and she'll

rally. Hereafter we must be cautious how we vex her."

"I desire no further advice from you," answered Mr. Linton. "You knew your

mistress's nature, and you encouraged me to harass her. And not to give me one

hint of how she has been these three days! It was heartless! Months of

sickness could not cause such a change!"

I began to defend myself, thinking it too bad to be blamed for another's

wicked waywardness. "I knew Mrs. Linton's nature to be headstrong and

domineering," cried I; "but I didn't know that you wished to foster her fierce

temper! I didn't know that, to humour her, I should wink at Mr. Heathcliff. I

performed the duty of a faithful servant in telling you, and I have got a

faithful servant's wages! Well, it will teach me to be careful next time. Next

time you may gather intelligence for yourself!"

"The next time you bring a tale to me, you shall quit my service, Ellen Dean,"

he replied.

"You'd rather hear nothing about it, I suppose, then, Mr. Linton?" said I.

"Heathcliff has your permission to come a-courting to Miss, and to drop in at

every opportunity your absence offers, on purpose to poison the mistress

against you?"

Confused as Catherine was, her wits were alert at applying our conversation.

"Ah! Nelly has played traitor," she exclaimed passionately. "Nelly is my

hidden enemy. You witch! So you do seek elf-bolts to hurt us! Let me go, and

I'll make her rue! I'll make her howl a recantation!"

A maniac's fury kindled under her brows; she struggled desperately to

disengage herself from Linton's arms. I felt no inclination to tarry the

event; and, resolving to seek medical aid on my own responsibility, I quitted

the chamber.

In passing the garden to reach the road, at a place where a bridle hook is

driven into the wall, I saw something white moved irregularly, evidently by

another agent than the wind. Notwithstanding my hurry, I stayed to examine it,

lest ever after I should have the conviction impressed on my imagination that

it was a creature of the other world. My surprise and perplexity were great to

discover, by touch more than vision, Miss Isabella's springer, Fanny,

suspended to a handkerchief, and nearly at its last gasp. I quickly released

the animal, and lifted it into the garden. I had seen it follow its mistress

upstairs when she went to bed, and wondered much how it could have got out

there, and what mischievous person had treated it so. While untying the knot

round the hook, it seemed to me that I repeatedly caught the beat of horses'

feet galloping at some distance; but there were such a number of things to

occupy my reflections that I hardly gave the circumstance a thought, though it

was a strange sound, in that place, at two o'clock in the morning.

Mr. Kenneth was fortunately just issuing from his house to see a patient in

the village as I came up the street; and my account of Catherine Linton's

malady induced him to accompany me back immediately. He was a plain rough man,

and he made no scruple to speak his doubts of her surviving this second

attack; unless she were more submissive to his directions than she had shown

herself before.

"Nelly Dean," said he, "I can't help fancying there's an extra cause for this.

What has there been to do at the Grange? We've odd reports up here. A stout,

hearty lass like Catherine does not fall ill for a trifle; and that sort of

people should not either. It's hard work bringing them through fevers, and

such things. How did it begin?"

"The master will inform you," I answered; "but you are acquainted with the

Earnshaws' violent dispositions, and Mrs. Linton caps them. I may say this: it

commenced in a quarrel. She was struck during a tempest of passion with a kind

of fit. That's her account, at least; for she flew off in the height of it,

and locked herself up. Afterwards, she refused to eat, and now she alternately

raves and remains in a half-dream, -knowing those about her, but having her

mind filled with all sorts of strange ideas and illusions."

"Mr. Linton will be sorry?" observed Kenneth, interrogatively.

"Sorry? He'll break his heart should anything happen!" I replied. "Don't alarm

him more than necessary."

"Well, I told him to beware," said my companion; "and he must bide the

consequences of neglecting my warning! Hasn't he been thick with Mr.

Heathcliff lately?"

"Heathcliff frequently visits at the Grange," answered I, "though more on the

strength of the mistress having known him when a boy, than because the master

likes his company. At present, he's discharged from the trouble of calling,

owing to some presumptuous aspirations after Miss Linton which he manifested.

I hardly think he'll be taken in again."

"And does Miss Linton turn a cold shoulder on him?" was the doctor's next

question.

"I'm not in her confidence," returned I, reluctant to continue the subject.

"No, she's a sly one," he remarked, shaking his head. "She keeps her own

counsel! But she's a real little fool. I have it from good authority that,

last night (and a pretty night it was!) she and Heathcliff were walking in the

plantation at the back of your house, above two hours; and he pressed her not

to go in again, but just mount his horse and away with him! My informant said

she could only put him off by pledging her word of honour to be prepared on

their first meeting after that: when it was to be, he didn't hear; but you

urge Mr. Linton to look sharp!"

This news filled me with fresh fears; I outstripped Kenneth, and ran most of

the way back. The little dog was yelping in the garden yet. I spared a minute

to open the gate for it, but instead of going to the house door, it coursed up

and down snuffing the grass, and would have escaped to the road, had I not

seized and conveyed it in with me. On ascending to Isabella's room, my

suspicions were confirmed: it was empty. Had I been a few hours sooner, Mrs.

Linton's illness might have arrested her rash step. But what could be done

now? There was a bare possibility of overtaking them if I pursued instantly. I

could not pursue them, however; and I dare not rouse the family, and fill the

place with confusion; still less unfold the business to my master, absorbed as

he was in his present calamity, and having no heart to spare for a second

grief! I saw nothing for it but to hold my tongue, and suffer matters to take

their course; and Kenneth being arrived, I went with a badly composed

countenance to announce him. Catherine lay in a troubled sleep: her husband

had succeeded in soothing the excess of frenzy; he now hung over her pillow,

watching every shade, and every change of her painfully expressive features.

The doctor, on examining the case for himself, spoke hopefully to him of its

having a favourable termination, if we could only preserve around her perfect

and constant tranquillity. To me, he signified the threatening danger was not

so much death, as permanent alienation of intellect.

I did not close my eyes that night, nor did Mr. Linton; indeed, we never went

to bed; and the servants were all up long before the usual hour, moving

through the house with stealthy tread, and exchanging whispers as they

encountered each other in their vocations. Every one was active, but Miss

Isabella; and they began to remark how sound she slept; her brother, too,

asked if she had risen, and seemed impatient for her presence, and hurt that

she showed so little anxiety for her sister-in-law. I trembled lest he should

send me to call her; but I was spared the pain of being the first proclaimant

of her flight. One of the maids, a thoughtless girl, who had been on an early

errand to Gimmerton, came panting upstairs, open-mouthed, and dashed into the

chamber, crying:

"Oh, dear, dear! What mun we have next? Master, master, our young lady -"

"Hold your noise!" cried I hastily, enraged at her clamorous manner.

"Speak lower, Mary -What is the matter?" said Mr. Linton. "What ails your

young lady?"

"She's gone, she's gone! Yon Heathcliff's run off wi' her!" gasped the girl.

"That is not true!" exclaimed Linton, rising in agitation. "It cannot be: how

has the idea entered your head? Ellen Dean, go and seek her. It is incredible,

-it cannot be."

As he spoke he took the servant to the door, and then repeated his demand to

know her reasons for such an assertion.

"Why, I met on the road a lad that fetches milk here," she stammered, "and he

asked whether we weren't in trouble at the Grange. I thought he meant for

missis's sickness, so I answered, yes. Then says he, `They's somebody gone

after 'em, I guess?' I stared. He saw I knew naught about it, and he told how

a gentleman and lady had stopped to have a horse's shoe fastened at a

blacksmith's shop, two miles out of Gimmerton, not very long after midnight!

and how the blacksmith's lass had got up to spy who they were: she knew them

both directly. And she noticed the man -Heathcliff it was, she felt certain,

-nob'dy could mistake him, besides -put a sovereign in her father's hand for

payment. The lady had a cloak about her face; but having desired a sup of

water, while she drank, it fell back, and she saw her very plain. Heathcliff

held both bridles as they rode on, and they set their faces from the village,

and went as fast as the rough roads would let them. The lass said nothing to

her father, but she told it all over Gimmerton this morning."

I ran and peeped, for form's sake, into Isabella's room; confirming, when I

returned, the servant's statement. Mr. Linton had resumed his seat by the bed;

on my re-entrance, he raised his eyes, read the meaning of my blank aspect,

and dropped them without giving an order, or uttering a word.

"Are we to try any measures for overtaking and bringing her back?" I inquired.

"How should we do?"

"She went of her own accord," answered the master; "she had a right to go if

she pleased. Trouble me no more about her. Hereafter she is only my sister in

name: not because I disown her, but because she has disowned me."

And that was all he said on the subject: he did not make a single inquiry

further, or mention her in any way, except directing me to send what property

she had in the house to her fresh home, wherever it was, when I knew it.

Chapter 13

For two months the fugitives remained absent; in those two months, Mrs. Linton

encountered and conquered the worst shock of what was denominated a brain

fever. No mother could have nursed an only child more devotedly than Edgar

tended her. Day and night he was watching, and patiently enduring all the

annoyances that irritable nerves and a shaken reason could inflict; and,

though Kenneth remarked that what he saved from the grave would only

recompense his care by forming the source of constant future anxiety -in fact,

that his health and strength were being sacrificed to preserve a mere ruin of

humanity -he knew no limits in gratitude and joy when Catherine's life was

declared out of danger; and hour after hour he would sit beside her, tracing

the gradual return to bodily health, and flattering his too sanguine hopes

with the illusion that her mind would settle back to its right balance also,

and she would soon be entirely her former self.

The first time she left her chamber was at the commencement of the following

March. Mr. Linton had put on her pillow, in the morning, a handful of golden

crocuses; her eye, long stranger to any gleam of pleasure, caught them in

waking, and shone delighted as she gathered them eagerly together.

"These are the earliest flowers at the Heights," she exclaimed. "They remind

me of soft thaw winds, and warm sunshine, and nearly melted snow. Edgar, is

there not a south wind, and is not the snow almost gone?"

"The snow is quite gone down here, darling," replied her husband; "and I only

see two white spots on the whole range of moors; the sky is blue, and the

larks are singing, and the becks and brooks are all brim full. Catherine, last

spring at this time, I was longing to have you under this roof; now, I wish

you were a mile or two up those hills, -the air blows so sweetly, I feel that

it would cure you."

"I shall never be there but once more," said the invalid; "and then you'll

leave me, and I shall remain for ever. Next spring you'll long again to have

me under this roof, and you'll look back and think you were happy today."

Linton lavished on her the kindest caresses, and tried to cheer her by the

fondest words; but, vaguely regarding the flowers, she let the tears collect

on her lashes and stream down her cheeks unheeding. We knew she was really

better, and, therefore, decided that long confinement to a single place

produced much of this despondency, and it might be partially removed by a

change of scene. The master told me to light a fire in the many-weeks deserted

parlour, and to set an easy-chair in the sunshine by the window; and then he

brought her down, and she sat a long while enjoying the genial heat, and, as

we expected, revived by the objects round her, which, though familiar, were

free from the dreary associations investing her hated sick-chamber. By

evening, she seemed greatly exhausted; yet no arguments could persuade her to

return to that apartment, and I had to arrange the parlour sofa for her bed,

till another room could be prepared. To obviate the fatigue of mounting and

descending the stairs, we fitted up this, where you lie at present, on the

same floor with the parlour; and she was soon strong enough to move from one

to the other, leaning on Edgar's arm. Ah, I thought myself, she might recover,

so waited on as she was. And there was double cause to desire it, for on her

existence depended that of another: we cherished the hope that in a little

while, Mr. Linton's heart would be gladdened, and his lands secured from a

stranger's gripe, by the birth of an heir.

I should mention that Isabella sent to her brother, some six weeks from her

departure, a short note, announcing her marriage with Heathcliff. It appeared

dry and cold; but at the bottom was dotted in with pencil an obscure apology,

and an entreaty for kind remembrance and reconciliation, if her proceeding had

offended him: asserting that she could not help it then, and being done, she

had now no power to repeal it. Linton did not reply to this, I believe; and,

in a fortnight more, I got a long letter which I considered odd, coming from

the pen of a bride just out of the honeymoon. I'll read it; for I keep it yet.

Any relic of the dead is precious, if they were valued living.

Dear Ellen, it begins -

I came last night to Wuthering Heights, and heard, for the first time, that

Catherine has been, and is yet, very ill. I must not write to her, I suppose,

and my brother is either too angry or too distressed to answer what I send

him. Still, I must write to somebody, and the only choice left me is you.

Inform Edgar that I'd give the world to see his face again -that my heart

returned to Thrushcross Grange in twenty-four hours after I left it, and is

there at this moment, full of warm feelings for him, and Catherine! I can't

follow it though -(those words are underlined) they need not expect me, and

they may draw what conclusions they please; taking care, however to lay

nothing at the door of my weak will or deficient affection.

The remainder of the letter is for yourself alone. I want to ask you two

questions: the first is -How did you contrive to preserve the common

sympathies of human nature when you resided here? I cannot recognize any

sentiment which those around share with me.

The second question, I have great interest in; it is this -Is Mr. Heathcliff a

man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil? I shan't tell my reasons for

making this inquiry; but I beseech you to explain, if you can, what I have

married: that is, when you call to see me; and you must call, Ellen, very

soon. Don't write, but come, and bring me something from Edgar.

Now, you shall hear how I have been received in my new home, as I am led to

imagine the Heights will be. It is to amuse myself that I dwell on such

subjects as the lack of external comforts: they never occupy my thoughts,

except at the moment when I miss them. I should laugh and dance for joy, if I

found their absence was the total of my miseries, and the rest was an

unnatural dream!

The sun set behind the Grange, as we turned on to the moors; by that, I judged

it to be six o'clock; and my companion halted half-an-hour, to inspect the

park, and the gardens, and, probably, the place itself, as well as he could;

so it was dark when we dismounted in the paved yard of the farmhouse, and your

old fellow-servant, Joseph, issued out to receive us by the light of a dip

candle. He did it with a courtesy that redounded to his credit. His first act

was to elevate his torch to a level with my face, squint malignantly, project

his under lip, and turn away. Then he took the two horses, and led them into

the stables; reappearing for the purpose of locking the outer gate, as if we

lived in an ancient castle.

Heathcliff stayed to speak to him, and I entered the kitchen -a dingy, untidy

hole; I daresay you would not know it, it is so changed since it was in your

charge. By the fire stood a ruffianly child, strong in limb and dirty in garb,

with a look of Catherine in his eyes and about his mouth.

"This is Edgar's legal nephew," I reflected -"mine in a manner; I must shake

hands, and -yes -I must kiss him. It is right to establish a good

understanding at the beginning."

I approached, and, attempting to take his chubby fist, said:

"How do you do, my dear?"

He replied in a jargon I did not comprehend.

"Shall you and I be friends, Hareton?" was my next essay at conversation.

An oath, and a threat to set Throttler on me if I did not "frame off "

rewarded my perseverance.

"Hey, Throttler, lad!" whispered the little wretch, rousing a half-bred

bulldog from its lair in a corner. "Now, wilt tuh be ganging?" he asked

authoritatively.

Love for my life urged a compliance; I stepped over the threshold to wait till

the others should enter. Mr. Heathcliff was nowhere visible; and Joseph, whom

I followed to the stables, and requested to accompany me in, after staring and

muttering to himself, screwed up his nose and replied:

"Mim! mim! mim! Did iver a Christian body hear owt like it? Minching un

munching! Hah can Aw tell whet ye say?"

"I say, I wish you to come with me into the house!" I cried, thinking him

deaf, yet highly disgusted at his rudeness.

"Nor nuh me! Aw getten summet else to do," he answered, and continued his

work, moving his lantern jaws meanwhile, and surveying my dress and

countenance (the former a great deal too fine, but the latter, I'm sure, as

sad as he could desire) with sovereign contempt.

I walked round the yard, and through a wicket, to another door, at which I

took the liberty of knocking, in hopes some more civil servant might show

himself. After a short suspense, it was opened by a tall, gaunt man, without

neckerchief, and otherwise extremely slovenly; his features were lost in

masses of shaggy hair that hung on his shoulders; and his eyes, too, were like

a ghostly Catherine's, with all their beauty annihilated.

"What's your business here?" he demanded, grimly. "Who are you?"

"My name was Isabella Linton," I replied. "You've seen me before, sire. I'm

lately married to Mr. Heathcliff, and he has brought me here -I suppose by

your permission."

"Is he come back, then?" asked the hermit, glaring like a hungry wolf.

"Yes -we came just now," I said; "but he left me by the kitchen door, and when

I would have gone in, your little boy played sentinel over the place, and

frightened me off by the help of a bulldog."

"It's well the hellish villain has kept his word!" growled my future host,

searching the darkness beyond me in expectation of discovering Heathcliff; and

then he indulged in a soliloquy of execrations, and threats of what he would

have done had the "fiend" deceived him.

I repented having tried this second entrance, and was almost inclined to slip

away before he finished cursing, but ere I could execute that intention, he

ordered me in, and shut and refastened the door. There was a great fire, and

that was all the light in the huge apartment, whose floor had grown a uniform

grey; and the once brilliant pewter dishes, which used to attract my gaze when

I was a girl, partook of a similar obscurity, created by tarnish and dust. I

inquired whether I might call the maid, and be conducted to a bedroom? Mr.

Earnshaw vouchsafed no answer. He walked up and down, with his hands in his

pockets, apparently quite forgetting my presence; and his abstraction was

evidently so deep, and his whole aspect so misanthropical, that I shrank from

disturbing him again.

You'll not be surprised, Ellen, at my feeling particularly cheerless, seated

in worse than solitude on that inhospitable hearth, and remembering that four

miles distant lay my delightful home, containing the only people I loved on

earth; and there might as well be the Atlantic to part us, instead of those

four miles: I could not overpass them! I questioned with myself -where must I

turn for comfort? and -mind you don't tell Edgar, or Catherine -above every

sorrow beside, this rose pre-eminent: despair at finding nobody who could or

would be my ally against Heathcliff! I had sought shelter at Wuthering

Heights, almost gladly, because I was secured by that arrangement from living

alone with him; but he knew the people we were coming amongst, and he did not

fear their intermeddling.

I sat and thought a doleful time; the clock struck eight, and nine, and still

my companion paced to and fro, his head bent on his breast, and perfectly

silent, unless a groan or a bitter ejaculation forced itself out at intervals.

I listened to detect a woman's voice in the house, and filled the interim with

wild regrets and dismal anticipations, which, at last, spoke audibly in

irrepressible sighing and weeping. I was not aware how openly I grieved, till

Earnshaw halted opposite, in his measured walk, and gave me a stare of newly

awakened surprise. Taking advantage of his recovered attention, I exclaimed:

"I'm tired with my journey, and I want to go to bed! Where is the

maid-servant? Direct me to her, as she won't come to me!"

"We have none," he answered; "you must wait on yourself!"

"Where must I sleep then?" I sobbed; I was beyond regarding self-respect,

weighed down by fatigue and wretchedness.

"Joseph will show you Heathcliff's chamber," said he; "open that door -he's in

there."

I was going to obey, but he suddenly arrested me, and added in the strangest

tone:

"Be so good as to turn your lock, and draw your bolt -don't omit it!"

"Well!" I said. "But why, Mr. Earnshaw?" I did not relish the notion of

deliberately fastening myself in with Heathcliff.

"Look here!" he replied, pulling from his waistcoat a curiously constructed

pistol, having a double-edged spring knife attached to the barrel. "That's a

great tempter to a desperate man, is it not? I cannot resist going up with

this every night, and trying his door. If once I find it open, he's done for!

I do it invariably, even though the minute before I have been recalling a

hundred reasons that should make me refrain; it is some devil that urges me to

thwart my own schemes by killing him. You fight against that devil, for love,

as long as you may; when the time comes, not all the angels in heaven shall

save him!"

I surveyed the weapon inquisitively. A hideous notion struck me: how powerful

I should be possessing such an instrument! I took it from his hand, and

touched the blade. He looked astonished at the expression my face assumed

during a brief second: it was not horror, it was covetousness. He snatched the

pistol back, jealously; shut the knife, and returned it to its concealment.

"I don't care if you tell him," said he. "Put him on his guard, and watch for

him. You know the terms we are on, I see, -his danger does not shock you."

"What has Heathcliff done to you?" I asked. "In what has he wronged you, to

warrant this appalling hatred? Wouldn't it be wiser to bid him quit the house?"

"No!" thundered Earnshaw, "should he offer to leave me, he's a dead man;

persuade him to attempt it, and you are a murderess! Am I to lose all, without

a chance of retrieval? Is Hareton to be a beggar? Oh, damnation! I will have

it back; and I'll have his gold too; and then his blood; and hell shall have

his soul! It will be ten times blacker with that guest than ever it was before!"

You've acquainted me, Ellen, with your old master's habits. He is clearly on

the verge of madness, -he was so last night at least. I shuddered to be near

him, and thought on the servant's ill-bred moroseness as comparatively

agreeable. He now recommenced his moody walk, and I raised the latch, and

escaped into the kitchen. Joseph was bending over the fire, peering into a

large pan that swung above it; and a wooden bowl of oatmeal stood on the

settle close by. The contents of the pan began to boil, and he turned to

plunge his hand into the bowl; I conjectured that this preparation was

probably for our supper, and, being hungry, I resolved it should be eatable;

so, crying out sharply, "I'll make the porridge!" I removed the vessel out of

his reach, and proceeded to take off my hat and riding habit. "Mr. Earnshaw,"

I continued, "directs me to wait on myself -I will. I'm not going to act the

lady among you, for fear I should starve."

"Gooid Lord!" he muttered, sitting down, and stroking his ribbed stockings

from the knee to the ankle. "If they's tuh be fresh ortherings -just when Aw

getten used tuh two maisters, if Aw mun hev a mistress set o'er my heead, it's

loike time tuh be flitting. Aw niver did think tuh say t' day ut Aw mud lave

th' owld place -but Aw daht it's nigh at hend!"

This lamentation drew no notice from me; I went briskly to work, sighing to

remember a period when it would have been all merry fun; but compelled

speedily to drive off the remembrance. It racked me to recall past happiness,

and the greater peril there was of conjuring up its apparition, the quicker

the thible ran round, and the faster the handfuls of meal fell into the water.

Joseph beheld my style of cookery with growing indignation.

"Thear!" he ejaculated. "Hareton, thah willn't sup thy porridge tuh neeght;

they'll be nowt bud lumps as big as maw nave. Thear, agean! Aw'd fling in bowl

un all, if Aw wer yah! Thear, pale t' guilp off, un then yah'll hae done wi't.

Bang, bang. It's a marcy t' bothom isn't deaved aht!"

It was rather a rough mess, I own, when poured into the basins; four had been

provided, and a gallon pitcher of new milk was brought from the dairy, which

Hareton seized and commenced drinking and spilling from the expansive lip. I

expostulated, and desired that he should have his in a mug; affirming that I

could not taste the liquid treated so dirtily. The old cynic chose to be

vastly offended at this nicety; assuring me, repeatedly, that "the barn was

every bit as gooid" as I, "and every bit as wollsome," and wondering how I

could fashion to be so conceited. Meanwhile, the infant ruffian continued

sucking; and glowered up at me defyingly, as he slavered into the jug.

"I shall have my supper in another room," I said. "Have you no place you call

a parlour?"

"Parlour!" he echoed sneeringly, "parlour! Nay, we've noa parlours. If yah

dunnut loike wer company, they's maister's; un if yah dunnut loike maister,

they's us."

"Then I shall go upstairs," I answered; "show me a chamber."

I put my basin on a tray, and went myself to fetch some more milk. With great

grumblings, the fellow rose, and preceded me in my ascent: we mounted to the

garrets; he opening a door, now and then, to look into the apartments we passed.

"Here's a rahm," he said, at last, flinging back a cranky board on hinges.

"It's weel eneugh tuh ate a few porridge in. They's a pack uh corn i' t'

corner, thear, meeterly clane; if yah're feared uh muckying yer grand silk

cloes, spread yer hankerchir ut t' top on't."

The "rahm" was a kind of lumber-hole smelling strong of malt and grain;

various sacks of which articles were piled around, leaving a wide, bare space

in the middle.

"Why man!" I exclaimed, facing him angrily, "this is not a place to sleep in.

I wish to see my bedroom."

"Bed-rume!" he repeated, in a tone of mockery. "Yah's see all t' bed-rumes

thear is -yon's mine."

He pointed into the second garret, only differing from the first in being more

naked about the walls, and having a large, low, curtainless bed, with an

indigo-coloured quilt, at one end.

"What do I want with yours?" I retorted. "I suppose Mr. Heathcliff does not

lodge at the top of the house, does he?"

"Oh, it' s Maister Hathecliff's yah're wenting?" cried he, as if making a new

discovery. "Couldn't ye uh said soa, at onst? un then, Aw mud uh telled ye,

baht all this wark, ut that's just one yah cannut sea -he allas keeps it

locked, un nob'dy iver mells on't but hisseln."

"You've a nice house, Joseph," I could not refrain from observing, "and

pleasant inmates; and I think the concentrated essence of all the madness in

the world took up its abode in my brain the day I linked my fate with theirs!

However, that is not to the present purpose -there are other rooms. For

heaven's sake, be quick, and let me settle somewhere!"

He made no reply to this adjuration; only plodding doggedly down the wooden

steps, and halting before an apartment which, from that halt and the superior

quality of its furniture, I conjectured to be the best one. There was a

carpet, -a good one, but the pattern was obliterated by dust; a fireplace hung

with cut paper, dropping to pieces; a handsome oak bedstead with ample crimson

curtains of rather expensive material and modern make, but they had evidently

experienced rough usage, -the valances hung in festoons, wrenched from their

rings, and the iron rod supporting them was bent in an arc on one side,

causing the drapery to trail upon the floor. The chairs were also damaged,

many of them severely; and deep indentations deformed the panels of the walls.

I was endeavouring to gather resolution for entering, and taking possession,

when my fool of a guide announced, "This here is t' maister's." My supper by

this time was cold, my appetite gone, and my patience exhausted. I insisted on

being provided instantly with a place of refuge, and means of repose.

"Whear the divil?" began the religious elder. "The Lord bless us! The Lord

forgie us! Whear the hell, wold ye gang? ye marred, wearisome nowt! Yah seen

all bud Hareton's bit uf a cham'er. They's nut another hoile tuh lig dahn in

i' th' hahse!"

I was so vexed, I flung my tray and its contents on the ground; and then

seated myself at the stairs-head, hid my face in my hands, and cried.

"Ech! ech!" exclaimed Joseph. "Weel done, Miss Cathy! weel done, Miss Cathy!

Hahsiver, t' maister sall just tum'le o'er them brocken pots; un then we's

hear summut; we's hear hah it's tuh be. Gooid-for-nowt madling! yah desarve

pining froo this tuh Churstmas, flinging t' precious gifts uh God under fooit

i' yer flaysome rages! Bud, Aw'm mista'en if yah shew yer sperrit lang. Will

Hathecliff bide sich bonny ways, think ye? Aw nobbut wish he muh cotch he i'

that plisky. Aw nobbut wish he may."

And so he went scolding to his den beneath, taking the candle with him; and I

remained in the dark. The period of reflection succeeding this silly action

compelled me to admit the necessity of smothering my pride and choking my

wrath, and bestirring myself to remove its effects. An unexpected aid

presently appeared in the shape of Throttler, whom I now recognized as a son

of our old Skulker: it had spent its whelphood at the Grange, and was given by

my father to Mr. Hindley. I fancy it knew me, -it pushed its nose against mine

by way of salute, and then hastened to devour the porridge; while I groped

from step to step, collecting the shattered earthenware, and drying the

spatters of milk from the banister with my pocket-handkerchief. Our labours

were scarcely over when I heard Earnshaw's tread in the passage; my assistant

tucked in his tail, and pressed to the wall; I stole into the nearest doorway.

The dog's endeavour to avoid him was unsuccessful, as I guessed by a scutter

downstairs, and a prolonged, piteous yelping. I had better luck: he passed on,

entered his chamber, and shut the door. Directly after, Joseph came up with

Hareton, to put him to bed. I had found shelter in Hareton's room, and the old

man, on seeing me, said:

"They's rahm fur boath yah un yer pride nah, Aw sud think i' th' hahse. It's

empty; yah muh hev it all tuh yerseln, un Him as allas maks a third, i' sich

ill company!"

Gladly did I take advantage of this intimation; and the minute I flung myself

into a chair, by the fire, I nodded, and slept. My slumber was deep and sweet,

though over far too soon. Mr. Heathcliff awoke me; he has just come in, and

demanded, in his loving manner, what I was doing there? I told him the cause

of my staying up so late -that he had the key of our room in his pocket. The

adjective our gave mortal offence. He swore it was not, nor ever should be

mine; and he'd -but I'll not repeat his language, nor describe his habitual

conduct: he is ingenious and unresting in seeking to gain my abhorrence! I

sometimes wonder at him with an intensity that deadens my fear; yet, I assure

you, a tiger or a venomous serpent could not rouse terror in me equal to that

which he wakens. He told me of Catherine's illness, and accused my brother of

causing it; promising that I should be Edgar's proxy in suffering, till he

could get hold of him.

I do hate him -I am wretched -I have been a fool! Beware of uttering one

breath of this to any one at the Grange. I shall expect you every day -don't

disappoint me!

ISABELLA.

Chapter 14

As soon as I had perused this epistle, I went to the master, and informed him

that his sister had arrived at the Heights, and sent me a letter expressing

her sorrow for Mrs. Linton's situation, and her ardent desire to see him, with

a wish that he would transmit to her, as early as possible, some token of

forgiveness by me.

"Forgiveness!" said Linton. "I have nothing to forgive her, Ellen. You may

call at Wuthering Heights this afternoon, if you like, and say that I am not

angry, but I'm sorry to have lost her; especially as I can never think she'll

be happy. It is out of the question my going to see her, however: we are

eternally divided; and should she really wish to oblige me, let her persuade

the villain she has married to leave the country."

"And you won't write her a little note, sir?" I asked imploringly.

"No," he answered. "It is needless. My communication with Heathcliff's family

shall be as sparing as his with mine. It shall not exist!"

Mr. Edgar's coldness depressed me exceedingly; and all the way from the Grange

I puzzled my brains how to put more heart into what he said, when I repeated

it; and how to soften his refusal of even a few lines to console Isabella. I

daresay she had been on the watch for me since morning: I saw her looking

through the lattice, as I came up the garden causeway, and I nodded to her;

but she drew back, as if afraid of being observed. I entered without knocking.

There never was such a dreary, dismal scene as the formerly cheerful house

presented! I must confess, that if I had been in the young lady's place, I

would, at least, have swept the hearth, and wiped the tables with a duster.

But she already partook of the pervading spirit of neglect which encompassed

her. Her pretty face was wan and listless; her hair uncurled, some locks

hanging lankly down, and some carelessly twisted round her head. Probably she

had not touched her dress since yester evening. Hindley was not there. Mr.

Heathcliff sat at a table, turning over some papers in his pocket-book; but he

rose when I appeared, asked me how I did, quite friendly, and offered me a

chair. He was the only thing there that seemed decent, and I thought he never

looked better. So much had circumstances altered their positions, that he

would certainly have struck a stranger as a born and bred gentleman, and his

wife as a thorough little slattern! She came forward eagerly to greet me; and

held out one hand to take the expected letter. I shook my head. She wouldn't

understand the hint, but followed me to a sideboard, where I went to lay my

bonnet, and importuned me in a whisper to give her directly what I had

brought. Heathcliff guessed the meaning of her manoeuvres, and said:

"If you have got anything for Isabella (as no doubt you have, Nelly), give it

to her. You needn't make a secret of it; -we have no secrets between us."

"Oh, I have nothing," I replied, thinking it best to speak the truth at once.

"My master bid me tell his sister that she must not expect either a letter or

a visit from him at present. He sends his love, ma'am, and his wishes for your

happiness, and his pardon for the grief you have occasioned; but he thinks

that after this time, his household and the household here should drop

intercommunication, as nothing good could come of keeping it up."

Mrs. Heathcliff's lip quivered slightly, and she returned to her seat in the

window. Her husband took his stand on the hearthstone, near me, and began to

put questions concerning Catherine. I told him as much as I thought proper of

her illness, and he extorted from me, by cross-examination, most of the facts

connected with its origin. I blamed her, as she deserved, for bringing it all

on herself; and ended by hoping that he would follow Mr. Linton's example, and

avoid future interference with his family, for good or evil.

"Mrs. Linton is now just recovering," I said; "she'll never be like she was,

but her life is spared; and if you really have a regard for her, you'll shun

crossing her way again; nay, you'll move out of this country entirely; and

that you may not regret it, I'll inform you Catherine Linton is as different

now from your old friend Catherine Earnshaw, as that young lady is different

from me. Her appearance is changed greatly, her character much more so; and

the person who is compelled, of necessity, to be her companion, will only

sustain his affection hereafter by the remembrance of what she once was, by

common humanity, and a sense of duty!"

"That is quite possible," remarked Heathcliff, forcing himself to seem calm,

"quite possible that your master should have nothing but common humanity and a

sense of duty to fall back upon. But do you imagine that I shall leave

Catherine to his duty and humanity? and can you compare my feelings respecting

Catherine to his? Before you leave this house, I must exact a promise from

you, that you'll get me an interview with her: consent, or refuse, I will see

her! What do you say?"

"I say, Mr. Heathcliff," I replied, "you must not -you never shall, through my

means. Another encounter between you and the master would kill her altogether."

"With your aid, that may be avoided," he continued; "and should there be

danger of such an event -should he be the cause of adding a single trouble

more to her existence -why, I think I shall be justified in going to extremes!

I wish you had sincerity enough to tell me whether Catherine would suffer

greatly from his loss: the fear that she would restrains me. And there you see

the distinction between our feelings: had he been in my place and I in his,

though I hated him with a hatred that turned my life to gall, I never would

have raised a hand against him. You may look incredulous, if you please! I

never would have banished him from her society as long as she desired his. The

moment her regard ceased, I would have torn his heart out, and drank his

blood! But, till then -if you don't believe me, you don't know me -till then,

I would have died by inches before I touched a single hair of his head!"

"And yet," I interrupted, "you have no scruples in completely ruining all

hopes of her perfect restoration, by thrusting yourself into her remembrance

now, when she has nearly forgotten you, and involving her in a new tumult of

discord and distress."

"You suppose she has nearly forgotten me?" he said. "Oh, Nelly! you know she

has not! You know as well as I do, that for every thought she spends on

Linton, she spends a thousand on me! At a most miserable period of my life, I

had a notion of the kind: it haunted me on my return to the neighbourhood last

summer; but only her own assurance could make me admit the horrible idea

again. And then, Linton would be nothing, nor Hindley, nor all the dreams that

ever I dreamt. Two words would comprehend my future -death and hell;

existence, after losing her, would be hell. Yet I was a fool to fancy for a

moment that she valued Edgar Linton's attachment more than mine. If he loved

with all the powers of his puny being, he couldn't love as much in eighty

years as I could in a day. And Catherine has a heart as deep as I have, -the

sea could be as readily contained in that horse trough, as her whole affection

be monopolized by him! Tush! He is scarcely a degree dearer to her than her

dog, or her horse. It is not in him to be loved like me: how can she love in

him what he has not?"

"Catherine and Edgar are as fond of each other as any two people can be,"

cried Isabella, with sudden vivacity. "No one has a right to talk in that

manner, and I won't hear my brother depreciated in silence!"

"Your brother is wondrous fond of you too, isn't he?" observed Heathcliff

scornfully. "He turns you adrift on the world with surprising alacrity."

"He is not aware of what I suffer," she replied. "I didn't tell him that."

"You have been telling him something, then: you have written, have you?"

"To say that I was married, I did write -you saw the note."

"And nothing since?"

"No."

"My young lady is looking sadly the worse for her change of condition," I

remarked. "Somebody's love comes short in her case, obviously -whose, I may

guess; but, perhaps, I shouldn't say."

"I should guess it was her own," said Heathcliff. "She degenerates into a mere

slut! She is tired of trying to please me uncommonly early. You'd hardly

credit it, but the very morrow of our wedding, she was weeping to go home.

However, she'll suit this house so much the better for not being over nice,

and I'll take care she does not disgrace me by rambling abroad."

"Well, sir," returned I, "I hope you'll consider that Mrs. Heathcliff is

accustomed to be looked after and waited on; and that she has been brought up

like an only daughter, whom every one was ready to serve. You must let her

have a maid to keep things tidy about her, and you must treat her kindly.

Whatever be your notion of Mr. Edgar, you cannot doubt that she has a capacity

for strong attachments, or she wouldn't have abandoned the elegancies, and

comforts, and friends of her former home, to fix contentedly, in such a

wilderness as this, with you."

"She abandoned them under a delusion," he answered; "picturing in me a hero of

romance, and expecting unlimited indulgences from my chivalrous devotion. I

can hardly regard her in the light of a rational creature, so obstinately has

she persisted in forming a fabulous notion of my character and acting on the

false impressions she cherished. But, at last, I think she begins to know me:

I don't perceive the silly smiles and grimaces that provoked me at first; and

the senseless incapability of discerning that I was in earnest when I gave her

my opinion of her infatuation and herself. It was a marvellous effort of

perspicacity to discover that I did not love her. I believed, at one time, no

lessons could teach her that! And yet it is poorly learned, for this morning

she announced, as a piece of appalling intelligence, that I had actually

succeeded in making her hate me! A positive labour of Hercules, I assure you!

If it be achieved, I have cause to return thanks. Can I trust your assertion,

Isabella? Are you sure you hate me? If I let you alone for half a day, won't

you come sighing and wheedling to me again? I daresay she would rather I had

seemed all tenderness before you: it wounds her vanity to have the truth

exposed. But I don't care who knows that the passion was wholly on one side;

and I never told her a lie about it. She cannot accuse me of showing one bit

of deceitful softness. The first thing she saw me do, on coming out of the

Grange, was to hang up her little dog; and when she pleaded for it, the first

words I uttered were a wish that I had the hanging of every being belonging to

her, except one: possibly she took that exception for herself. But no

brutality disgusted her, -I suppose she has an innate admiration of it, if

only her precious person were secure from injury! Now, was it not the depth of

absurdity -of genuine idiocy, for that pitiful, slavish, mean-minded brach to

dream that I could love her? Tell your master, Nelly, that I never, in all my

life, met with such an abject thing as she is. She even disgraces the name of

Linton; and I've sometimes relented, from pure lack of invention, in my

experiments on what she could endure, and still creep shamefully cringing

back! But tell him, also, to set his fraternal and magisterial heart at ease,

-that I keep strictly within the limits of the law. I have avoided, up to this

period, giving her the slightest right to claim a separation; and, what's

more, she'd thank nobody for dividing us. If she desired to go, she might: the

nuisance of her presence outweighs the gratification to be derived from

tormenting her!"

"Mr. Heathcliff," said I, "this is the talk of a madman; and your wife, most

likely, is convinced you are mad; and, for that reason, she has borne with you

hitherto; but now that you say she may go, she'll doubtless avail herself of

the permission. You are not so bewitched, ma'am, are you, as to remain with

him of your own accord?"

"Take care, Ellen!" answered Isabella, her eyes sparkling irefully; there was

no misdoubting by their expression the full success of her partner's

endeavours to make himself detested. "Don't put faith in a single word he

speaks. He's a lying fiend! a monster, and not a human being! I've been told I

might leave him before; and I've made the attempt, but I dare not repeat it!

Only, Ellen, promise you'll not mention a syllable of his infamous

conversation to my brother or Catherine. Whatever he may pretend, he wishes to

provoke Edgar to desperation: he says he has married me on purpose to obtain

power over him; and he shan't obtain it -I'll die first! I just hope, I pray,

that he may forget his diabolical prudence, and kill me! The single pleasure I

can imagine is to die, or to see him dead!"

"There -that will do for the present!" said Heathcliff. "If you are called

upon in a court of law, you'll remember her language, Nelly! And take a good

look at that countenance, -she's near the point which would suit me. No;

you're not fit to be your own guardian, Isabella, now; and I, being your legal

protector, must detain you in my custody, however distasteful the obligation

may be. Go upstairs; I have something to say to Ellen Dean in private. That's

not the way -upstairs, I tell you! Why, this is the road upstairs, child!"

He seized, and thrust her from the room; and returned muttering:

"I have no pity! I have no pity! The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn

to crush out their entrails! It's a moral teething; and I grind with greater

energy, in proportion to the increase of pain."

"Do you understand what the word pity means?" I said, hastening to resume my

bonnet. "Did you ever feel a touch of it in your life?"

"Put that down!" he interrupted, perceiving my intention to depart. "You are

not going yet. Come here now, Nelly: I must either persuade or compel you to

aid me in fulfilling my determination to see Catherine, and that without

delay. I swear that I meditate no harm; I don't desire to cause any

disturbance, or to exasperate or insult Mr. Linton; I only wish to hear from

herself how she is, and why she has been ill; and to ask if anything that I

could do would be of use to her. Last night, I was in the Grange garden six

hours, and I'll return there tonight; and every night I'll haunt the place,

and every day, till I find an opportunity of entering. If Edgar Linton meets

me, I shall not hesitate to knock him down, and give him enough to insure his

quiescence while I stay. If his servants oppose me, I shall threaten them off

with these pistols. But wouldn't it be better to prevent my coming in contact

with them, or their master? And you could do it so easily. I'd warn you when I

came, and then you might let me in unobserved, as soon as she was alone, and

watch till I departed, your conscience quite calm: you would be hindering

mischief."

I protested against playing that treacherous part in my employer's house; and,

besides, I urged the cruelty and selfishness of his destroying Mrs. Linton's

tranquillity for his satisfaction. "The commonest occurrence startles her

painfully," I said. "She's all nerves, and she couldn't bear the surprise, I'm

positive. Don't persist, sir! or else, I shall be obliged to inform my master

of your designs; and he'll take measures to secure his house and its inmates

from any such unwarrantable intrusions!"

"In that case, I'll take measures to secure you, woman!" exclaimed Heathcliff;

"you shall not leave Wuthering Heights till tomorrow morning. It is a foolish

story to assert that Catherine could not bear to see me; and as to surprising

her, I don't desire it: you must prepare her -ask her if I may come. You say

she never mentions my name, and that I am never mentioned to her. To whom

should she mention me if I am a forbidden topic in the house? She thinks you

are all spies for her husband. Oh, I've no doubt she's in hell among you! I

guess by her silence, as much as anything, what she feels. You say she is

often restless, and anxious-looking, -is that a proof of tranquillity? You

talk of her mind being unsettled. How the devil could it be otherwise in her

frightful isolation? And that insipid, paltry creature attending her from duty

and humanity! From pity and charity! He might as well plant an oak in a

flower-pot, and expect it to thrive, as imagine he can restore her to vigour

in the soil of his shallow cares! Let us settle it at once: will you stay

here, and am I to fight my way to Catherine over Linton and his footmen? Or

will you be my friend, as you have been hitherto, and do what I request?

Decide! because there is no reason for my lingering another minute, if you

persist in your stubborn ill-nature."

Well, Mr. Lockwood, I argued and complained, and flatly refused him fifty

times; but in the long run he forced me to an agreement. I engaged to carry a

letter from him to my mistress; and should she consent, I promised to let him

have intelligence of Linton's next absence from home, when he might come, and

get in as he was able: I wouldn't be there, and my fellow-servants should be

equally out of the way. Was it right or wrong? I fear it was wrong, though

expedient. I thought I prevented another explosion by my compliance; and I

thought, too, it might create a favourable crisis in Catherine's mental

illness; and then I remembered Mr. Edgar's stern rebuke of my carrying tales;

and I tried to smooth away all disquietude on the subject, by affirming, with

frequent iteration, that that betrayal of trust, if it merited so harsh an

appellation, should be the last. Notwithstanding, my journey homeward was

sadder than my journey thither; and many misgivings I had, ere I could prevail

on myself to put the missive into Mrs. Linton's hand.

But here is Kenneth; I'll go down, and tell him how much better you are. My

history is dree, as we say, and will serve to while away another morning.

Dree, and dreary! I reflected as the good woman descended to receive the

doctor; and not exactly of the kind which I should have chosen to amuse me.

But never mind! I'll extract wholesome medicines from Mrs. Dean's bitter

herbs; and firstly, let me beware of the fascination that lurks in Catherine

Heathcliff's brilliant eyes. I should be in a curious taking if I surrendered

my heart to that young person, and the daughter turned out a second edition of

the mother!

Chapter 15

Another week over -and I am so many days nearer health, and spring! I have now

heard all my neighbour's history, at different sittings, as the housekeeper

could spare time from more important occupations. I'll continue it in her own

words, only a little condensed. She is, on the whole, a very fair narrator,

and I don't think I could improve her style.

In the evening, she said, the evening of my visit to the Heights, I knew, as

well as if I saw him, that Mr. Heathcliff was about the place; and I shunned

going out, because I still carried his letter in my pocket, and didn't want to

be threatened, or teased any more. I had made up my mind not to give it till

my master went somewhere, as I could not guess how its receipt would affect

Catherine. The consequence was, that it did not reach her before the lapse of

three days. The fourth was Sunday, and I brought it into her room after the

family were gone to church. There was a manservant left to keep the house with

me, and we generally made a practice of locking the doors during the hours of

service; but on that occasion the weather was so warm and pleasant that I set

them wide open, and, to fulfil my engagement, as I knew who would be coming, I

told my companion that the mistress wished very much for some oranges, and he

must run over to the village and get a few, to be paid for on the morrow. He

departed, and I went upstairs.

Mrs. Linton sat in a loose, white dress, with a light shawl over her

shoulders, in the recess of the open window, as usual. Her thick, long hair

had been partly removed at the beginning of her illness, and now she wore it

simply combed in its natural tresses over her temples and neck. Her appearance

was altered, as I had told Heathcliff; but when she was calm, there seemed

unearthly beauty in the change. The flash of her eyes had been succeeded by a

dreamy and melancholy softness; they no longer gave the impression of looking

at the objects around her: they appeared always to gaze beyond, and far beyond

-you would have said out of this world. Then the paleness of her face -its

haggard aspect having vanished as she recovered flesh -and the peculiar

expression arising from her mental state, though painfully suggestive of their

causes, added to the touching interest which she awakened; and -invariably to

me, I know, and to any person who saw her, I should think -refuted more

tangible proofs of convalescence, and stamped her as one doomed to decay.

A book lay spread on the sill before her, and the scarcely perceptible wind

fluttered its leaves at intervals. I believe Linton had laid it there; for she

never endeavoured to divert herself with reading, or occupation of any kind,

and he would spend many an hour in trying to entice her attention to some

subject which had formerly been her amusement. She was conscious of his aim,

and in her better moods endured his efforts placidly, only showing their

uselessness by now and then suppressing a wearied sigh, and checking him at

last with the saddest of smiles and kisses. At other times, she would turn

petulantly away, and hide her face in her hands, or even push him off angrily;

and then he took care to let her alone, for he was certain of doing no good.

Gimmerton chapel bells were still ringing; and the full, mellow flow of the

beck in the valley came soothingly on the ear. It was a sweet substitute for

the yet absent murmur of the summer foliage, which drowned that music about

the Grange when the trees were in leaf. At Wuthering Heights it always sounded

on quiet days following a great thaw or a season of steady rain. And of

Wuthering Heights Catherine was thinking as she listened, -that is, if she

thought or listened at all; but she had the vague, distant look I mentioned

before, which expressed no recognition of material things either by ear or eye.

"There's a letter for you, Mrs. Linton," I said, gently inserting it in one

hand that rested on her knee. "You must read it immediately, because it wants

an answer. Shall I break the seal?" -"Yes," she answered, without altering the

direction of her eyes. I opened it -it was very short. "Now," I continued,

"read it." She drew away her hand, and let it fall. I replaced it in her lap,

and stood waiting till it should please her to glance down; but that movement

was so long delayed that at last I resumed:

"Must I read it, ma'am? It is from Mr. Heathcliff."

There was a start and a troubled gleam of recollection, and a struggle to

arrange her ideas. She lifted the letter, and seemed to peruse it; and when

she came to the signature she sighed; yet still I found she had not gathered

its import, for, upon my desiring to hear her reply, she merely pointed to the

name, and gazed at me with mournful and questioning eagerness.

"Well, he wishes to see you," said I, guessing her need of an interpreter.

"He's in the garden by this time, and impatient to know what answer I shall

bring."

As I spoke, I observed a large dog lying on the sunny grass beneath raise its

ears as if about to bark, and then smoothing them back, announce, by a wag of

the tail, that some one approached whom it did not consider a stranger. Mrs.

Linton bent forward, and listened breathlessly. The minute after a step

traversed the hall; the open house was too tempting for Heathcliff to resist

walking in: most likely he supposed that I was inclined to shirk my promise,

and so resolved to trust to his own audacity. With straining eagerness

Catherine gazed towards the entrance of her chamber. He did not hit the right

room directly; she motioned me to admit him; but he found it out ere I could

reach the door, and in a stride or two was at her side, and had her grasped in

his arms.

He neither spoke nor loosed his hold for some five minutes, during which

period he bestowed more kisses than ever he gave in his life before, I

daresay: but then my mistress had kissed him first, and I plainly saw that he

could hardly bear, for downright agony, to look into her face! The same

conviction had stricken him as me, from the instant he beheld her, that there

was no prospect of ultimate recovery there -she was fated, sure to die.

"Oh, Cathy! Oh, my life! how can I bear it?" was the first sentence he

uttered, in a tone that did not seek to disguise his despair. And now he

stared at her so earnestly that I thought the very intensity of his gaze would

bring tears into his eyes; but they burned with anguish, they did not melt.

"What now?" said Catherine, leaning back, and returning his look with a

suddenly clouded brow: her humour was a mere vane for constantly varying

caprices. "You and Edgar have broken my heart, Heathcliff! And you both come

to bewail the deed to me, as if you were the people to be pitied! I shall not

pity you, not I. You have killed me -and thriven on it, I think. How strong

you are! How many years do you mean to live after I am gone?"

Heathcliff had knelt on one knee to embrace her; he attempted to rise, but she

seized his hair, and kept him down.

"I wish I could hold you," she continued bitterly, "till we were both dead! I

shouldn't care what you suffered. I care nothing for your sufferings. Why

shouldn't you suffer? I do! Will you forget me? Will you be happy when I am in

the earth? Will you say twenty years hence, `That's the grave of Catherine

Earnshaw. I loved her long ago, and was wretched to lose her; but it is past.

I've loved many others since: my children are dearer to me than she was; and,

at death, I shall not rejoice that I am going to her, -I shall be sorry that I

must leave them!' Will you say so, Heathcliff?"

"Don't torture me till I'm as mad as yourself," cried he, wrenching his head

free, and grinding his teeth.

The two, to a cool spectator, made a strange and fearful picture. Well might

Catherine deem that heaven would be a land of exile to her, unless with her

mortal body she cast away her mortal character also. Her present countenance

had a wild vindictiveness in its white cheek, and a bloodless lip and

scintillating eye; and she retained in her closed fingers a portion of the

locks she had been grasping. As to her companion, while raising himself with

one hand, he had taken her arm with the other; and so inadequate was his stock

of gentleness to the requirements of her condition, that on his letting go I

saw four distinct impressions left blue in the colourless skin.

"Are you possessed with a devil," he pursued savagely, "to talk in that manner

to me, when you are dying? Do you reflect that all those words will be branded

in my memory, and eating deeper eternally after you have left me? You know you

lie to say I have killed you; and, Catherine, you know that I could as soon

forget you as my existence! Is it not sufficient for your infernal

selfishness, that while you are at peace I shall writhe in the torments of

hell?"

"I shall not be at peace," moaned Catherine, recalled to a sense of physical

weakness by the violent, unequal throbbing of her heart, which beat visibly

and audibly under this excess of agitation. She said nothing further till the

paroxysm was over; then she continued, more kindly:

"I'm not wishing you greater torment than I have, Heathcliff. I only wish us

never to be parted: and should a word of mine distress you hereafter, think I

feel the same distress underground, and for my own sake, forgive me! Come here

and kneel down again! You never harmed me in your life. Nay, if you nurse

anger, that will be worse to remember than my harsh words! Won't you come here

again? Do!"

Heathcliff went to the back of her chair, and leant over, but not so far as to

let her see his face, which was livid with emotion. She bent round to look at

him; he would not permit it; turning abruptly, he walked to the fireplace,

where he stood, silent, with his back towards us. Mrs. Linton's glance

followed him suspiciously: every movement woke a new sentiment in her. After a

pause and a prolonged gaze, she resumed, addressing me in accents of indignant

disappointment:

"Oh, you see, Nelly, he would not relent a moment to keep me out of the grave.

That is how I'm loved! Well, never mind. That is not my Heathcliff. I shall

love mine yet; and take him with me, -he's in my soul. And," added she,

musingly, "the thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all.

I'm tired, tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that

glorious world, and to be always there: not seeing it dimly through tears, and

yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart, but really with it, and

in it. Nelly, you think you are better and more fortunate than I, in full

health and strength; you are sorry for me -very soon that will be altered. I

shall be sorry for you. I shall be incomparably beyond and above you all. I

wonder he won't be near me!" She went on to herself. "I thought he wished it.

Heathcliff, dear! you should not be sullen now. Do come to me, Heathcliff."

In her eagerness she rose and supported herself on the arm of the chair. At

that earnest appeal he turned to her, looking absolutely desperate. His eyes

wide, and wet at last, flashed fiercely on her; his breast heaved

convulsively. An instant they held asunder, and then how they met I hardly

saw, but Catherine made a spring, and he caught her, and they were locked in

an embrace from which I thought my mistress would never be released alive; in

fact, to my eyes, she seemed directly insensible. He flung himself into the

nearest seat, and on my approaching hurriedly to ascertain if she had fainted,

he gnashed at me, and foamed like a mad dog, and gathered her to him with

greedy jealousy. I did not feel as if I were in the company of a creature of

my own species: it appeared that he would not understand, though I spoke to

him; so I stood off, and held my tongue, in great perplexity.

A movement of Catherine's relieved me a little presently: she put up her hand

to clasp his neck, and bring her cheek to his as he held her; while he, in

return, covering her with frantic caresses, said wildly -

"You teach me how cruel you've been -cruel and false. Why did you despise me?

Why did you betray your own heart, Cathy? I have not one word of comfort. You

deserve this. You have killed yourself. Yes, you may kiss me, and cry; and

wring out my kisses and tears: they'll blight you -they'll damn you. You loved

me -then what right had you to leave me? What right -answer me -for the poor

fancy you felt for Linton? Because misery, and degradation, and death, and

nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, you, of your own

will, did it. I have not broken your heart -you have broken it; and in

breaking it, you have broken mine. So much the worse for me, that I am strong.

Do I want to live? What kind of living will it be when you -oh, God! would you

like to live with your soul in the grave?"

"Let me alone. Let me alone," sobbed Catherine. "If I've done wrong, I'm dying

for it. It is enough! You left me too -but I won't upbraid you! I forgive you.

Forgive me!"

"It is hard to forgive, and to look at those eyes, and feel those wasted

hands," he answered. "Kiss me again; and don't let me see your eyes! I forgive

what you have done to me. I love my murderer -but yours! How can I?"

They were silent -their faces hid against each other, and washed by each

other's tears. At least, I suppose the weeping was on both sides; as it seemed

Heathcliff could weep on a great occasion like this.

I grew very uncomfortable, meanwhile; for the afternoon wore fast away, the

man whom I had sent off returned from his errand, and I could distinguish, by

the shine of the westering sun up the valley, a concourse thickening outside

Gimmerton chapel porch.

"Service is over," I announced. "My master will be here in half-an-hour."

Heathcliff groaned a curse, and strained Catherine closer: she never moved.

Ere long I perceived a group of the servants passing up the road towards the

kitchen wing. Mr. Linton was not far behind; he opened the gate himself and

sauntered slowly up, probably enjoying the lovely afternoon that breathed as

soft as summer.

"Now he is here," I exclaimed. "For heaven's sake, hurry down! You'll not meet

any one on the front stairs. Do be quick; and stay among the trees till he is

fairly in."

"I must go, Cathy," said Heathcliff, seeking to extricate himself from his

companion's arms. "But, if I live, I'll see you again before you are asleep. I

won't stray five yards from your window."

"You must not go!" she answered, holding him as firmly as her strength

allowed. "You shall not, I tell you."

"For one hour," he pleaded, earnestly.

"Not for one minute," she replied.

"I must -Linton will be up immediately," persisted the alarmed intruder.

He would have risen, and unfixed her fingers by the act -she clung fast,

gasping; there was mad resolution in her face.

"No!" she shrieked. "Oh, don't, don't go. It is the last time! Edgar will not

hurt us. Heathcliff, I shall die! I shall die!"

"Damn the fool! There he is," cried Heathcliff, sinking back into his seat.

"Hush, my darling! Hush, hush, Catherine! I'll stay. If he shot me so, I'd

expire with a blessing on my lips."

And there they were fast again. I heard my master mounting the stairs -the

cold sweat ran from my forehead: I was horrified.

"Are you going to listen to her ravings?" I said passionately. "She does not

know what she says. Will you ruin her, because she has not wit to help

herself? Get up! You could be free instantly. That is the most diabolical deed

that ever you did. We are all done for -master, mistress, and servant."

I wrung my hands, and cried out; and Mr. Linton hastened his step at the

noise. In the midst of my agitation, I was sincerely glad to observe that

Catherine's arms had fallen relaxed, and her head hung down.

"She's fainted, or dead," I thought; "so much the better. Far better that she

should be dead, than lingering a burden and a misery-maker to all about her."

Edgar sprang to his unbidden guest, blanched with astonishment and rage. What

he meant to do, I cannot tell; however, the other stopped all demonstrations,

at once, by placing the lifeless-looking form in his arms.

"Look there!" he said; "unless you be a fiend, help her first -then you shall

speak to me!"

He walked into the parlour, and sat down. Mr. Linton summoned me, and with

great difficulty, and after resorting to many means, we managed to restore her

to sensation; but she was all bewildered; she sighed, and moaned, and knew

nobody. Edgar, in his anxiety for her, forgot her hated friend. I did not. I

went, at the earliest opportunity, and besought him to depart; affirming that

Catherine was better, and he should hear from me in the morning how she passed

the night.

"I shall not refuse to go out of doors," he answered; "but I shall stay in the

garden; and, Nelly, mind you keep your word tomorrow. I shall be under those

larch trees. Mind! or I pay another visit, whether Linton be in or not."

He sent a rapid glance through the half-open door of the chamber, and,

ascertaining that what I stated was apparently true, delivered the house of

his luckless presence.

Chapter 16

About twelve o'clock, that night, was born the Catherine you saw at Wuthering

Heights: a puny, seven months' child; and two hours after the mother died,

having never recovered sufficient consciousness to miss Heathcliff, or know

Edgar. The latter's distraction at his bereavement is a subject too painful to

be dwelt on; its after effects showed how deep the sorrow sunk. A great

addition, in my eyes, was his being left without an heir. I bemoaned that, as

I gazed on the feeble orphan; and I mentally abused old Linton for (what was

only natural partiality) the securing his estate to his own daughter, instead

of his son's. An unwelcomed infant it was, poor thing! It might have wailed

out of life, and nobody cared a morsel, during those first hours of existence.

We redeemed the neglect afterwards; but its beginning was as friendless as its

end is likely to be.

Next morning -bright and cheerful out of doors -stole softened in through the

blinds of the silent room, and suffused the couch and its occupant with a

mellow, tender glow. Edgar Linton had his head laid on the pillow, and his

eyes shut. His young and fair features were almost as deathlike as those of

the form beside him, and almost as fixed; but his was the hush of exhausted

anguish, and hers of perfect peace. Her brow smooth, her lids closed, her lips

wearing the expression of a smile; no angel in heaven could be more beautiful

than she appeared. And I partook of the infinite calm in which she lay: my

mind was never in a holier frame than while I gazed on that untroubled image

of Divine rest. I instinctively echoed the words she had uttered a few hours

before: "Incomparably beyond and above us all! Whether still on earth or now

in heaven, her spirit is at home with God!"

I don't know if it be a peculiarity in me, but I am seldom otherwise than

happy while watching in the chamber of death, should no frenzied or despairing

mourner share the duty with me. I see a repose that neither earth nor hell can

break, and I feel an assurance of the endless and shadowless hereafter -the

Eternity they have entered -where life is boundless in its duration, and love

in its sympathy, and joy in its fullness. I noticed on that occasion how much

selfishness there is even in a love like Mr. Linton's, when he so regretted

Catherine's blessed release! To be sure, one might have doubted, after the

wayward and impatient existence she had led, whether she merited a haven of

peace at last. One might doubt in seasons of cold reflection; but not then, in

the presence of her corpse. It asserted its own tranquillity, which seemed a

pledge of equal quiet to its former inhabitant.

Do you believe such people are happy in the other world, sir? I'd give a great

deal to know.

I declined answering Mrs. Dean's question, which struck me as something

heterodox. She proceeded:

Retracing the course of Catherine Linton, I fear we have no right to think she

is; but we'll leave her with her Maker.

The master looked asleep, and I ventured soon after sunrise to quit the room

and steal out to the pure refreshing air. The servants thought me gone to

shake off the drowsiness of my protracted watch; in reality, my chief motive

was seeing Mr. Heathcliff. If he had remained among the larches all night, he

would have heard nothing of the stir at the Grange; unless, perhaps, he might

catch the gallop of the messenger going to Gimmerton. If he had come nearer,

he would probably be aware, from the lights flitting to and fro, and the

opening and shutting of the outer doors, that all was not right within. I

wished, yet feared, to find him. I felt the terrible news must be told, and I

longed to get it over; but how to do it, I did not know. He was there -at

least a few yards further in the park, leant against an old ash tree, his hat

off, and his hair soaked with the dew that had gathered on the budded

branches, and fell pattering round him. He had been standing a long time in

that position, for I saw a pair of ousels passing and repassing scarcely three

feet from him, busy in building their nest, and regarding his proximity no

more than that of a piece of timber. They flew off at my approach, and he

raised his eyes and spoke:

"She's dead!" he said; "I've not waited for you to learn that. Put your

handkerchief away -don't snivel before me. Damn you all! she wants none of

your tears!"

I was weeping as much for him as her, -we do sometimes pity creatures that

have none of the feeling either for themselves or others; and when I first

looked into his face, I perceived that he had got intelligence of the

catastrophe; and a foolish notion struck me that his heart was quelled and he

prayed, because his lips moved and his gaze was bent on the ground.

"Yes, she's dead!" I answered, checking my sobs and drying my cheeks. "Gone to

heaven, I hope; where we may, every one, join her, if we take due warning and

leave our evil ways to follow good!"

"Did she take due warning, then?" asked Heathcliff, attempting a sneer. "Did

she die like a saint? Come, give me a true history of the event. How did -"

He endeavoured to pronounce the name, but could not manage it; and compressing

his mouth he held a silent combat with his inward agony, defying, meanwhile,

my sympathy with an unflinching, ferocious stare. "How did she die?" he

resumed at last -fain, notwithstanding his hardihood, to have a support behind

him; for, after the struggle, he trembled, in spite of himself, to his very

finger-ends.

"Poor wretch!" I thought; "you have a heart and nerves the same as your

brother men! Why should you be anxious to conceal them? Your pride cannot

blind God! You tempt Him to wring them, till He forces a cry of humiliation."

"Quietly as a lamb!" I answered aloud. "She drew a sigh, and stretched

herself, like a child reviving, and sinking again to sleep; and five minutes

after I felt one little pulse at her heart, and nothing more!"

"And -did she ever mention me?" he asked, hesitating, as if he dreaded the

answer to his question would introduce details that he could not bear to hear.

"Her senses never returned; she recognised nobody from the time you left her,"

I said. "She lies with a sweet smile on her face; and her latest ideas

wandered back to pleasant early days. Her life closed in a gentle dream -may

she wake as kindly in the other world!"

"May she wake in torment!" he cried, with frightful vehemence, stamping his

foot, and groaning in a sudden paroxysm of ungovernable passion. "Why, she's a

liar to the end! Where is she? Not there -not in heaven -not perished -where?

Oh! you said you cared nothing for my sufferings! And I pray one prayer -I

repeat it till my tongue stiffens -Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as

long as I am living! You said I killed you -haunt me, then! The murdered do

haunt their murderers. I believe -I know that ghosts have wandered on earth.

Be with me always -take any form -drive me mad! only do not leave me in this

abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh God! it is unutterable! I cannot live

without my life! I cannot live without my soul!"

He dashed his head against the knotted trunk; and, lifting up his eyes,

howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast getting goaded to death with

knives and spears. I observed several splashes of blood about the bark of the

tree, and his hand and forehead were both stained; probably the scene I

witnessed was a repetition of others acted during the night. It hardly moved

my compassion -it appalled me: still, I felt reluctant to quit him so. But the

moment he recollected himself enough to notice me watching, he thundered a

command for me to go, and I obeyed. He was beyond my skill to quiet or console!

Mrs. Linton's funeral was appointed to take place on the Friday following her

decease; and till then her coffin remained uncovered, and strewn with flowers

and scented leaves, in the great drawing-room. Linton spent his days and

nights there, a sleepless guardian; and -a circumstance concealed from all but

me -Heathcliff spent his nights, at least, outside, equally a stranger to

repose. I held no communication with him; still, I was conscious of his design

to enter, if he could; and on the Tuesday, a little after dark, when my

master, from sheer fatigue, had been compelled to retire a couple of hours, I

went and opened one of the windows, moved by his perseverance to give him a

chance of bestowing on the fading image of his idol one final adieu. He did

not omit to avail himself of the opportunity, cautiously and briefly -too

cautiously to betray his presence by the slightest noise. Indeed, I shouldn't

have discovered that he had been there, except for the disarrangement of the

drapery about the corpse's face, and for observing on the floor a curl of

light hair, fastened with a silver thread; which, on examination, I

ascertained to have been taken from a locket hung round Catherine's neck.

Heathcliff had opened the trinket and cast out its contents, replacing them by

a black lock of his own. I twisted the two, and enclosed them together.

Mr. Earnshaw was, of course, invited to attend the remains of his sister to

the grave; and he sent no excuse, but he never came; so that, besides her

husband, the mourners were wholly composed of tenants and servants. Isabella

was not asked.

The place of Catherine's interment, to the surprise of the villagers, was

neither in the chapel, under the carved monument of the Lintons, nor yet by

the tombs of her own relations, outside. It was dug on a green slope in a

corner of the kirkyard, where the wall is so low that heath and bilberry

plants have climbed over it from the moor; and peat mould almost buries it.

Her husband lies in the same spot now; and they have each a simple headstone

above, and a plain grey block at their feet, to mark the graves.

Chapter 17

That Friday made the last of our fine days for a month. In the evening, the

weather broke: the wind shifted from south to northeast, and brought rain

first, and then sleet and snow. On the morrow one could hardly imagine that

there had been three weeks of summer: the primroses and crocuses were hidden

under wintry drifts, the larks were silent, the young leaves of the early

trees smitten and blackened. And dreary, and chill, and dismal that morrow did

creep over! My master kept his room; I took possession of the lonely parlour,

converting it into a nursery: and there I was, sitting with the moaning doll

of a child laid on my knee, rocking it to and fro, and watching, meanwhile,

the still driving flakes build up the uncurtained window, when the door

opened, and some person entered, out of breath and laughing! My anger was

greater than my astonishment for a minute. I supposed it one of the maids, and

I cried:

"Have done! How dare you show your giddiness here? What would Mr. Linton say

if he heard you?"

"Excuse me!" answered a familiar voice, "but I know Edgar is in bed, and I

cannot stop myself."

With that the speaker came forward to the fire, panting and holding her hand

to her side.

"I have run the whole way from Wuthering Heights!" she continued, after a

pause; "except where I've flown. I couldn't count the number of falls I've

had. Oh, I'm aching all over! Don't be alarmed! There shall be an explanation

as soon as I can give it; only just have the goodness to step out and order

the carriage to take me on to Gimmerton, and tell a servant to seek up a few

clothes in my wardrobe."

The intruder was Mrs. Heathcliff. She certainly seemed in no laughing

predicament, -her hair streamed on her shoulders, dripping with snow and

water; she was dressed in the girlish dress she commonly wore, befitting her

age more than her position, -a low frock with short sleeves, and nothing on

either head or neck. The frock was of light silk, and clung to her with wet,

and her feet were protected merely by thin slippers; add to this a deep cut

under one ear, which only the cold prevented from bleeding profusely, a white

face scratched and bruised, and a frame hardly able to support itself, through

fatigue, and you may fancy my first fright was not much allayed when I had

leisure to examine her.

"My dear young lady," I exclaimed, "I'll stir nowhere, and hear nothing, till

you have removed every article of your clothes, and put on dry things; and

certainly you shall not go to Gimmerton tonight, so it is needless to order

the carriage."

"Certainly, I shall," she said. "walking or riding; yet I've no objection to

dress myself decently. And -ah, see how it flows down my neck now! The fire

does make it smart."

She insisted on my fulfilling her directions, before she would let me touch

her; and not till after the coachman had been instructed to get ready, and a

maid set to pack up some necessary attire, did I obtain her consent for

binding the wound and helping to change her garments.

"Now, Ellen," she said, when my task was finished and she was seated in an

easy chair on the hearth, with a cup of tea before her, "you sit down opposite

me, and put poor Catherine's baby away: I don't like to see it! You mustn't

think I care little for Catherine, because I behaved so foolishly on entering:

I've cried too, bitterly -yes, more than any one else has reason to cry. We

parted unreconciled, you remember, and I shan't forgive myself. But, for all

that, I was not going to sympathise with him -the brute beast! O, give me the

poker! This is the last thing of his I have about me:" she slipped the gold

ring from her third finger, and threw it on the floor. "I'll smash it!" she

continued, striking it with childish spite, "and then I'll burn it!" and she

took and dropped the misused article among the coals. "There! he shall buy

another, if he gets me back again. He'd be capable of coming to seek me, to

tease Edgar -I dare not stay, lest that notion should possess his wicked head!

And besides, Edgar has not been kind, has he? And I won't come suing for his

assistance; nor will I bring him into more trouble. Necessity compelled me to

seek shelter here; though, if I had not learned he was out of the way, I'd

have halted at the kitchen, washed my face, warmed myself, got you to bring

what I wanted, and departed again to anywhere out of reach of my accursed -of

that incarnate goblin! Ah, he was in such a fury! If he had caught me! It's a

pity Earnshaw is not his match in strength: I wouldn't have run till I'd seen

him all but demolished, had Hindley been able to do it!"

"Well, don't talk so fast, Miss!" I interrupted; "you'll disorder the

handkerchief I have tied round your face, and make the cut bleed again. Drink

your tea, and take breath, and give over laughing -laughter is sadly out of

place under this roof, and in your condition!"

"An undeniable truth," she replied. "Listen to that child! It maintains a

constant wail -send it out of my hearing for an hour; I shan't stay any longer."

I rang the bell, and committed it to a servant's care; and then I inquired

what had urged her to escape from Wuthering Heights in such an unlikely

plight, and where she meant to go, as she refused remaining with us.

"I ought, and I wish to remain," answered she, "to cheer Edgar and take care

of the baby, for two things, and because the Grange is my right home. But I

tell you he wouldn't let me! Do you think he could bear to see me grow fat and

merry; and could bear to think that we were tranquil, and not resolve on

poisoning our comfort? Now, I have the satisfaction of being sure that he

detests me to the point of its annoying him seriously to have me within

earshot or eyesight: I notice, when I enter his presence, the muscles of his

countenance are involuntarily distorted into an expression of hatred; partly

arising from his knowledge of the good causes I have to feel that sentiment

for him, and partly from original aversion. It is strong enough to make me

feel pretty certain that he would not chase me over England, supposing I

contrived a clear escape; and therefore I must get quite away. I've recovered

from my first desire to be killed by him: I'd rather he'd kill himself! He has

extinguished my love effectually, and so I'm at my ease. I can recollect yet

how I loved him; and can dimly imagine that I could still be loving him, if

-no, no! Even if he had doted on me, the devilish nature would have revealed

its existence somehow. Catherine had an awfully perverted taste to esteem him

so dearly, knowing him so well. Monster! would that he could be blotted out of

creation, and out of my memory!"

"Hush, hush! He's a human being," I said. "Be more charitable; there are worse

men than he is yet!"

"He's not a human being," she retorted, "and he has no claim on my charity. I

gave him my heart, and he took and pinched it to death, and flung it back to

me. People feel with their hearts, Ellen, and since he has destroyed mine, I

have not power to feel for him; and I would not, though he groaned from this

to his dying day, and wept tears of blood for Catherine! No, indeed, indeed, I

wouldn't!" And here Isabella began to cry; but, immediately dashing the water

from her lashes, she recommenced. "You asked, what has driven me to flight at

last? I was compelled to attempt it, because I had succeeded in rousing his

rage a pitch above his malignity. Pulling out the nerves with red-hot pincers

requires more coolness than knocking on the head. He was worked up to forget

the fiendish prudence he boasted of, and proceeded to murderous violence. I

experienced pleasure in being able to exasperate him; the sense of pleasure

woke my instinct of self-preservation, so I fairly broke free; and if ever I

come into his hands again he is welcome to a signal revenge.

"Yesterday, you know, Mr. Earnshaw should have been at the funeral. He kept

himself sober for the purpose -tolerably sober: not going to bed mad at six

o'clock and getting up drunk at twelve. Consequently he rose, in suicidal low

spirits, as fit for the church as for a dance; and instead, he sat down by the

fire and swallowed gin or brandy by tumblerfuls.

"Heathcliff -I shudder to name him! -has been a stranger in the house from

last Sunday till today. Whether the angels have fed him, or his kin beneath, I

cannot tell, but he has not eaten a meal with us for nearly a week. He has

just come home at dawn, and gone upstairs to his chamber, locking himself in

-as if anybody dreamt of coveting his company! There he has continued, praying

like a Methodist -only the deity he implored is senseless dust and ashes, and

God, when addressed, was curiously confounded with his own black father! After

concluding these precious orisons -and they lasted generally till he grew

hoarse and his voice was strangled in his throat -he would be off again,

always straight down to the Grange! I wonder Edgar did not send for a

constable, and give him into custody! For me, grieved as I was about

Catherine, it was impossible to avoid regarding this season of deliverance

from degrading oppression as a holiday.

"I recovered spirits sufficient to hear Joseph's eternal lectures without

weeping, and to move up and down the house less with the foot of a frightened

thief than formerly. You wouldn't think that I should cry at anything Joseph

could say; but he and Hareton are detestable companions. I'd rather sit with

Hindley, and hear his awful talk, than with `t' little maister' and his

staunch supporter, that odious old man! When Heathcliff is in, I'm often

obliged to seek the kitchen and their society, or starve among the damp

uninhabited chambers; when he is not, as was the case this week, I establish a

table and chair at one corner of the house fire, and never mind how Mr.

Earnshaw may occupy himself; and he does not interfere with my arrangements.

He is quieter now than he used to be, if no one provokes him, -more sullen and

depressed, and less furious. Joseph affirms he's sure he's an altered man,

that the Lord has touched his heart, and he is saved `so as by fire'. I'm

puzzled to detect signs of the favourable change: but it is not my business.

"Yester-evening I sat in my nook reading some old books till late on towards

twelve. It seemed so dismal to go upstairs, with the wild snow blowing

outside, and my thoughts continually reverting to the kirkyard and the

new-made grave! I dared hardly lift my eyes from the page before me, that

melancholy scene so instantly usurped its place. "Hindley sat opposite, his

head leant on his hand, perhaps meditating on the same subject. He had ceased

drinking at a point below irrationality, and had neither stirred nor spoken

during two or three hours. There was no sound through the house but the

moaning wind, which shook the windows every now and then, the faint crackling

of the coals, and the click of my snuffers as I removed at intervals the long

wick of the candle. Hareton and Joseph were probably fast asleep in bed. It

was very, very sad; and while I read I sighed, for it seemed as if all joy had

vanished from the world, never to be restored.

"The doleful silence was broken at length by the sound of the kitchen latch:

Heathcliff had returned from his watch earlier than usual; owing, I suppose,

to the sudden storm. That entrance was fastened, and we heard him coming round

to get in by the other. I rose with an irrepressible expression of what I felt

on my lips, which induced my companion, who had been staring towards the door,

to turn and look at me.

" `I'll keep him out five minutes,' he exclaimed. `You won't object?'

" `No, you may keep him out the whole night for me,' I answered. `Do! put the

key in the lock, and draw the bolts.'

"Earnshaw accomplished this ere his guest reached the front; he then came and

brought his chair to the other side of my table, leaning over it, and

searching in my eyes for a sympathy with the burning hate that gleamed from

his: as he both looked and felt like an assassin, he couldn't exactly find

that; but he discovered enough to encourage him to speak.

" `You and I,' he said, `have each a great debt to settle with the man out

yonder! If we were neither of us cowards, we might combine to discharge it.

Are you as soft as your brother? Are you willing to endure to the last, and

not once attempt a repayment?'

" `I'm weary of enduring now,' I replied; `and I'd be glad of a retaliation

that wouldn't recoil on myself; but treachery and violence are spears pointed

at both ends, -they wound those who resort to them worse than their enemies.'

" `Treachery and violence are a just return for treachery and violence!' cried

Hindley. `Mrs. Heathcliff, I'll ask you to do nothing but sit still and be

dumb. Tell me now, can you? I'm sure you would have as much pleasure as I in

witnessing the conclusion of the fiend's existence; he'll be your death unless

you overreach him; and he'll be my ruin. Damn the hellish villain! He knocks

at the door as if he were master here already! Promise to hold your tongue,

and before that clock strikes -it wants three minutes of one -you're a free

woman!'

"He took the implements which I described to you in my letter from his breast,

and would have turned down the candle. I snatched it away, however, and seized

his arm.

" `I'll not hold my tongue!' I said; `you mustn't touch him. Let the door

remain shut, and be quiet!'

" `No! I've formed my resolution, and, by God, I'll execute it!' cried the

desperate being. `I'll do you a kindness in spite of yourself, and Hareton

justice! And you needn't trouble your head to screen me; Catherine is gone.

Nobody alive would regret me, or be ashamed, though I cut my throat this

minute -and it's time to make an end!'

"I might as well have struggled with a bear, or reasoned with a lunatic. The

only resource left me was to run to a lattice and warn his intended victim of

the fate which awaited him.

" `You'd better seek shelter somewhere else tonight!' I exclaimed in a rather

triumphant tone. `Mr. Earnshaw has a mind to shoot you, if you persist in

endeavouring to enter.'

" `You'd better open the door, you --' he answered, addressing me by some

elegant term that I don't care to repeat.

" `I shall not meddle in the matter,' I retorted again. `Come in and get shot,

if you please! I've done my duty.'

"With that I shut the window and returned to my place by the fire, having too

small a stock of hypocrisy at my command to pretend any anxiety for the danger

that menaced him. Earnshaw swore passionately at me, affirming that I loved

the villain yet, and calling me all sorts of names for the base spirit I

evinced. And I, in my secret heart (and conscience never reproached me),

thought what a blessing it would be for him should Heathcliff put him out of

misery; and what a blessing for me should he send Heathcliff to his right

abode! As I sat nursing these reflections, the casement behind me was banged

on to the floor by a blow from the latter individual, and his black

countenance looked blightingly through. The stanchions stood too close to

suffer his shoulders to follow, and I smiled, exulting in my fancied security.

His hair and clothes were whitened with snow, and his sharp cannibal teeth,

revealed by cold and wrath, gleamed through the dark.

" `Isabella, let me in, or I'll make you repent!' he `girned', as Joseph calls

it.

" `I cannot commit murder,' I replied. `Mr. Hindley stands sentinel with a

knife and loaded pistol.'

" `Let me in by the kitchen door,' he said.

" `Hindley will be there before me,' I answered; `and that's a poor love of

yours that cannot bear a shower of snow! We were left at peace in our beds as

long as the summer moon shone, but the moment a blast of winter returns, you

must run for shelter! Heathcliff, if I were you, I'd go stretch myself over

her grave and die like a faithful dog. The world is surely not worth living in

now, is it? You had distinctly impressed on me the idea that Catherine was the

whole joy of your life: I can't imagine how you think of surviving her loss.'

" `He's there, is he?' exclaimed my companion, rushing to the gap. `If I can

get my arm out I can hit him!'

"I'm afraid, Ellen, you'll set me down as really wicked; but you don't know

all, so don't judge. I wouldn't have aided or abetted an attempt on even his

life for anything. Wish that he were dead, I must; and therefore I was

fearfully disappointed, and unnerved by terror for the consequences of my

taunting speech, when he flung himself on Earnshaw's weapon and wrenched it

from his grasp.

"The charge exploded, and the knife, in springing back, closed into its

owner's wrist. Heathcliff pulled it away by main force, slitting up the flesh

as it passed on, and thrust it dripping into his pocket. He then took a stone,

struck down the division between two windows, and sprung in. His adversary had

fallen senseless with excessive pain and the flow of blood that gushed from an

artery or a large vein. The ruffian kicked and trampled on him, and dashed his

head repeatedly against the flags, holding me with one hand, meantime, to

prevent me summoning Joseph. He exerted preterhuman self-denial in abstaining

from finishing him completely; but getting out of breath he finally desisted,

and dragged the apparently inanimate body on to the settle. There he tore off

the sleeve of Earnshaw's coat, and bound up the wound with brutal roughness,

spitting and cursing during the operation as energetically as he had kicked

before. Being at liberty, I lost no time in seeking the old servant; who,

having gathered by degrees the purport of my hasty tale, hurried below,

gasping, as he descended the steps two at once.

" `Whet is thur tuh do, nah? whet is thur tuh do, nah?'

" `There's this to do,' thundered Heathcliff, `that your master's mad; and

should he last another month, I'll have him to an asylum. And how the devil

did you come to fasten me out, you toothless hound? Don't stand muttering and

mumbling there. Come, I'm not going to nurse him. Wash that stuff away; and

mind the sparks of your candle -it is more than half brandy!'

" `Und soa, yah been murthering on him?' exclaimed Joseph, lifting his hands

and eyes in horror. `If iver Aw seed a seeght loike this! May the Lord -'

"Heathcliff gave him a push on to his knees in the middle of the blood, and

flung a towel to him; but instead of proceeding to dry it up, he joined his

hands and began a prayer, which excited my laughter from its odd phraseology.

I was in the condition of mind to be shocked at nothing; in fact, I was as

reckless as some malefactors show themselves at the foot of the gallows.

" `Oh, I forgot you,' said the tyrant. `You shall do that. Down with you. And

you conspire with him against me, do you, viper? There, that is work fit for

you!'

"He shook me till my teeth rattled, and pitched me beside Joseph, who steadily

concluded his supplications and then rose, vowing he would set off for the

Grange directly. Mr. Linton was a magistrate, and though he had fifty wives

dead, he should inquire into this. He was so obstinate in his resolution, that

Heathcliff deemed it expedient to compel from my lips a recapitulation of what

had taken place, standing over me, heaving with malevolence, as I reluctantly

delivered the account in answer to his questions. It required a great deal of

labour to satisfy the old man that he was not the aggressor; especially with

my hardly-wrung replies. However, Mr. Earnshaw soon convinced him that he was

alive still; he hastened to administer a dose of spirits, and by their succour

his master presently regained motion and consciousness. Heathcliff, aware that

he was ignorant of the treatment received while insensible, called him

deliriously intoxicated, and said he should not notice his atrocious conduct

further, but advised him to get to bed. To my joy, he left us, after giving

this judicious counsel, and Hindley stretched himself on the hearthstone. I

departed to my own room, marvelling that I had escaped so easily.

"This morning, when I came down, about half-an-hour before noon, Mr. Earnshaw

was sitting by the fire, deadly sick; his evil genius, almost as gaunt and

ghastly, leant against the chimney. Neither appeared inclined to dine, and,

having waited till all was cold on the table, I commenced alone. Nothing

hindered me from eating heartily, and I experienced a certain sense of

satisfaction and superiority, as, at intervals, I cast a look towards my

silent companions, and felt the comfort of a quiet conscience within me. After

I had done, I ventured on the unusual liberty of drawing near the fire, going

round Earnshaw's seat, and kneeling in the corner beside him.

"Heathcliff did not glance my way, and I gazed up, and contemplated his

features almost as confidently as if they had been turned to stone. His

forehead, that I once thought so manly, and that I now think so diabolical,

was shaded with a heavy cloud; his basilisk eyes were nearly quenched by

sleeplessness, and weeping, perhaps, for the lashes were wet then; his lips

devoid of their ferocious sneer, and sealed in an expression of unspeakable

sadness. Had it been another, I would have covered my face in the presence of

such grief. In his case, I was gratified; and, ignoble as it seems to insult a

fallen enemy, I couldn't miss this chance of sticking in a dart: his weakness

was the only time when I could taste the delight of paying wrong for wrong."

"Fie, fie, Miss!" I interrupted. "One might suppose you had never opened a

Bible in your life. If God afflict your enemies, surely that ought to suffice

you. It is both mean and presumptuous to add your torture to His!"

"In general, I'll allow that it would be, Ellen," she continued; "but what

misery laid on Heathcliff could content me, unless I have a hand in it? I'd

rather he suffered less, if I might cause his sufferings and he might know

that I was the cause. Oh, I owe him so much. On only one condition can I hope

to forgive him. It is, if I may take an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth;

for every wrench of agony return a wrench: reduce him to my level. As he was

the first to injure, make him the first to implore pardon; and then -why then,

Ellen, I might show you some generosity. But it is utterly impossible I can

ever be revenged, and therefore I cannot forgive him. Hindley wanted some

water, and I handed him a glass, and asked him how he was.

" `Not as ill as I wish,' he replied. `But leaving out my arm, every inch of

me is as sore as if I had been fighting with a legion of imps!'

" `Yes, no wonder,' was my next remark. `Catherine used to boast that she

stood between you and bodily harm: she meant that certain persons would not

hurt you for fear of offending her. It's well people don't really rise from

their grave, or, last night, she might have witnessed a repulsive scene! Are

not you bruised, and cut over your chest and shoulders?'

" `I can't say,' he answered; `but what do you mean? Did he dare to strike me

when I was down?'

" `He trampled on, and kicked you, and dashed you on the ground,' I whispered.

`And his mouth watered to tear you with his teeth; because he's only half a

man -not so much.'

"Mr. Earnshaw looked up, like me, to the countenance of our mutual foe; who,

absorbed in his anguish, seemed insensible to anything around him: the longer

he stood, the plainer his reflections revealed their blackness through his

features.

" `Oh, if God would but give me strength to strangle him in my last agony, I'd

go to hell with joy,' groaned the impatient man, writhing to rise, and sinking

back in despair, convinced of his inadequacy for the struggle.

" `Nay, it's enough that he has murdered one of you,' I observed aloud. `At

the Grange, every one knows your sister would have been living now, had it not

been for Mr. Heathcliff. After all, it is preferable to be hated than loved by

him. When I recollect how happy we were -how happy Catherine was before he

came -I'm fit to curse the day.'

"Most likely, Heathcliff noticed more the truth of what was said than the

spirit of the person who said it. His attention was roused, I saw, for his

eyes rained down tears among the ashes, and he drew his breath in suffocating

sighs. I stared full at him, and laughed scornfully. The clouded windows of

hell flashed a moment towards me; the fiend which usually looked out, however,

was so dimmed and drowned that I did not fear to hazard another sound of

derision.

" `Get up, and begone out of my sight,' said the mourner.

"I guessed he uttered those words, at least, though his voice was hardly

intelligible.

" `I beg your pardon,' I replied. `But I loved Catherine too; and her brother

requires attendance, which, for her sake, I shall supply. Now that she's dead,

I see her in Hindley: Hindley has exactly her eyes, if you had not tried to

gouge them out, and made them black and red, and her -'

" `Get up, wretched idiot, before I stamp you to death!' he cried, making a

movement that caused me to make one also.

" `But then,' I continued, holding myself ready to flee, `if poor Catherine

had trusted you, and assumed the ridiculous, contemptible, degrading title of

Mrs. Heathcliff, she would soon have presented a similar picture! She wouldn't

have borne your abominable behaviour quietly -her detestation and disgust must

have found voice.'

"The back of the settle and Earnshaw's person interposed between me and him,

so instead of endeavouring to reach me, he snatched a dinner knife from the

table and flung it at my head. It struck beneath my ear, and stopped the

sentence I was uttering; but, pulling it out, I sprang to the door and

delivered another, which I hope went a little deeper than his missile. The

last glimpse I caught of him was a furious rush on his part, checked by the

embrace of his host, and both fell locked together on the hearth. In my flight

through the kitchen I bid Joseph speed to his master; I knocked over Hareton,

who was hanging a litter of puppies from a chair-back in the doorway, and,

blest as a soul escaped from purgatory, I bounded, leaped, and flew down the

steep road; then, quitting its windings, shot direct across the moor, rolling

over banks, and wading through marshes, -precipitating myself, in fact,

towards the beacon light of the Grange. And far rather would I be condemned to

a perpetual dwelling in the infernal regions, than, even for one night, abide

beneath the roof of Wuthering Heights again."

Isabella ceased speaking, and took a drink of tea; then she rose, and bidding

me put on her bonnet, and a great shawl I had brought, and turning a deaf ear

to my entreaties for her to remain another hour, she stepped on to a chair,

kissed Edgar's and Catherine's portraits, bestowed a similar salute on me, and

descended to the carriage, accompanied by Fanny, who yelped wild with joy at

recovering her mistress. She was driven away, never to revisit this

neighbourhood; but a regular correspondence was established between her and my

master when things were more settled. I believe her new abode was in the

south, near London; there she had a son born, a few months subsequent to her

escape. He was christened Linton, and, from the first, she reported him to be

an ailing, peevish creature.

Mr. Heathcliff, meeting me one day in the village, inquired where she lived. I

refused to tell. He remarked that it was not of any moment, only she must

beware of coming to her brother: she should not be with him, if he had to keep

her himself. Though I would give no information, he discovered, through some

of the other servants, both her place of residence and the existence of the

child. Still he didn't molest her, -for which forbearance she might thank his

aversion, I suppose. He often asked about the infant, when he saw me; and on

hearing its name, smiled grimly, and observed:

"They wish me to hate it too, do they?'

"I don't think they wish you to know anything about it," I answered.

"But I'll have it," he said, "when I want it. They may reckon on that!"

Fortunately, its mother died before the time arrived; some thirteen years

after the decease of Catherine, when Linton was twelve, or a little more.

On the day succeeding Isabella's unexpected visit, I had no opportunity of

speaking to my master: he shunned conversation, and was fit for discussing

nothing. When I could get him to listen, I saw it pleased him that his sister

had left her husband, whom he abhorred with an intensity which the mildness of

his nature would scarcely seem to allow. So deep and sensitive was his

aversion, that he refrained from going anywhere where he was likely to see or

hear of Heathcliff. Grief, and that together, transformed him into a complete

hermit: he threw up his office of magistrate, ceased even to attend church,

avoided the village on all occasions, and spent a life of entire seclusion

within the limits of his park and grounds; only varied by solitary rambles on

the moors, and visits to the grave of his wife, mostly at evening, or early

morning before other wanderers were abroad. But he was too good to be

thoroughly unhappy long. He didn't pray for Catherine's soul to haunt him.

Time brought resignation, and a melancholy sweeter than common joy. He

recalled her memory with ardent, tender love, and hopeful aspiring to the

better world, where, he doubted not, she was gone.

And he had earthly consolation and affections, also. For a few days, I said,

he seemed regardless of the puny successor to the departed: that coldness

melted as fast as snow in April, and ere the tiny thing could stammer a word

or totter a step, it wielded a despot's sceptre in his heart. It was named

Catherine; but he never called it the name in full, as he had never called the

first Catherine short, -probably because Heathcliff had a habit of doing so.

The little one was always Cathy; it formed to him a distinction from the

mother, and yet a connection with her; and his attachment sprang from its

relation to her, far more than from its being his own.

I used to draw a comparison between him and Hindley Earnshaw, and perplex

myself to explain satisfactorily why their conduct was so opposite in similar

circumstances. They had both been fond husbands, and were both attached to

their children; and I could not see how they shouldn't both have taken the

same road, for good or evil. But, I thought in my mind, Hindley, with

apparently the stronger head, has shown himself sadly the worse and the weaker

man. When his ship struck, the captain abandoned his post; and the crew,

instead of trying to save her, rushed into riot and confusion, leaving no hope

for their luckless vessel. Linton, on the contrary, displayed the true courage

of a loyal and faithful soul: he trusted God; and God comforted him. One

hoped, and the other despaired: they chose their own lots, and were

righteously doomed to endure them. But you'll not want to hear my moralising,

Mr. Lockwood; you'll judge as well as I can, all these things; at least,

you'll think you will, and that's the same. The end of Earnshaw was what might

have been expected; it followed fast on his sister's, -there were scarcely six

months between them. We, at the Grange, never got a very succinct account of

his state preceding it; all that I did learn, was on occasion of going to aid

in the preparations for the funeral. Mr. Kenneth came to announce the event to

my master.

"Well, Nelly," said he, riding into the yard one morning, too early not to

alarm me with an instant presentiment of bad news, "it's yours and my turn to

go into mourning at present. Who's given us the slip now, do you think?"

"Who?" I asked in a flurry.

"Why, guess!" he returned, dismounting, and slinging his bridle on a hook by

the door. "And nip up the corner of your apron, -I'm certain you'll need it."

"Not Mr. Heathcliff, surely?" I exclaimed.

"What! would you have tears for him?" said the doctor. "No, Heathcliff's a

tough young fellow: he looks blooming today. I've just seen him. He's rapidly

regaining flesh since he lost his better half."

"Who is it then, Mr. Kenneth?" I repeated impatiently.

"Hindley Earnshaw! Your old friend Hindley," he replied, "and my wicked

gossip; though he's been too wild for me this long while. There! I said we

should draw water. But cheer up! He died true to his character: drunk as a

lord. Poor lad! I'm sorry, too. One can't help missing an old companion,

though he had the worst tricks with him that ever man imagined, and has done

me many a rascally turn. He's barely twenty-seven, it seems; that's your own

age -who would have thought you were born in one year?"

I confess this blow was greater to me than the shock of Mrs. Linton's death:

ancient associations lingered round my heart; I sat down in the porch and wept

as for a blood relation, desiring Kenneth to get another servant to introduce

him to the master. I could not hinder myself from pondering on the question

-"Had he had fair play?" Whatever I did, that idea would bother me: it was so

tiresomely pertinacious that I resolved on requesting leave to go to Wuthering

Heights, and assist in the last duties to the dead. Mr. Linton was extremely

reluctant to consent, but I pleaded eloquently for the friendless condition in

which he lay; and I said my old master and foster-brother had a claim on my

services as strong as his own. Besides, I reminded him that the child Hareton

was his wife's nephew, and, in the absence of nearer kin, he ought to act as

its guardian; and he ought to and must inquire how the property was left, and

look over the concerns of his brother-in-law. He was unfit for attending to

such matters then, but he bid me speak to his lawyer; and at length permitted

me to go. His lawyer had been Earnshaw's also: I called at the village, and

asked him to accompany me. He shook his head, and advised that Heathcliff

should be let alone; affirming, if the truth were known, Hareton would be

found little else than a beggar.

"His father died in debt," he said; "the whole property is mortgaged, and the

sole chance for the natural heir is to allow him an opportunity of creating

some interest in the creditor's heart, that he may be inclined to deal

leniently towards him."

When I reached the Heights, I explained that I had come to see everything

carried on decently; and Joseph, who appeared in sufficient distress,

expressed satisfaction at my presence. Mr. Heathcliff said he did not perceive

that I was wanted; but I might stay and order the arrangements for the

funeral, if I chose.

"Correctly," he remarked, "that fool's body should be buried at the

crossroads, without ceremony of any kind. I happened to leave him ten minutes

yesterday afternoon, and in that interval he fastened the two doors of the

house against me, and he has spent the night in drinking himself to death

deliberately! We broke in this morning, for we heard him snorting like a

horse; and there he was, laid over the settle; flaying and scalping would not

have wakened him. I sent for Kenneth, and he came; but not till the beast had

changed into carrion: he was both dead and cold, and stark; and so you'll

allow, it was useless making more stir about him!"

The old servant confirmed his statement, but muttered:

"Aw'd rayther he'd goan hisseln fur t' doctor! Aw sud uh taen tent uh t'

maister better nur him -un he warn't deead when Aw left, nowt uh t' soart!"

I insisted on the funeral being respectable. Mr. Heathcliff said I might have

my own way there too; only, he desired me to remember that the money for the

whole affair came out of his pocket. He maintained a hard, careless

deportment, indicative of neither joy nor sorrow; if anything, it expressed a

flinty gratification at a piece of difficult work successfully executed. I

observed once, indeed, something like exultation in his aspect: it was just

when the people were bearing the coffin from the house. He had the hypocrisy

to represent a mourner; and previous to following with Hareton, he lifted the

unfortunate child on to the table and muttered, with peculiar gusto, "Now, my

bonny lad, you are mine! And we'll see if one tree won't grow as crooked as

another, with the same wind to twist it!" The unsuspecting thing was pleased

at this speech, -he played with Heathcliff's whiskers, and stroked his cheek;

but I divined its meaning, and observed tartly, "That boy must go back with me

to Thrushcross Grange, sir. There is nothing in the world less yours than he

is!"

"Does Linton say so?" he demanded.

"Of course -he has ordered me to take him," I replied.

"Well," said the scoundrel, "we'll not argue the subject now; but I have a

fancy to try my hand at rearing a young one, so intimate to your master that I

must supply the place of this with my own, if he attempt to remove it. I don't

engage to let Hareton go, undisputed; but I'll be pretty sure to make the

other come! Remember to tell him."

This hint was enough to bind our hands. I repeated its substance on my return;

and Edgar Linton, little interested at the commencement, spoke no more of

interfering. I'm not aware that he could have done it to any purpose, had he

been ever so willing.

The guest was now the master of Wuthering Heights: he held firm possession,

and proved to the attorney -who, in his turn, proved it to Mr. Linton -that

Earnshaw had mortgaged every yard of land he owned, for cash to supply his

mania for gaming; and he, Heathcliff, was the mortgagee. In that manner

Hareton, who should now be the first gentleman in the neighbourhood, was

reduced to a state of complete dependence on his father's inveterate enemy;

and lives in his own house as a servant, deprived of the advantage of wages,

and quite unable to right himself, because of his friendlessness, and his

ignorance that he has been wronged.

Chapter 18

The twelve years, continued Mrs. Dean, following that dismal period, were the

happiest of my life: my greatest troubles in their passage rose from our

little lady's trifling illnesses, which she had to experience in common with

all children, rich and poor. For the rest, after the first six months, she

grew like a larch, and could walk and talk too, in her own way, before the

heath blossomed a second time over Mrs. Linton's dust. She was the most

winning thing that ever brought sunshine into a desolate house: a real beauty

in face, with the Earnshaws' handsome dark eyes, but the Lintons' fair skin,

and small features, and yellow curling hair. Her spirit was high, though not

rough, and qualified by a heart sensitive and lively to excess in its

affections. That capacity for intense attachments reminded me of her mother;

still she did not resemble her; for she could be soft and mild as a dove, and

she had a gentle voice and pensive expression: her anger was never furious;

her love never fierce, -it was deep and tender. However, it must be

acknowledged, she had faults to foil her gifts. A propensity to be saucy was

one; and a perverse will, that indulged children invariably acquire, whether

they be good tempered or cross. If a servant chanced to vex her, it was always

-"I shall tell Papa!" And if he reproved her, even by a look, you would have

thought it a heart-breaking business: I don't believe he ever did speak a

harsh word to her. He took her education entirely on himself, and made it an

amusement. Fortunately, curiosity and a quick intellect urged her into an apt

scholar: she learned rapidly and eagerly, and did honour to his teaching.

Till she reached the age of thirteen, she had not once been beyond the range

of the park by herself. Mr. Linton would take her with him a mile or so

outside, on rare occasions; but he trusted her to no one else. Gimmerton was

an unsubstantial name in her ears; the chapel, the only building she had

approached or entered, except her own home. Wuthering Heights and Mr.

Heathcliff did not exist for her, -she was a perfect recluse, and, apparently,

perfectly contented. Sometimes, indeed, while surveying the country from her

nursery window, she would observe:

"Ellen, how long will it be before I can walk to the top of those hills? I

wonder what lies on the other side -is it the sea?"

"No, Miss Cathy," I would answer; "it is hills again, just like these."

"And what are those golden rocks like, when you stand under them?" she once

asked.

The abrupt descent of Penistone Crags particularly attracted her notice;

especially when the setting sun shone on it and the topmost heights, and the

whole extent of landscape besides lay in shadow. I explained that they were

bare masses of stone, with hardly enough earth in their clefts to nourish a

stunted tree.

"And why are they bright so long after it is evening here?" she pursued.

"Because they are a great deal higher up than we are," replied I; "you could

not climb them, they are too high and steep. In winter the frost is always

there before it comes to us; and deep into summer I have found snow under that

black hollow on the northeast side!"

"Oh, you have been on them!" she cried gleefully. "Then I can go, too, when I

am a woman. Has Papa been, Ellen?"

"Papa would tell you, Miss," I answered hastily, "that they are not worth the

trouble of visiting. The moors, where you ramble with him, are much nicer; and

Thrushcross Park is the finest place in the world."

"But I know the park, and I don't know those," she murmured to herself. "And I

should delight to look round me from the brow of that tallest point: my little

pony Minny shall take me some time."

One of the maids mentioning the Fairy Cave, quite turned her head with a

desire to fulfil this project, -she teased Mr. Linton about it; and he

promised she should have the journey when she got older. But Miss Catherine

measured her age by months, and, "Now, am I old enough to go to Penistone

Crags?" was the constant question in her mouth. The road thither wound close

by Wuthering Heights. Edgar had not the heart to pass it; so she received as

constantly the answer, "Not yet, love; not yet."

I said Mrs. Heathcliff lived above a dozen years after quitting her husband.

Her family were of a delicate constitution: she and Edgar both lacked the

ruddy health that you will generally meet in these parts. What her last

illness was, I am not certain: I conjecture, they died of the same thing, a

kind of fever, slow at its commencement, but incurable, and rapidly consuming

life towards the close. She wrote to inform her brother of the probable

conclusion of a four months' indisposition under which she had suffered, and

entreated him to come to her, if possible; for she had much to settle, and she

wished to bid him adieu, and deliver Linton safely into his hands. Her hope

was that Linton might be left with him, as he had been with her: his father,

she would fain convince herself, had no desire to assume the burden of his

maintenance or education. My master hesitated not a moment in complying with

her request: reluctant as he was to leave home at ordinary calls, he flew to

answer this; commending Catherine to my peculiar vigilance, in his absence,

with reiterated orders that she must not wander out of the park, even under my

escort: he did not calculate on her going unaccompanied.

He was away three weeks. The first day or two, my charge sat in a corner of

the library, too sad for either reading or playing: in that quiet state she

caused me little trouble; but it was succeeded by an interval of impatient,

fretful weariness; and being too busy, and too old then, to run up and down

amusing her, I hit on a method by which she might entertain herself. I used to

send her on travels round the grounds -now on foot, and now on a pony;

indulging her with a patient audience of all her real and imaginary

adventures, when she returned.

The summer shone in full prime; and she took such a taste for this solitary

rambling that she often contrived to remain out from breakfast till tea; and

then the evenings were spent in recounting her fanciful tales. I did not fear

her breaking bounds, because the gates were generally locked, and I thought

she would scarcely venture forth alone, if they had stood wide open.

Unluckily, my confidence proved misplaced. Catherine came to me, one morning,

at eight o'clock, and said she was that day an Arabian merchant, going to

cross the Desert with his caravan; and I must give her plenty of provision for

herself and beasts: a horse, and three camels, personated by a large hound and

a couple of pointers. I got together a good store of dainties, and slung them

in a basket on one side of the saddle; and she sprang up as gay as a fairy,

sheltered by her wide-brimmed hat and gauze veil from the July sun, and

trotted off with a merry laugh, mocking my cautious counsel to avoid

galloping, and come back early. The naughty thing never made her appearance at

tea. One traveller, the hound, being an old dog and fond of its ease,

returned; but neither Cathy, nor the pony, nor the two pointers were visible

in any direction: I dispatched emissaries down this path, and that path, and

at last went wandering in search of her myself. There was a labourer working

at a fence round a plantation, on the borders of the grounds. I inquired of

him if he had seen our young lady.

"I saw her at morn," he replied; "she would have me to cut her a hazel switch,

and then she leapt her Galloway over the hedge yonder, where it is lowest, and

galloped out of sight."

You may guess how I felt at hearing this news. It struck me directly she must

have started for Penistone Crags. "What will become of her?" I ejaculated,

pushing through a gap which the man was repairing, and making straight to the

highroad. I walked as if for a wager, mile after mile, till a turn brought me

in view of the Heights; but no Catherine could I detect, far or near. The

Crags lie about a mile and a half beyond Mr. Heathcliff's place, and that is

four from the Grange, so I began to fear night would fall ere I could reach

them. "And what if she should have slipped in clambering among them," I

reflected, "and been killed, or broken some of her bones?" My suspense was

truly painful; and, at first, it gave me delightful relief to observe, in

hurrying by the farmhouse, Charlie, the fiercest of the pointers, lying under

a window, with swelled head and bleeding ear. I opened the wicket and ran to

the door, knocking vehemently for admittance. A woman whom I knew, and who

formerly lived at Gimmerton, answered, -she had been servant there since the

death of Mr. Earnshaw.

"Ah," said she, "you are coming a-seeking your little mistress! don't be

frightened. She's here safe: but I'm glad it isn't the master."

"He is not at home then, is he?" I panted, quite breathless with quick walking

and alarm.

"No, no," she replied; "both he and Joseph are off, and I think they won't

return this hour or more. Step in and rest you a bit."

I entered, and beheld my stray lamb seated on the hearth, rocking herself in a

little chair that had been her mother's when a child. Her hat was hung against

the wall, and she seemed perfectly at home, laughing and chattering, in the

best spirits imaginable, to Hareton -now a great, strong lad of eighteen -who

stared at her with considerable curiosity and astonishment, comprehending

precious little of the fluent succession of remarks and questions which her

tongue never ceased pouring forth.

"Very well, Miss!" I exclaimed, concealing my joy under an angry countenance.

"This is your last ride, till Papa comes back. I'll not trust you over the

threshold again, you naughty, naughty girl!"

"Aha, Ellen!" she cried gaily, jumping up, and running to my side. "I shall

have a pretty story to tell tonight: and so you've found me out. Have you ever

been here in your life before?"

"Put that hat on, and home at once," said I. "I'm dreadfully grieved at you,

Miss Cathy; you've done extremely wrong! It's no use pouting and crying, -that

won't repay the trouble I've had, scouring the country after you. To think how

Mr. Linton charged me to keep you in; and you stealing off so! it shows you

are a cunning little fox, and nobody will put faith in you any more."

"What have I done?" sobbed she, instantly checked. "Papa charged me nothing;

he'll not scold me, Ellen -he's never cross, like you!"

"Come, come!" I repeated. "I'll tie the riband. Now, let us have no petulance.

Oh, for shame! You thirteen years old, and such a baby!"

This exclamation was caused by her pushing the hat from her head, and

retreating to the chimney out of my reach.

"Nay," said the servant, "don't be hard on the bonny lass, Mrs. Dean. We made

her stop: she'd fain have ridden forwards, afeared you should be uneasy. But

Hareton offered to go with her, and I thought he should: it's a wild road over

the hills."

Hareton, during the discussion, stood with his hands in his pockets, too

awkward to speak, though he looked as if he did not relish my intrusion.

"How long am I to wait?" I continued, disregarding the woman's interference.

"It will be dark in ten minutes. Where is the pony, Miss Cathy? And where is

Phoenix? I shall leave you, unless you be quick; so please yourself."

"The pony is in the yard," she replied, "and Phoenix is shut in there. He's

bitten -and so is Charlie. I was going to tell you all about it; but you are

in a bad temper, and don't deserve to hear."

I picked up her hat, and approached to reinstate it; but perceiving that the

people of the house took her part, she commenced capering round the room; and

on my giving chase, ran like a mouse over and under and behind the furniture,

rendering it ridiculous for me to pursue. Hareton and the woman laughed, and

she joined them, and waxed more impertinent still; till I cried, in great

irritation:

"Well, Miss Cathy, if you were aware whose house this is, you'd be glad enough

to get out."

"It's your father's, isn't it?" she said, turning to Hareton.

"Nay," he replied, looking down, and blushing bashfully.

He could not stand a steady gaze from her eyes, though they were just his own.

"Whose, then -your master's?" she asked.

He coloured deeper, with a different feeling, muttered an oath, and turned away.

"Who is his master?" continued the tiresome girl, appealing to me. "He talked

about `our house', and `our folk'. I thought he had been the owner's son. And

he never said, Miss; he should have done, shouldn't he, if he's a servant?"

Hareton grew black as a thundercloud at this childish speech. I silently shook

my questioner, and at last succeeded in equipping her for departure.

"Now, get my horse," she said, addressing her unknown kinsman as she would one

of the stableboys at the Grange. "And you may come with me. I want to see

where the goblin-hunter rises in the marsh, and to hear about the fairishes,

as you call them: but make haste! What's the matter? Get my horse, I say."

"I'll see thee damned before I be thy servant!" growled the lad.

"You'll see me what?" asked Catherine in surprise.

"Damned -thou saucy witch!" he replied.

"There, Miss Cathy! you see you have got into pretty company," I interposed.

"Nice words to be used to a young lady! Pray don't begin to dispute with him.

Come, let us seek for Minny ourselves, and begone."

"But Ellen," cried she, staring, fixed in astonishment, "how dare he speak so

to me? Mustn't he be made to do as I ask him? You wicked creature, I shall

tell Papa what you said. -Now then!"

Hareton did not appear to feel this threat; so the tears sprung into her eyes

with indignation. "You bring the pony," she exclaimed, turning to the woman,

"and let my dog free this moment!"

"Softly, Miss," answered the addressed; "you'll lose nothing by being civil.

Though Mr. Hareton, there, be not the master's son, he's your cousin; and I

was never hired to serve you."

"He my cousin!" cried Cathy, with a scornful laugh.

"Yes, indeed," responded her reprover.

"Oh, Ellen! don't let them say such things," she pursued, in great trouble.

"Papa is gone to fetch my cousin from London, -my cousin is a gentleman's son.

That my -" she stopped, and wept outright; upset at the bare notion of

relationship with such a clown.

"Hush, hush!" I whispered, "people can have many cousins, and of all sorts,

Miss Cathy, without being any the worse for it; only they needn't keep their

company, if they be disagreeable and bad."

"He's not -he's not my cousin, Ellen!" she went on, gathering fresh grief from

reflection, and flinging herself into my arms for refuge from the idea.

I was much vexed at her and the servant for their mutual revelations; having

no doubt of Linton's approaching arrival, communicated by the former, being

reported to Mr. Heathcliff; and feeling as confident that Catherine's first

thought on her father's return would be to seek an explanation of the latter's

assertion concerning her rude-bred kindred. Hareton, recovering from his

disgust at being taken for a servant, seemed moved by her distress; and,

having fetched the pony round to the door, he took, to propitiate her, a fine

crooked-legged terrier whelp from the kennel, and putting it into her hand bid

her wisht! for he meant naught. Pausing in her lamentations, she surveyed him

with a glance of awe and horror, then burst forth anew.

I could scarcely refrain from smiling at this antipathy to the poor fellow,

who was a well-made, athletic youth, good-looking in features, and stout and

healthy, but attired in garments befitting his daily occupations of working on

the farm, and lounging among the moors after rabbits and game. Still, I

thought I could detect in his physiognomy a mind owning better qualities than

his father ever possessed. Good things lost amid a wilderness of weeds, to be

sure, whose rankness far overtopped their neglected growth; yet,

notwithstanding, evidence of a wealthy soil, that might yield luxuriant crops

under other and favourable circumstances. Mr. Heathcliff, I believe, had not

treated him physically ill; thanks to his fearless nature, which offered no

temptation to that course of oppression: it had none of the timid

susceptibility that would have given zest to ill-treatment, in Heathcliff's

judgment. He appeared to have bent his malevolence on making him a brute: he

was never taught to read or write; never rebuked for any bad habit which did

not annoy his keeper; never led a single step towards virtue, or guarded by a

single precept against vice. And from what I heard, Joseph contributed much to

his deterioration, by a narrow-minded partiality which prompted him to flatter

and pet him, as a boy, because he was the head of the old family. And as he

had been in the habit of accusing Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff, when

children, of putting the master past his patience, and compelling him to seek

solace in drink by what he termed their "offalld ways", so at present he laid

the whole burden of Hareton's faults on the shoulders of the usurper of his

property. If the lad swore, he wouldn't correct him; nor however culpably he

behaved. It gave Joseph satisfaction, apparently, to watch him go the worst

lengths, -he allowed that he was ruined, that his soul was abandoned to

perdition; but then, he reflected that Heathcliff must answer for it.

Hareton's blood would be required at his hands; and there lay immense

consolation in that thought. Joseph had instilled into him a pride of name,

and of his lineage; he would, had he dared, have fostered hate between him and

the present owner of the Heights; but his dread of that owner amounted to

superstition; and he confined his feelings regarding him to muttered

innuendoes and private comminations. I don't pretend to be intimately

acquainted with the mode of living customary in those days at Wuthering

Heights: I only speak from hearsay; for I saw little. The villagers affirmed

Mr. Heathcliff was near, and a cruel hard landlord to his tenants; but the

house, inside, had regained its ancient aspect of comfort under female

management, and the scenes of riot common in Hindley's time were not now

enacted within its walls. The master was too gloomy to seek companionship with

any people, good or bad; and he is yet.

This, however, is not making progress with my story. Miss Cathy rejected the

peace-offering of the terrier, and demanded her own dogs, Charlie and Phoenix.

They came limping, and hanging their heads; and we set out for home, sadly out

of sorts, every one of us. I could not wring from my little lady how she had

spent the day; except that, as I supposed, the goal of her pilgrimage was

Penistone Crags; and she arrived without adventure to the gate of the

farmhouse, when Hareton happened to issue forth, attended by some canine

followers, who attacked her train. They had a smart battle, before their

owners could separate them: that formed an introduction. Catherine told

Hareton who she was, and where she was going; and asked him to show her the

way; finally, beguiling him to accompany her. He opened the mysteries of the

Fairy Cave, and twenty other queer places. But, being in disgrace, I was not

favoured with a description of the interesting objects she saw. I could

gather, however, that her guide had been a favourite till she hurt his

feelings by addressing him as a servant; and Heathcliff's housekeeper hurt

hers by calling him her cousin. Then the language he had held to her rankled

in her heart, -she who was always "love", and "darling", and "queen", and

"angel" with everybody at the Grange, to be insulted so shockingly by a

stranger! She did not comprehend it; and hard work I had to obtain a promise

that she would not lay the grievance before her father. I explained how he

objected to the whole household at the Heights, and how sorry he would be to

find she had been there; but I insisted most on the fact, that if she revealed

my negligence of his orders, he would perhaps be so angry, that I should have

to leave; and Cathy couldn't bear that prospect: she pledged her word, and

kept it, for my sake. After all, she was a sweet little girl.

Chapter 19

A letter, edged with black, announced the day of my master's return. Isabella

was dead; and he wrote to bid me get mourning for his daughter, and arrange a

room, and other accommodations, for his youthful nephew. Catherine ran wild

with joy at the idea of welcoming her father back; and indulged most sanguine

anticipations of the innumerable excellences of her "real" cousin. The evening

of their expected arrival came. Since early morning, she had been busy

ordering her own small affairs; and now, attired in her new black frock -poor

thing! her aunt's death impressed her with no definite sorrow -she obliged me,

by constant worrying, to walk with her down through the grounds to meet them.

"Linton is just six months younger than I am," she chattered, as we strolled

leisurely over the swells and hollows of mossy turf, under shadow of the

trees. "How delightful it will be to have him for a playfellow! Aunt Isabella

sent Papa a beautiful lock of his hair; it was lighter than mine -more flaxen,

and quite as fine. I have it carefully preserved in a little glass box, and

I've often thought what pleasure it would be to see its owner. Oh! I am happy

-and Papa, dear, dear Papa! Come, Ellen, let us run! come run!"

She ran, and returned and ran again, many times before my sober footsteps

reached the gate, and then she seated herself on the grassy bank beside the

path, and tried to wait patiently; but that was impossible, -she couldn't be

still a minute.

"How long they are!" she exclaimed. "Ah, I see some dust on the road -they are

coming! No! When will they be here? May we not go a little way -half a mile,

Ellen, only just half a mile? Do say yes: to that clump of birches at the turn!"

I refused staunchly; and, at length, her suspense was ended, -the travelling

carriage rolled in sight. Miss Cathy shrieked, and stretched out her arms, as

soon as she caught her father's face looking from the window. He descended,

nearly as eager as herself; and a considerable interval elapsed ere they had a

thought to spare for any but themselves. While they exchanged caresses, I took

a peep in to see after Linton. He was asleep in a corner, wrapped in a warm,

fur-lined cloak, as if it had been winter. A pale, delicate, effeminate boy,

who might have been taken for my master's younger brother, so strong was the

resemblance: but there was a sickly peevishness in his aspect, that Edgar

Linton never had. The latter saw me looking; and having shaken hands, advised

me to close the door, and leave him undisturbed; for the journey had fatigued

him. Cathy would fain have taken one glance, but her father told her to come

on, and they walked together up the park, while I hastened before to prepare

the servants.

"Now, darling," said Mr. Linton, addressing his daughter, as they halted at

the bottom of the front steps, "your cousin is not so strong or so merry as

you are, and he has lost his mother, remember, a very short time since;

therefore, don't expect him to play and run about with you directly. And don't

harass him much by talking: let him be quiet this evening, at least, will you?"

"Yes, yes, Papa," answered Catherine; "but I do want to see him; and he hasn't

once looked out."

The carriage stopped; and the sleeper, being roused, was lifted to the ground

by his uncle.

"This is your cousin Cathy, Linton," he said, putting their little hands

together. "She's fond of you already; and mind you don't grieve her by crying

tonight. Try to be cheerful now; the travelling is at an end, and you have

nothing to do but rest and amuse yourself as you please."

"Let me go to bed, then," answered the boy, shrinking from Catherine's salute;

and he put his fingers to his eyes to remove incipient tears.

"Come, come, there's a good child," I whispered, leading him in. "You'll make

her weep too -see how sorry she is for you!"

I do not know whether it were sorrow for him, but his cousin put on as sad a

countenance as himself, and returned to her father. All three entered, and

mounted to the library, where tea was laid ready. I proceeded to remove

Linton's cap and mantle, and placed him on a chair by the table; but he was no

sooner seated than he began to cry afresh. My master inquired what was the

matter.

"I can't sit on a chair," sobbed the boy.

"Go to the sofa, then, and Ellen shall bring you some tea," answered his uncle

patiently.

He had been greatly tried during the journey, I felt convinced, by his fretful

ailing charge. Linton slowly trailed himself off, and lay down. Cathy carried

a footstool and her cup to his side. At first she sat silent; but that could

not last: she had resolved to make a pet of her little cousin, as she would

have him to be; and she commenced stroking his curls, and kissing his cheek,

and offering him tea in her saucer, like a baby. This pleased him, for he was

not much better: he dried his eyes, and lightened into a faint smile.

"Oh, he'll do very well," said the master to me, after watching them a minute.

"Very well, if we can keep him, Ellen. The company of a child of his own age

will instil new spirit into him soon, and by wishing for strength he'll gain

it."

"Ay, if we can keep him!" I mused to myself; and sore misgivings came over me

that there was slight hope of that. And then, I thought, however will that

weakling live at Wuthering Heights, between his father and Hareton? what

playmates and instructors they'll be. Our doubts were presently decided -even

earlier than I expected. I had just taken the children upstairs, after tea was

finished, and seen Linton asleep -he would not suffer me to leave him till

that was the case -I had come down, and was standing by the table in the hall,

lighting a bedroom candle for Mr. Edgar, when a maid stepped out of the

kitchen and informed me that Mr. Heathcliff's servant Joseph was at the door,

and wished to speak with the master.

"I shall ask him what he wants first," I said, in considerable trepidation. "A

very unlikely hour to be troubling people, and the instant they have returned

from a long journey. I don't think the master can see him."

Joseph had advanced through the kitchen as I uttered these words, and now

presented himself in the hall. He was donned in his Sunday garments, with his

most sanctimonious and sourest face, and, holding his hat in one hand and his

stick in the other, he proceeded to clean his shoes on the mat.

"Good evening, Joseph," I said coldly. "What business brings you here tonight?"

"It's Maister Linton Aw mun spake tull," he answered, waving me disdainfully

aside.

"Mr. Linton is going to bed; unless you have something particular to say, I'm

sure he won't hear it now," I continued. "You had better sit down in there,

and entrust your message to me."

"Which is his rahm?" pursued the fellow, surveying the range of closed doors.

I perceived he was bent on refusing my mediation, so very reluctantly I went

up to the library, and announced the unseasonable visitor, advising that he

should be dismissed till next day. Mr. Linton had no time to empower me to do

so, for he mounted close at my heels, and, pushing into the apartment, planted

himself at the far side of the table, with his two fists clapped on the head

of his stick, and began in an elevated tone, as if anticipating opposition:

"Hathecliff has send me for his lad, un Aw munn't goa back baht him."

Edgar Linton was silent a minute; an expression of exceeding sorrow overcast

his features: he would have pitied the child on his own account; but,

recalling Isabella's hopes and fears, and anxious wishes for her son, and her

commendations of him to his care, he grieved bitterly at the prospect of

yielding him up, and searched in his heart how it might be avoided. No plan

offered itself: the very exhibition of any desire to keep him would have

rendered the claimant more peremptory, -there was nothing left but to resign

him. However, he was not going to rouse him from his sleep.

"Tell Mr. Heathcliff," he answered calmly, "that his son shall come to

Wuthering Heights tomorrow. He is in bed, and too tired to go the distance

now. You may also tell him that the mother of Linton desired him to remain

under my guardianship; and, at present, his health is very precarious."

"Noa!" said Joseph, giving a thud with his prop on the floor, and assuming an

authoritative air. "Noa! that manes nowt -Hathecliff maks noa 'cahnt uh t'

mother, nur yah norther; bud he'll hev his lad; und Aw mun tak him -soa nah

yah knaw!"

"You shall not tonight!" answered Linton decisively. "Walk downstairs at once,

and repeat to your master what I have said. Ellen, show him down. Go -"

And, aiding the indignant elder with a lift by the arm, he rid the room of

him, and closed the door.

"Varrah weel!" shouted Joseph, as he slowly drew off. "Tuh morn, he's come

hisseln, un thrust him aht, if yah darr!"

Chapter 20

To obviate the danger of this threat being fulfilled, Mr. Linton commissioned

me to take the boy home early, on Catherine's pony; and, said he: "As we shall

now have no influence over his destiny, good or bad, you must say nothing of

where he is gone to my daughter: she cannot associate with him hereafter, and

it's better for her to remain in ignorance of his proximity, lest she should

be restless, and anxious to visit the Heights -merely tell her, his father

sent for him suddenly, and he has been obliged to leave us."

Linton was very reluctant to be roused from his bed at five o'clock, and

astonished to be informed that he must prepare for further travelling; but I

softened off the matter by stating that he was going to spend some time with

his father, Mr. Heathcliff, who wished to see him so much, he did not like to

defer the pleasure till he should recover from his late journey.

"My father!" he cried, in strange perplexity. "Mamma never told me I had a

father. Where does he live? I'd rather stay with Uncle."

"He lives a little distance from the Grange," I replied; "just beyond those

hills: not so far, but you may walk over here when you get hearty. And you

should be glad to go home, and to see him. You must try to love him, as you

did your mother, and then he will love you."

"But why have I not heard of him before?" asked Linton. "Why didn't Mamma and

he live together, as other people do?"

"He had business to keep him in the north," I answered, "and your mother's

health required her to reside in the south."

"And why didn't Mamma speak to me about him?" persevered the child. "She often

talked of Uncle, and I learnt to love him long ago. How am I to love Papa? I

don't know him."

"Oh, all children love their parents," I said. "Your mother, perhaps, thought

you would want to be with him if she mentioned him often to you. Let us make

haste. An early ride on such a beautiful morning is much preferable to an

hour's more sleep."

"Is she to go with us," he demanded, "the little girl I saw yesterday?"

"Not now," replied I.

"Is Uncle?" he continued.

"No, I shall be your companion there," I said.

Linton sank back on his pillow, and fell into a brown study.

"I won't go without Uncle," he cried at length; "I can't tell where you mean

to take me."

I attempted to persuade him of the naughtiness of showing reluctance to meet

his father; still he obstinately resisted any progress towards dressing, and I

had to call for my master's assistance in coaxing him out of bed. The poor

thing was finally got off, with several delusive assurances that his absence

should be short, that Mr. Edgar and Cathy would visit him, and other promises,

equally ill-founded, which I invented and reiterated at intervals throughout

the way. The pure heather-scented air, and the bright sunshine, and the gentle

canter of Minny, relieved his despondency, after a while. He began to put

questions concerning his new home, and its inhabitants, with greater interest

and liveliness.

"Is Wuthering Heights as pleasant a place as Thrushcross Grange?" he inquired,

turning to take a last glance into the valley, whence a light mist mounted and

formed a fleecy cloud on the skirts of the blue.

"It is not so buried in trees," I replied, "and it is not quite so large, but

you can see the country beautifully, all round; and the air is healthier for

you -fresher and dryer. You will, perhaps, think the building old and dark at

first; though it is a respectable house, -the next best in the neighbourhood.

And you will have such nice rambles on the moors. Hareton Earnshaw -that is

Miss Cathy's other cousin, and so yours in a manner -will show you all the

sweetest spots; and you can bring a book in fine weather, and make a green

hollow your study; and, now and then, your uncle may join you in a walk: he

does, frequently, walk out on the hills."

"And what is my father like?" he asked. "Is he as young and handsome as Uncle?"

"He's as young," said I; "but he has black hair and eyes, and looks sterner;

and he is taller and bigger altogether. He'll not seem to you so gentle and

kind at first, perhaps, because it is not his way: still, mind you be frank

and cordial with him; and naturally he'll be fonder of you than any uncle, for

you are his own."

"Black hair and eyes!" mused Linton. "I can't fancy him. Then I am not like

him, am I?"

"Not much," I answered: not a morsel, I thought, surveying with regret the

white complexion and slim frame of my companion, and his large languid eyes,

-his mother's eyes, save that, unless a morbid touchiness kindled them a

moment, they had not a vestige of her sparkling spirit.

"How strange that he should never come to see Mama and me!" he murmured. "Has

he ever seen me? If he has, I must have been a baby -I remember not a single

thing about him!"

"Why, Master Linton," said I, "three hundred miles is a great distance; and

ten years seem very different in length to a grown-up person compared with

what they do to you. It is probable Mr. Heathcliff proposed going, from summer

to summer, but never found a convenient opportunity; and now it is too late.

Don't trouble him with questions on the subject: if will disturb him for no

good."

The boy was fully occupied with his own cogitations for the remainder of the

ride, till we halted before the farmhouse garden gate. I watched to catch his

impressions in his countenance. He surveyed the carved front and low-browed

lattices, the straggling gooseberry bushes and crooked firs, with solemn

intentness, and then shook his head: his private feelings entirely disapproved

of the exterior of his new abode. But he had sense to postpone complaining:

there might be compensation within. Before he dismounted, I went and opened

the door. It was half-past six; the family had just finished breakfast; the

servant was clearing and wiping down the table: Joseph stood by his master's

chair telling some tale concerning a lame horse; and Hareton was preparing for

the hay-field.

"Hallo, Nelly!" cried Mr. Heathcliff, when he saw me. "I feared I should have

to come down and fetch my property myself. You've brought it, have you? Let us

see what we can make of it."

He got up and strode to the door. Hareton and Joseph followed in gaping

curiosity. Poor Linton ran a frightened eye over the faces of the three.

"Sure-ly," said Joseph after a grave inspection, "he's swopped wi' ye,

maister, an' yon's his lass!"

Heathcliff, having stared his son into an ague of confusion, uttered a

scornful laugh.

"God! what a beauty! what a lovely, charming thing!" he exclaimed. "Haven't

they reared it on snails and sour milk, Nelly? Oh, damn my soul! but that's

worse than I expected -and the devil knows I was not sanguine!"

I bid the trembling and bewildered child get down, and enter. He did not

thoroughly comprehend the meaning of his father's speech, or whether it were

intended for him; indeed, he was not yet certain that the grim, sneering

stranger was his father; but he clung to me with growing trepidation; and on

Mr. Heathcliff's taking a seat, and bidding him "come hither", he hid his face

on my shoulder, and wept.

"Tut, tut!" said Heathcliff, stretching out a hand and dragging him roughly

between his knees, and then holding up his head by the chin. "None of that

nonsense! We're not going to hurt thee, Linton -isn't that thy name? Thou art

thy mother's child, entirely! Where is my share in thee, puling chicken?"

He took off the boy's cap and pushed back his thick flaxen curls, felt his

slender arms and his small fingers; during which examination Linton ceased

crying, and lifted his great blue eyes to inspect the inspector.

"Do you know me?" asked Heathcliff, having satisfied himself that the limbs

were all equally frail and feeble.

"No," said Linton, with a gaze of vacant fear.

"You've heard of me, I daresay?"

"No," he replied again.

"No? What a shame of your mother, never to waken your filial regard for me!

You are my son, then, I'll tell you; and your mother was a wicked slut to

leave you in ignorance of the sort of father you possessed. Now, don't wince,

and colour up! Though it is something to see you have not white blood. Be a

good lad; and I'll do for you. Nelly, if you be tired you may sit down; if

not, get home again. I guess you'll report what you hear, and see, to the

cipher at the Grange; and this thing won't be settled while you linger about

it."

"Well," replied I, "I hope you'll be kind to the boy, Mr. Heathcliff, or

you'll not keep him long; and he's all you have akin in the wide world, that

you will ever know -remember."

"I'll be very kind to him, you needn't fear," he said, laughing. "Only nobody

else must be kind to him, -I'm jealous of monopolising his affection. And, to

begin my kindness, Joseph, bring the lad some breakfast. Hareton, you infernal

calf, begone to your work. Yes, Nell," he added, when they had departed, "my

son is prospective owner of your place, and I should not wish him to die till

I was certain of being his successor. Besides he's mine, and I want the

triumph of seeing my descendant fairly lord of their estates, -my child hiring

their children to till their fathers' lands for wages. That is the sole

consideration which can make me endure the whelp: I despise him for himself,

and hate him for the memories he revives! But that consideration is

sufficient; he's as safe with me, and shall be tended as carefully as your

master tends his own. I have a room upstairs, furnished for him in handsome

style; I've engaged a tutor, also, to come three times a week, from twenty

miles distance, to teach him what he pleases to learn. I've ordered Hareton to

obey him; and in fact I've arranged every thing with a view to preserve the

superior and the gentleman in him, above his associates. I do regret, however,

that he so little deserves the trouble: if I wished any blessing in the world,

it was to find him a worthy object of pride; and I'm bitterly disappointed

with the whey-faced whining wretch!"

While he was speaking, Joseph returned, bearing a basin of milk-porridge, and

placed it before Linton. He stirred round the homely mess with a look of

aversion, and affirmed he could not eat it. I saw the old manservant shared

largely in his master's scorn of the child, though he was compelled to retain

the sentiment in his heart, because Heathcliff plainly meant his underlings to

hold him in honour.

"Cannot ate it?" repeated he, peering in Linton's face, and subduing his voice

to a whisper, for fear of being overhead. "But Maister Hareton nivir ate nowt

else, when he wer a little un; und what wer gooid eneugh fur him's gooid

eneugh fur yah, Aw's rayther think!"

"I shan't eat it!" answered Linton snappishly. "Take it away."

Joseph snatched up the food indignantly, and brought it to us.

"Is there owt ails th' victuals?" he asked, thrusting the tray under

Heathcliff's nose.

"What should ail them?" he said.

"Wah!" answered Joseph, "yon dainty chap says he cannut ate 'em. Bud Aw guess

it's raight! His mother wer just soa -we wer a'most too mucky tuh sow t' corn

fur makking her breead."

"Don't mention his mother to me," said the master angrily. "Get him something

that he can eat, that's all. What is his usual food, Nelly?"

I suggested boiled milk or tea; and the housekeeper received instructions to

prepare some. Come, I reflected, his father's selfishness may contribute to

his comfort. He perceives his delicate constitution, and the necessity of

treating him tolerably. I'll console Mr. Edgar by acquainting him with the

turn Heathcliff's humour has taken. Having no excuse for lingering longer, I

slipped out, while Linton was engaged in timidly rebuffing the advances of a

friendly sheep-dog. But he was too much on the alert to be cheated, -as I

closed the door, I heard a cry, and a frantic repetition of the words:

"Don't leave me! I'll not stay here! I'll not stay here!"

Then the latch was raised and fell: they did not suffer him to come forth. I

mounted Minny, and urged her to a trot; and so my brief guardianship ended.

Chapter 21

We had sad work with little Cathy that day: she rose in high glee, eager to

join her cousin, and such passionate tears and lamentations followed the news

of his departure, that Edgar himself was obliged to sooth her, by affirming he

should come back soon: he added, however, "if I can get him"; and there were

no hopes of that. This promise poorly pacified her: but time was more potent,

and though still at intervals she inquired of her father when Linton would

return, before she did see him again his features had waxed so dim in her

memory that she did not recognise him.

When I chanced to encounter the housekeeper of Wuthering Heights, in paying

business visits to Gimmerton, I used to ask how the young master got on; for

he lived almost as secluded as Catherine herself, and was never to be seen. I

could gather from her that he continued in weak health, and was a tiresome

inmate. She said Mr. Heathcliff seemed to dislike him ever longer and worse,

though he took some trouble to conceal it: he had an antipathy to the sound of

his voice, and could not do at all with his sitting in the same room with him

many minutes together. There seldom passed much talk between them: Linton

learnt his lessons and spent his evenings in a small apartment they called the

parlour; or else lay in bed all day, for he was constantly getting coughs, and

colds, and aches, and pains of some sort.

"And I never knew such a faint-hearted creature," added the woman; "nor one so

careful of hisseln. He will go on, if I leave the window open a bit late in

the evening. Oh! it's killing, a breath of night air! And he must have a fire

in the middle of summer; and Joseph's bacca pipe is poison; and he must always

have sweets and dainties, and always milk, milk for ever -heeding naught how

the rest of us are pinched in winter; and there he'll sit, wrapped in his

furred cloak in his chair by the fire, and some toast and water or other slop

on the hob to sip at; and if Hareton, for pity, comes to amuse him -Hareton is

not bad-natured, though he's rough -they're sure to part, one swearing and the

other crying. I believe the master would relish Earnshaw's thrashing him to a

mummy, if he were not his son; and I'm certain he would be fit to turn him out

of doors, if he knew half the nursing he gives hisseln. But then, he won't go

into danger of temptation: he never enters the parlour, and should Linton show

those ways in the house where he is, he sends him upstairs directly."

I divined, from this account, that utter lack of sympathy had rendered young

Heathcliff selfish and disagreeable, if he were not so originally; and my

interest in him, consequently, decayed; though still I was moved with a sense

of grief at his lot, and a wish that he had been left with us. Mr. Edgar

encouraged me to gain information: he thought a great deal about him, I fancy,

and would have run some risk to see him; and he told me once to ask the

housekeeper whether he ever came into the village. She said he had only been

twice, on horseback, accompanying his father, and both times he pretended to

be quite knocked up for three or four days afterwards. That housekeeper left,

if I recollect rightly, two years after he came; and another, whom I did not

know, was her successor: she lives there still.

Time wore on at the Grange in its former pleasant way, till Miss Cathy reached

sixteen. On the anniversary of her birth we never manifested any signs of

rejoicing, because it was also the anniversary of my late mistress's death.

Her father invariably spent that day alone in the library; and walked, at

dusk, as far as Gimmerton kirkyard, where he would frequently prolong his stay

beyond midnight. Therefore Catherine was thrown on her own resources for

amusement. This twentieth of March was a beautiful spring day, and when her

father had retired, my young lady came down dressed for going out, and said

she had asked to have a ramble on the edge of the moors with me, and Mr.

Linton had given her leave, if we went only a short distance and were back

within the hour.

"So make haste, Ellen!" she cried. "I know where I wish to go; where a colony

of moor-game are settled: I want to see whether they have made their nests yet."

"That must be a good distance up," I answered; "they don't breed on the edge

of the moor."

"No, it's not," she said. "I've gone very near with Papa."

I put on my bonnet and sallied out, thinking nothing more of the matter. She

bounded before me, and returned to my side, and was off again like a young

greyhound; and, at first, I found plenty of entertainment in listening to the

larks singing far and near, and enjoying the sweet, warm sunshine; and

watching her, my pet, and my delight, with her golden ringlets flying loose

behind, and her bright cheek, as soft and pure in its bloom as a wild rose,

and her eyes radiant with cloudless pleasure. She was a happy creature, and an

angel, in those days. It's a pity she could not be content.

"Well," said I, "where are your moor-game, Miss Cathy? We should be at them,

-the Grange park fence is a great way off now."

"Oh, a little further -only a little further, Ellen," was her answer

continually. "Climb to that hillock, pass that bank, and by the time you reach

the other side I shall have raised the birds."

But there were so many hillocks and banks to climb and pass, that, at length,

I began to be weary, and told her we must halt, and retrace our steps. I

shouted to her, as she had outstripped me, a long way; she either did not hear

or did not regard, for she still sprang on, and I was compelled to follow.

Finally, she dived into a hollow; and before I came in sight of her again, she

was two miles nearer Wuthering Heights than her own home; and I beheld a

couple of persons arrest her, one of whom I felt convinced was Mr. Heathcliff

himself.

Cathy had been caught in the fact of plundering, or, at least, hunting out the

nests of the grouse. The Heights were Heathcliff's land, and he was reproving

the poacher.

"I've neither taken any nor found any," she said, as I toiled to them,

expanding her hands in corroboration of the statement. "I didn't mean to take

them; but Papa told me there were quantities up here, and I wished to see the

eggs."

Heathcliff glanced at me with an ill-meaning smile, expressing his

acquaintance with the party, and, consequently, his malevolence towards it,

and demanded who "Papa" was?

"Mr. Linton of Thrushcross Grange," she replied. "I thought you did not know

me, or you wouldn't have spoken in that way."

"You suppose Papa is highly esteemed and respected, then?" he said

sarcastically.

"And what are you?" inquired Catherine, gazing curiously on the speaker. "That

man I've seen before. Is he your son?"

She pointed to Hareton, the other individual, who had gained nothing but

increased bulk and strength by the addition of two years to his age: he seemed

as awkward and rough as ever.

"Miss Cathy," I interrupted, "it will be three hours instead of one that we

are out, presently. We really must go back."

"No, that man is not my son," answered Heathcliff, pushing me aside. "But I

have one, and you have seen him before, too; and, though your nurse is in a

hurry, I think both you and she would be the better for a little rest. Will

you just turn this nab of heath, and walk into my house? You'll get home

earlier for the ease; and you shall receive a kind welcome."

I whispered Catherine that she mustn't, on any account, accede to the

proposal, -it was entirely out of the question.

"Why?" she asked, aloud. "I'm tired of running, and the ground is dewy, -I

can't sit here. Let us go, Ellen. Besides, he says I have seen his son. He's

mistaken, I think; but I guess where he lives, -at the farmhouse I visited in

coming from Penistone Crags. Don't you?"

"I do. Come, Nelly, hold your tongue -it will be a treat for her to look in on

us. Hareton, get forwards with the lass. You shall walk with me, Nelly."

"No, she's not going to any such place," I cried, struggling to release my

arm, which he had seized; but she was almost at the doorstones already,

scampering round the brow at full speed. Her appointed companion did not

pretend to escort her: he shied off by the roadside, and vanished.

"Mr. Heathcliff, it's very wrong," I continued; "you know you mean no good.

And there she'll see Linton, and all will be told, as soon as ever we return;

and I shall have the blame."

"I want her to see Linton," he answered; "he's looking better these few days:

it's not often he's fit to be seen. And we'll soon persuade her to keep the

visit secret: where is the harm of it?"

"The harm of it is, that her father would hate me if he found I suffered her

to enter your house; and I am convinced you have a bad design in encouraging

her to do so," I replied.

"My design is as honest as possible. I'll inform you of its whole scope," he

said. "That the two cousins may fall in love, and get married. I'm acting

generously to your master: his young chit has no expectations, and should she

second my wishes, she'll be provided for at once as joint successor with

Linton."

"If Linton died," I answered, "and his life is quite uncertain, Catherine

would be the heir."

"No, she would not," he said. "There is no clause in the will to secure it so:

his property would go to me; but, to prevent disputes, I desire their union,

and am resolved to bring it about."

"And I'm resolved she shall never approach your house with me again," I

returned, as we reached the gate, where Miss Cathy waited our coming.

Heathcliff bid me be quiet; and, preceding us up the path, hastened to open

the door. My young lady gave him several looks, as if she could not exactly

make up her mind what to think of him; but now he smiled when he met her eye,

and softened his voice in addressing her; and I was foolish enough to imagine

the memory of her mother might disarm him from desiring her injury. Linton

stood on the hearth. He had been out walking in the fields, for his cap was

on, and he was calling to Joseph to bring him dry shoes. He had grown tall of

his age, still wanting some months of sixteen. His features were pretty yet,

and his eye and complexion brighter than I remembered them, though with merely

temporary lustre borrowed from the salubrious air and genial sun.

"Now, who is that?" asked Mr. Heathcliff, turning to Cathy. "Can you tell?"

"Your son?" she said, having doubtfully surveyed first one and then the other.

"Yes, yes," answered he; "but is this the only time you have beheld him?

Think! Ah! you have a short memory. Linton, don't you recall your cousin, that

you used to tease us so with wishing to see?"

"What, Linton!" cried Cathy, kindling into joyful surprise at the name. "Is

that little Linton? He's taller than I am! Are you Linton?"

The youth stepped forward, and acknowledged himself; she kissed him fervently,

and they gazed with wonder at the change time had wrought in the appearance of

each. Catherine had reached her full height; her figure was both plump and

slender, elastic as steel, and her whole aspect sparkling with health and

spirits. Linton's looks and movements were very languid, and his form

extremely slight; but there was a grace in his manner that mitigated these

defects, and rendered him not unpleasing. After exchanging numerous marks of

fondness with him, his cousin went to Mr. Heathcliff, who lingered by the

door, dividing his attention between the objects inside and those that lay

without, -pretending, that is, to observe the latter, and really noting the

former alone.

"And you are my uncle, then?" she cried, reaching up to salute him. "I thought

I liked you, though you were cross, at first. Why don't you visit at the

Grange with Linton? To live all these years such close neighbours, and never

see us, is odd: what have you done so for?"

"I visited it once or twice too often before you were born," he answered.

"There -damn it! If you have any kisses to spare, give them to Linton: they

are thrown away on me."

"Naughty Ellen!" exclaimed Catherine, flying to attack me next with her lavish

caresses. "Wicked Ellen! to try to hinder me from entering. But I'll take this

walk every morning in future -may I, Uncle? -and sometimes bring Papa. Won't

you be glad to see us?"

"Of course!" replied the uncle, with a hardly suppressed grimace, resulting

from his deep aversion to both the proposed visitors. "But stay," he

continued, turning towards the young lady. "Now I think of it, I'd better tell

you. Mr. Linton has a prejudice against me: we quarrelled at one time of our

lives, with unchristian ferocity; and, if you mention coming here to him,

he'll put a veto on your visits altogether. Therefore, you must not mention

it, unless you be careless of seeing your cousin hereafter: you may come, if

you will, but you must not mention it."

"Why did you quarrel?" asked Catherine, considerably crestfallen.

"He thought me too poor to wed his sister," answered Heathcliff, "and was

grieved that I got her: his pride was hurt, and he'll never forget it."

"That's wrong!" said the young lady: "some time, I'll tell him so. But Linton

and I have no share in your quarrel. I'll not come here, then; he shall come

to the Grange."

"It will be too far for me," murmured her cousin; "to walk four miles would

kill me. No, come here, Miss Catherine, now and then, -not every morning, but

once or twice a week."

The father launched towards his son a glance of bitter contempt.

"I am afraid, Nelly, I shall lose my labour," he muttered to me. "Miss

Catherine, as the ninny calls her, will discover his value, and send him to

the devil. Now, if it had been Hareton! -Do you know that, twenty times a day,

I covet Hareton, with all his degradation? I'd have loved the lad had he been

some one else. But I think he's safe from her love. I'll pit him against that

paltry creature, unless it bestir itself briskly. We calculate it will

scarcely last till it is eighteen. Oh, confound the vapid thing! He's absorbed

in drying his feet, and never looks at her -Linton!"

"Yes, Father," answered the boy.

"Have you nothing to show your cousin, anywhere about? not even a rabbit or a

weasel's nest? Take her into the garden, before you change your shoes, and

into the stable to see your horse."

"Wouldn't you rather sit here?" asked Linton, addressing Cathy in a tone which

expressed reluctance to move again.

"I don't know," she replied, casting a longing look at the door, and evidently

eager to be active.

He kept his seat, and shrank closer to the fire. Heathcliff rose, and went

into the kitchen, and from thence to the yard, calling out for Hareton.

Hareton responded, and presently the two re-entered. The young man had been

washing himself, as was visible by the glow on his cheeks, and his wetted hair.

"Oh, I'll ask you, Uncle," cried Miss Cathy, recollecting the housekeeper's

assertion. "That is not my cousin, is he?"

"Yes," he replied, "your mother's nephew. Don't you like him?"

Catherine looked queer.

"Is he not a handsome lad?" he continued.

The uncivil little thing stood on tiptoe, and whispered a sentence in

Heathcliff's ear. He laughed; Hareton darkened: I perceived he was very

sensitive to suspected slights, and had obviously a dim notion of his

inferiority. But his master or guardian chased the frown by exclaiming:

"You'll be the favourite among us, Hareton! She says you are a -what was it?

Well, something very flattering. Here! you go with her round the farm. And

behave like a gentleman, mind! Don't use any bad words; and don't stare, when

the young lady is not looking at you, and be ready to hide your face when she

is; and, when you speak, say your words slowly, and keep your hands out of

your pockets. Be off, and entertain her as nicely as you can."

He watched the couple walking past the window. Earnshaw had his countenance

completely averted from his companion. He seemed studying the familiar

landscape with a stranger's and an artist's interest. Catherine took a sly

look at him, expressing small admiration. She then turned her attention to

seeking out objects of amusement for herself, and tripped merrily on, lilting

a tune to supply the lack of conversation.

"I've tied his tongue," observed Heathcliff. "He'll not venture a single

syllable, all the time! Nelly, you recollect me at his age -nay, some years

younger. Did I ever look so stupid -so `gaumless', as Joseph calls it?"

"Worse," I replied, "because more sullen with it."

"I've a pleasure in him," he continued, reflecting aloud. "He has satisfied my

expectations. If he were a born fool I should not enjoy it half so much. But

he's no fool; and I can sympathise with all his feelings, having felt them

myself. I know what he suffers now, for instance, exactly: it is merely a

beginning of what he shall suffer, though. And he'll never be able to emerge

from his bathos of coarseness and ignorance. I've got him faster than his

scoundrel of a father secured me, and lower; for he takes a pride in his

brutishness. I've taught him to scorn everything extra-animal as silly and

weak. Don't you think Hindley would be proud of his son, if he could see him?

almost as proud as I am of mine. But there's this difference; one is gold put

to the use of paving-stones, and the other is tin polished to ape a service of

silver. Mine has nothing valuable about it; yet I shall have the merit of

making it go as far as such poor stuff can go. His had first-rate qualities,

and they are lost, rendered worse than unavailing. I have nothing to regret;

he would have more than any, but I, are aware of. And the best of it is,

Hareton is damnably fond of me! You'll own that I've outmatched Hindley there.

If the dead villain could rise from his grave to abuse me for his offspring's

wrongs, I should have the fun of seeing the said offspring fight him back

again, indignant that he should dare to rail at the one friend he has in the

world!"

Heathcliff chuckled a fiendish laugh at the idea. I made no reply, because I

saw that he expected none. Meantime, our young companion, who sat too removed

from us to hear what was said, began to evince symptoms of uneasiness,

probably repenting that he had denied himself the treat of Catherine's society

for fear of a little fatigue. His father remarked the restless glances

wandering to the widow, and the hand irresolutely extended towards his cap.

"Get up, you idle boy!" he exclaimed with assumed heartiness. "Away after

them! they are just at the corner, by the stand of hives."

Linton gathered his energies, and left the hearth. The lattice was open, and,

as he stepped out, I heard Cathy inquiring of her unsociable attendant, what

was that inscription over the door? Hareton stared up, and scratched his head

like a true clown.

"It's some damnable writing," he answered. "I cannot read it."

"Can't read it?" cried Catherine; "I can read it, it's English. But I want to

know why it is there."

Linton giggled, -the first appearance of mirth he had exhibited.

"He does not know his letters," he said to his cousin. "Could you believe in

the existence of such a colossal dunce?"

"Is he all as he should be?" asked Miss Cathy seriously; "or is he simple,

-not right? I've questioned him twice now, and each time he looked so stupid I

think he does not understand me. I can hardly understand him, I'm sure!"

Linton repeated his laugh, and glanced at Hareton tauntingly, who certainly

did not seem quite clear of comprehension at that moment.

"There's nothing the matter but laziness, is there, Earnshaw?" he said. "My

cousin fancies you are an idiot. There you experience the consequence of

scorning `book-larning', as you would say. Have you noticed, Catherine, his

frightful Yorkshire pronunciation?"

"Why, where the devil is the use on't?" growled Hareton, more ready in

answering his daily companion. He was about to enlarge further, but the two

youngsters broke into a noisy fit of merriment; my giddy Miss being delighted

to discover that she might turn his strange talk to matter of amusement.

"Where is the use of the devil in that sentence?" tittered Linton. "Papa told

you not to say any bad words, and you can't open your mouth without one. Do

try to behave like a gentleman, now do!"

"If thou weren't more a lass than a lad, I'd fell thee this minute, I would;

pitiful lath of a crater!" retorted the angry boor, retreating, while his face

burnt with mingled rage and mortification; for he was conscious of being

insulted, and embarrassed how to resent it.

Mr. Heathcliff, having overheard the conversation as well as I, smiled when he

saw him go; but immediately afterwards cast a look of singular aversion on the

flippant pair, who remained chattering in the doorway, -the boy finding

animation enough while discussing Hareton's faults and deficiencies, and

relating anecdotes of his goings-on; and the girl relishing his pert and

spiteful sayings, without considering the ill-nature they evinced; but I began

to dislike, more than to compassionate, Linton, and to excuse his father, in

some measure, for holding him cheap.

We stayed till afternoon: I could not tear Miss Cathy away, before; but

happily my master had not quitted his apartment, and remained ignorant of our

prolonged absence. As we walked home, I would fain have enlightened my charge

on the characters of the people we had quitted; but she got it into her head

that I was prejudiced against them.

"Aha!" she cried, "you take Papa's side, Ellen: you are partial, I know; or

else you wouldn't have cheated me so many years into the notion that Linton

lived a long way from here. I'm really extremely angry; only, I'm so pleased,

I can't show it! But you must hold your tongue about my uncle, -he's my uncle,

remember, and I'll scold papa for quarrelling with him."

And so she ran on, till I dropped endeavouring to convince her of her mistake.

She did not mention the visit that night, because she did not see Mr. Linton.

Next day it all came out, sadly to my chagrin; and still I was not altogether

sorry: I thought the burden of directing and warning would be more efficiently

borne by him than me; but he was too timid in giving satisfactory reasons for

his wish that she would shun connection with the household of the Heights, and

Catherine liked good reasons for every restraint that harassed her petted will.

"Papa!" she exclaimed, after the morning's salutations, "guess whom I saw

yesterday, in my walk on the moors. Ah, Papa, you started! you've not done

right, have you, now? I saw -But listen, and you shall hear how I found you

out, and Ellen, who is in league with you, and yet pretended to pity me so,

when I kept hoping, and was always disappointed about Linton's coming back!"

She gave a faithful account of her excursion and its consequences; and my

master, though he cast more than one reproachful look at me, said nothing till

she had concluded. Then he drew her to him, and asked if she knew why he had

concealed Linton's near neighbourhood from her? Could she think it was to deny

her a pleasure that she might harmlessly enjoy?

"It was because you disliked Mr. Heathcliff," she answered.

"Then you believe I care more for my own feelings than yours, Cathy?" he said.

"No, it was not because I disliked Mr. Heathcliff, but because Mr. Heathcliff

dislikes me; and is a most diabolical man, delighting to wrong and ruin those

he hates, if they give him the slightest opportunity. I knew that you could

not keep up an acquaintance with your cousin, without being brought into

contact with him; and I knew he would detest you, on my account; so for your

own good, and nothing else, I took precautions that you should not see Linton

again. I meant to explain this some time as you grew older, and I'm sorry I

delayed it."

"But Mr. Heathcliff was quite cordial, Papa," observed Catherine, not at all

convinced; "and he didn't object to our seeing each other: he said I might

come to his house when I pleased; only I must not tell you, because you had

quarrelled with him, and would not forgive him for marrying Aunt Isabella. And

you won't. You are the one to be blamed: he is willing to let us be friends,

at least -Linton and I -and you are not."

My master, perceiving that she would not take his word for her uncle-in-law's

evil disposition, gave a hasty sketch of his conduct to Isabella, and the

manner in which Wuthering Heights became his property. He could not bear to

discourse long upon the topic; for though he spoke little of it, he still felt

the same horror and detestation of his ancient enemy that had occupied his

heart ever since Mrs. Linton's death. "She might have been living yet, if it

had not been for him!" was his constant bitter reflection; and, in his eyes,

Heathcliff seemed a murderer. Miss Cathy -conversant with no bad deeds except

her own slight acts of disobedience, injustice, and passion, rising from hot

temper and thoughtlessness, and repented of on the day they were committed

-was amazed at the blackness of spirit that could brood on and cover revenge

for years, and deliberately prosecute its plans without a visitation of

remorse. She appeared so deeply impressed and shocked at this new view of

human nature -excluded from all her studies and all her ideas till now -that

Mr. Edgar deemed it unnecessary to pursue the subject. He merely added:

"You will know hereafter, darling, why I wish you to avoid his house and

family; now, return to your old employments and amusements, and think no more

about them!"

Catherine kissed her father, and sat down quietly to her lessons for a couple

of hours, according to custom; then she accompanied him into the grounds, and

the whole day passed as usual; but in the evening, when she had retired to her

room, and I went to help her to undress, I found her crying, on her knees by

the bedside.

"Oh, fie, silly child!" I exclaimed. "If you had any real griefs, you'd be

ashamed to waste a tear on this little contrariety. You never had one shadow

of substantial sorrow, Miss Catherine. Suppose, for a minute, that master and

I were dead, and you were by yourself in the world, -how would you feel then?

Compare the present occasion with such an affliction as that, and be thankful

for the friends you have, instead of coveting more."

"I'm not crying for myself, Ellen," she answered, "it's for him. He expected

to see me again tomorrow, and there, he'll be so disappointed: and he'll wait

for me, and I shan't come!"

"Nonsense!" said I, "do you imagine he has thought as much of you as you have

of him? Hasn't he Hareton for a companion? Not one in a hundred would weep at

losing a relation they had just seen twice, for two afternoons. Linton will

conjecture how it is, and trouble himself no further about you."

"But may I not write a note to tell him why I cannot come?" she asked, rising

to her feet. "And just send those books I promised to lend him? His books are

not as nice as mine, and he wanted to have them extremely, when I told him how

interesting they were. May I not, Ellen?"

"No, indeed! no, indeed!" replied I with decision. "Then he would write to

you, and there'd never be an end of it. No, Miss Catherine, the acquaintance

must be dropped entirely: so Papa expects, and I shall see that it is done."

"But how can one little note -" she recommenced, putting on an imploring

countenance.

"Silence!" I interrupted. "We'll not begin with your little notes. Get into

bed."

She threw at me a very naughty look, so naughty that I would not kiss her good

night at first; I covered her up, and shut her door, in great displeasure;

but, repenting halfway, I returned softly, and lo! there was Miss, standing at

the table with a bit of blank paper before her and a pencil in her hand, which

she guiltily slipped out of sight, on my re-entrance.

"You'll get nobody to take that, Catherine," I said, "if you write it; and at

present I shall put out your candle."

I set the extinguisher on the flame, receiving as I did so a slap on my hand,

and a petulant "Cross thing!" I then quitted her again, and she drew the bolt

in one of her worst, most peevish humours. The letter was finished and

forwarded to its destination by a milk-fetcher who came from the village; but

that I didn't learn till some time afterwards. Weeks passed on, and Cathy

recovered her temper; though she grew wondrous fond of stealing off to corners

by herself; and often, if I came near her suddenly while reading, she would

start and bend over the book, evidently desirous to hide it; and I detected

edges of loose paper sticking out beyond the leaves. She also got a trick of

coming down early in the morning, and lingering about the kitchen, as if she

were expecting the arrival of something; and she had a small drawer in a

cabinet in the library, which she would trifle over for hours, and whose key

she took special care to remove when she left it.

One day, as she inspected this drawer, I observed that the playthings and

trinkets which recently formed its contents, were transmuted into bits of

folded paper. My curiosity and suspicions were roused; I determined to take a

peep at her mysterious treasures; so, at night, as soon as she and my master

were safe upstairs, I searched and readily found among my house keys one that

would fit the lock. Having opened, I emptied the whole contents into my apron,

and took them with me to examine at leisure in my own chamber. Though I could

not but suspect, I was still surprised to discover that they were a mass of

correspondence -daily, almost, it must have been -from Linton Heathcliff:

answers to documents forwarded by her. The earlier dated were embarrassed and

short; gradually, however, they expanded into copious love letters, -foolish,

as the age of the writer rendered natural, yet with touches, here and there,

which I thought were borrowed from a more experienced source. Some of them

struck me as singularly odd compounds of ardour and flatness; commencing in

strong feeling, and concluding in the affected, wordy way that a schoolboy

might use to a fancied, incorporeal sweetheart. Whether they satisfied Cathy,

I don't know; but they appeared very worthless trash to me. After turning over

as many as I thought proper, I tied them in a handkerchief and set them aside,

relocking the vacant drawer.

Following her habit, my young lady descended early, and visited the kitchen; I

watched her go to the door, on the arrival of a certain little boy; and, while

the dairymaid filled his can, she tucked something into his jacket pocket, and

plucked something out. I went round by the garden, and laid wait for the

messenger, who fought valorously to defend his trust, and we spilt the milk

between us; but I succeeded in abstracting the epistle; and, threatening

serious consequences if he did not look sharp home, I remained under the wall

and perused Miss Cathy's affectionate composition. It was more simple and more

eloquent than her cousin's, -very pretty and very silly. I shook my head, and

went meditating into the house. The day being wet, she could not divert

herself with rambling about the park; so, at the conclusion of her morning

studies, she resorted to the solace of the drawer. Her father sat reading at

the table, and I, on purpose, had sought a bit of work in some unripped

fringes of the window curtain, keeping my eye steadily fixed on her

proceedings. Never did any bird flying back to a plundered nest which it had

left brimful of chirping young ones, express more complete despair in its

anguished cries and flutterings, than she by her single "Oh!" and the change

that transfigured her late happy countenance. Mr. Linton looked up.

"What is the matter, love? Have you hurt yourself?" he said.

His tone and look assured her he had not been the discoverer of the hoard.

"No, Papa -" she gasped. "Ellen! Ellen! come upstairs -I'm sick!"

I obeyed her summons, and accompanied her out.

"Oh, Ellen! you have got them," she commenced immediately, dropping on her

knees, when we were enclosed alone. "Oh, give them to me, and I'll never do so

again! Don't tell Papa. You have not told Papa, Ellen? say you have not! I've

been exceedingly naughty, but I won't do it any more!"

With a grave severity in my manner, I bid her stand up.

"So," I exclaimed, "Miss Catherine, you are tolerably far on, it seems; you

may well be ashamed of them! A fine bundle of trash you study in your leisure

hours, to be sure: why, it's good enough to be printed! And what do you

suppose the master will think, when I display it before him? I haven't shown

it yet, but you needn't imagine I shall keep your ridiculous secrets. For

shame! and you must have led the way in writing such absurdities: he would not

have thought of beginning, I'm certain."

"I didn't! I didn't!" sobbed Cathy, fit to break her heart. "I didn't once

think of loving him till -"

"Loving!" cried I, as scornfully as I could utter the word. "Loving! Did

anybody ever hear the like! I might just as well talk of loving the miller who

comes once a year to buy our corn. Pretty loving, indeed! and both times

together you have seen Linton hardly four hours in your life! Now here is the

babyish trash. I'm going with it to the library; and we'll see what your

father says to such loving."

She sprang at her precious epistles, but I held them above my head; and then

she poured out further frantic entreaties that I would burn them -do anything

rather than show them. And being really fully as inclined to laugh as scold

-for I esteemed it all girlish vanity -I at length relented in a measure, and

asked:

"If I consent to burn them, will you promise faithfully, neither to send nor

receive a letter again, nor a book (for I perceive you have sent him books),

nor locks of hair, nor rings, nor playthings?"

"We don't send playthings!" cried Catherine, her pride overcoming her shame.

"Nor any thing at all, then, my lady!" I said. "Unless you will, here I go."

"I promise, Ellen!" she cried, catching my dress. "Oh, put them in the fire,

do, do!"

But when I proceeded to open a place with the poker, the sacrifice was too

painful to be borne. She earnestly supplicated that I would spare her one or

two.

"One or two, Ellen, to keep for Linton's sake!"

I unknotted the handkerchief, and commenced dropping them in from an angle,

and the flame curled up the chimney.

"I will have one, you cruel wretch!" she screamed, darting her hand into the

fire, and drawing forth some half-consumed fragments, at the expense of her

fingers.

"Very well -and I will have some to exhibit to Papa!" I answered, shaking back

the rest into the bundle, and turning anew to the door.

She emptied her blackened pieces into the flames, and motioned me to finish

the immolation. It was done; I stirred up the ashes, and interred them under a

shovelful of coals; and she mutely, and with a sense of intense injury,

retired to her private apartment. I descended to tell my master that the young

lady's qualm of sickness was almost gone, but I judged it best for her to lie

down a while. She wouldn't dine; but she reappeared at tea, pale, and red

about the eyes, and marvellously subdued in outward aspect. Next morning, I

answered the letter by a slip of paper, inscribed, "Master Heathcliff is

requested to send no more notes to Miss Linton, as she will not receive them."

And, thenceforth, the little boy came with vacant pockets.

Chapter 22

Summer drew to an end, and early autumn: it was past Michaelmas, but the

harvest was late that year, and a few of our fields were still uncleared. Mr.

Linton and his daughter would frequently walk out among the reapers; at the

carrying of the last sheaves, they stayed till dusk, and the evening happening

to be chill and damp, my master caught a bad cold that, settling obstinately

on his lungs, confined him indoors throughout the whole of the winter, nearly

without intermission.

Poor Cathy, frightened from her little romance, had been considerably sadder

and duller since its abandonment; and her father insisted on her reading less,

and taking more exercise. She had his companionship no longer; I esteemed it a

duty to supply its lack, as much as possible, with mine, -an inefficient

substitute, for I could only spare two or three hours, from my numerous

diurnal occupations, to follow her footsteps, and then my society was

obviously less desirable than his.

On an afternoon in October, or the beginning of November -a fresh watery

afternoon, when the turf and paths were rustling with moist, withered leaves,

and the cold, blue sky was half hidden by clouds -dark grey streamers, rapidly

mounting from the west, and boding abundant rain -I requested my young lady to

forego her ramble, because I was certain of showers. She refused; and I

unwillingly donned a cloak, and took my umbrella to accompany her on a stroll

to the bottom of the park: a formal walk which she generally affected if

low-spirited -and that she invariably was when Mr. Edgar had been worse than

ordinary, a thing never known from his confession, but guessed both by her and

me from his increased silence and the melancholy of his countenance. She went

sadly on: there was no running or bounding now, though the chill wind might

well have tempted her to a race. And often, from the side of my eye, I could

detect her raising a hand, and brushing something off her cheek. I gazed round

for a means of diverting her thoughts. On one side of the road rose a high,

rough bank, where hazels and stunted oaks, with their roots half exposed, held

uncertain tenure, -the soil was too loose for the latter, and strong winds had

blown some nearly horizontal. In summer, Miss Catherine delighted to climb

along these trunks, and sit in the branches, swinging twenty feet above the

ground; and I, pleased with her agility and her light, childish heart, still

considered it proper to scold every time I caught her at such an elevation,

but so that she knew there was no necessity for descending. From dinner to tea

she would lie in her breeze-rocked cradle, doing nothing except singing old

songs -my nursery lore -to herself, or watching the birds, joint tenants, feed

and entice their young ones to fly; or nestling with closed lids, half

thinking, half dreaming, happier than words can express.

"Look, Miss!" I exclaimed, pointing to a nook under the roots of one twisted

tree. "Winter is not here yet. There's a little flower up yonder, the last bud

from the multitude of bluebells that clouded those turf steps in July with a

lilac mist. Will you clamber up, and pluck it to show to Papa?"

Cathy stared a long time at the lonely blossom trembling in its earthly

shelter, and replied, at length:

"No, I'll not touch it; but it looks melancholy, does it not, Ellen?"

"Yes," I observed, "about as starved and sackless as you: your cheeks are

bloodless; let us take hold of hands and run. You're so low, I daresay I shall

keep up with you"

"No," she repeated, and continued sauntering on, pausing at intervals, to muse

over a bit of moss, or a tuft of blanched grass, or a fungus spreading its

bright orange among the heaps of brown foliage; and, ever and anon, her hand

was lifted to her averted face.

"Catherine, why are you crying, love?" I asked, approaching and putting my arm

over her shoulder. "You mustn't cry because Papa has a cold; be thankful it is

nothing worse."

She now put no further restraint on her tears; her breath was stifled by sobs.

"Oh, it will be something worse," she said. "And what shall I do when Papa and

you leave me, and I am by myself? I can't forget your words, Ellen; they are

always in my ear. How life will be changed, how dreary the world will be, when

Papa and you are dead."

"None can tell, whether you won't die before us," I replied. "It's wrong to

anticipate evil. We'll hope there are years and years to come before any of us

go: master is young, and I am strong, and hardly forty-five. My mother lived

till eighty, a canty dame to the last. And suppose Mr. Linton were spared till

he saw sixty, that would be more years than you have counted, Miss. And would

it not be foolish to mourn a calamity above twenty years beforehand?"

"But Aunt Isabella was younger than Papa," she remarked, gazing up with timid

hope to seek further consolation.

"Aunt Isabella had not you and me to nurse her," I replied. "She wasn't as

happy as master; she hadn't as much to live for. All you need do is to wait

well on your father, and cheer him by letting him see you cheerful, and avoid

giving him anxiety on any subject -mind that, Cathy! I'll not disguise but you

might kill him, if you were wild and reckless, and cherished a foolish,

fanciful affection for the son of a person who would be glad to have him in

his grave, and allowed him to discover that you fretted over the separation he

has judged it expedient to make."

"I fret about nothing on earth except Papa's illness," answered my companion.

"I care for nothing in comparison with Papa. And I'll never -never -oh, never,

while I have my senses, do an act or say a word to vex him. I love him better

than myself, Ellen; and I know it by this: I pray every night that I may live

after him, because I would rather be miserable than that he should be, -that

proves I love him better than myself."

"Good words," I replied. "But deeds must prove it also; and after he is well,

remember you don't forget resolutions formed in the hour of fear."

As we talked, we neared a door that opened on the road; and my young lady,

lightening into sunshine again, climbed up and seated herself on the top of

the wall, reaching over to gather some hips that bloomed scarlet on the summit

branches of the wild rose trees, shadowing the highway side: the lower fruit

had disappeared, but only birds could touch the upper, except from Cathy's

present station. In stretching to pull them, her hat fell off; and as the door

was locked, she proposed scrambling down to recover it. I bid her be cautious

lest she got a fall, and she nimbly disappeared. But the return was no such

easy matter: the stones were smooth and neatly cemented, and the rosebushes

and blackberry stragglers could yield no assistance in reascending. I, like a

fool, didn't recollect that, till I heard her laughing and exclaiming:

"Ellen, you'll have to fetch the key, or else I must run round to the porter's

lodge. I can't scale the ramparts on this side!"

"Stay where you are," I answered. "I have my bundle of keys in my pocket;

perhaps I may manage to open it; if not, I'll go."

Catherine amused herself with dancing to and fro before the door, while I

tried all the large keys in succession. I had applied the last, and found that

none would do; so, repeating my desire that she would remain there, I was

about to hurry home as fast as I could, when an approaching sound arrested me.

It was the trot of a horse; Cathy's dance stopped; and in a minute the horse

stopped also.

"Who is that?" I whispered.

"Ellen, I wish you could open the door," whispered back my companion anxiously.

"Ho, Miss Linton!" cried a deep voice (the rider's), "I'm glad to meet you.

Don't be in haste to enter, for I have an explanation to ask and obtain."

"I shan't speak to you, Mr. Heathcliff," answered Catherine. "Papa says you

are a wicked man, and you hate both him and me; and Ellen says the same."

"That is nothing to the purpose," said Heathcliff. (He it was.) "I don't hate

my son, I suppose; and it is concerning him that I demand your attention. Yes;

you have cause to blush. Two or three months since, were you not in the habit

of writing to Linton? making love in play, eh? You deserved, both of you,

flogging for that! You especially, the elder; and less sensitive, as it turns

out. I've got your letters, and if you give me any pertness I'll send them to

your father. I presume you grew weary of the amusement and dropped it, didn't

you? Well, you dropped Linton with it, into a Slough of Despond. He was in

earnest: in love, really. As true as I live, he's dying for you; breaking his

heart at your fickleness, -not figuratively, but actually. Though Hareton has

made him a standing jest for six weeks, and I have used more serious measures,

and attempted to frighten him out of his idiocy, he gets worse daily, and

he'll be under the sod before summer, unless you restore him!"

"How can you lie so glaringly to the poor child!" I called from the inside.

"Pray ride on! How can you deliberately get up such paltry falsehoods? Miss

Cathy, I'll knock the lock off with a stone: you won't believe that vile

nonsense. You can feel in yourself, it is impossible that a person should die

for love of a stranger."

"I was not aware there were eavesdroppers," muttered the detected villain.

"Worthy Mrs. Dean, I like you, but I don't like your double-dealing," he added

aloud. "How could you lie so glaringly, as to affirm I hated the `poor child'?

and invent bugbear stories to terrify her from my doorstones? Catherine Linton

(the very name warms me), my bonny lass, I shall be from home all this week;

go and see if I have not spoken truth: do, there's a darling! Just imagine

your father in my place, and Linton in yours; then think how you would value

your careless lover if he refused to stir a step to comfort you, when your

father himself entreated him; and don't, from pure stupidity, fall into the

same error. I swear, on my salvation, he's going to his grave, and none but

you can save him!"

The lock gave way, and I issued out.

"I swear Linton is dying," repeated Heathcliff, looking hard at me. "And grief

and disappointment are hastening his death. Nelly, if you won't let her go,

you can walk over yourself. But I shall not return till this time next week;

and I think your master himself would scarcely object to her visiting her

cousin!"

"Come in," said I, taking Cathy by the arm and half forcing her to re-enter;

for she lingered, viewing with troubled eyes the features of the speaker, too

stern to express his inward deceit.

He pushed his horse close, and, bending down, observed:

"Miss Catherine, I'll own to you that I have little patience with Linton; and

Hareton and Joseph have less. I'll own that he's with a harsh set. He pines

for kindness, as well as love; and a kind word from you would be his best

medicine. Don't mind Mrs. Dean's cruel cautions; but be generous, and contrive

to see him. He dreams of you day and night, and cannot be persuaded that you

don't hate him, since you neither write nor call."

I closed the door, and rolled a stone to assist the loosened lock in holding

it; and spreading my umbrella, I drew my charge underneath, for the rain began

to drive through the moaning branches of the trees, and warned us to avoid

delay. Our hurry prevented any comment on the encounter with Heathcliff, as we

stretched towards home; but I divined instinctively that Catherine's heart was

clouded now in double darkness. Her features were so sad, they did not seem

hers: she evidently regarded what she had heard as every syllable true.

The master had retired to rest before we came in. Cathy stole to his room to

inquire how he was; he had fallen asleep. She returned, and asked me to sit

with her in the library. We took our tea together; and afterwards she lay down

on the rug, and told me not to talk, for she was weary. I got a book, and

pretended to read. As soon as she supposed me absorbed in my occupation, she

recommenced her silent weeping: it appeared, at present, her favourite

diversion. I suffered her to enjoy it a while; then I expostulated, deriding

and ridiculing all Mr. Heathcliff's assertions about his son, as if I were

certain she would coincide. Alas! I hadn't skill to counteract the effect his

account had produced: it was just what he intended.

"You may be right, Ellen," she answered; "but I shall never feel at ease till

I know. And I must tell Linton it is not my fault that I don't write, and

convince him that I shall not change."

What use were anger and protestations against her silly credulity? We parted

that night -hostile; but next day beheld me on the road to Wuthering Heights,

by the side of my wilful young mistress's pony. I couldn't bear to witness her

sorrow, -to see her pale, dejected countenance, and heavy eyes; and I yielded,

in the faint hope that Linton himself might prove, by his reception of us, how

little of the tale was founded on fact.

Chapter 23

The rainy night had ushered in a misty morning -half frost, half drizzle -and

temporary brooks crossed our path, gurgling from the uplands. My feet were

thoroughly wetted; I was cross and low, -exactly the humour suited for making

the most of these disagreeable things. We entered the farmhouse by the kitchen

way, to ascertain whether Mr. Heathcliff were really absent; because I put

slight faith in his own affirmation.

Joseph seemed sitting in a sort of elysium alone, beside a roaring fire, a

quart of ale on the table near him, bristling with large pieces of toasted

oatcake, and his black, short pipe in his mouth. Catherine ran to the hearth

to warm herself. I asked if the master was in? My question remained so long

unanswered, that I thought the old man had grown deaf, and repeated it louder.

"Na -ay!" he snarled, or rather screamed through his nose. "Na -ay! yah muh

goa back whear yah coom frough."

"Joseph!" cried a peevish voice, simultaneously with me, from the inner room.

"How often am I to call you? There are only a few red ashes now. Joseph! come

this moment."

Vigorous puffs, and a resolute stare into the grate, declared he had no ear

for this appeal. The housekeeper and Hareton were invisible: one gone on an

errand, and the other at his work, probably. We knew Linton's tones, and

entered.

"Oh, I hope you'll die in a garret! starved to death," said the boy, mistaking

our approach for that of his negligent attendant.

He stopped, on observing his error; his cousin flew to him.

"Is that you, Miss Linton?" he said, raising his head from the arm of the

great chair, in which he reclined. "No -don't kiss me: it takes my breath.

Dear me! Papa said you would call," continued he, after recovering a little

from Catherine's embrace, while she stood by looking very contrite. "Will you

shut the door, if you please? you left it open; and those -those detestable

creatures won't bring coals to the fire. It's so cold!"

I stirred up the cinders, and fetched a scuttleful myself. The invalid

complained of being covered with ashes; but he had a tiresome cough, and

looked feverish and ill, so I did not rebuke his temper.

"Well, Linton," murmured Catherine, when his corrugated brow relaxed. "Are you

glad to see me? Can I do you any good?"

"Why didn't you come before?" he said. "You should have come, instead of

writing. It tired me dreadfully, writing those long letters. I'd far rather

have talked to you. Now, I can neither bear to talk, nor anything else. I

wonder where Zillah is! Will you (looking at me) step into the kitchen and see?"

I had received no thanks for my other service; and being unwilling to run to

and fro at his behest, I replied:

"Nobody is out there but Joseph."

"I want to drink," he exclaimed fretfully, turning away. "Zillah is constantly

gadding off to Gimmerton since Papa went -it's miserable! And I'm obliged to

come down here -they resolved never to hear me upstairs."

"Is your father attentive to you, Master Heathcliff?" I asked, perceiving

Catherine to be checked in her friendly advances.

"Attentive? He makes them a little more attentive, at least," he cried. "The

wretches! Do you know, Miss Linton, that brute Hareton laughs at me! I hate

him! indeed, I hate them all: they are odious beings."

Cathy began searching for some water; she lighted on a pitcher in the dresser,

filled a tumbler, and brought it. He bid her add a spoonful of wine from a

bottle on the table; and having swallowed a small portion, appeared more

tranquil, and said she was very kind.

"And are you glad to see me?" asked she, reiterating her former question, and

pleased to detect the faint dawn of a smile.

"Yes, I am. It's something new to hear a voice like yours!" he replied. "But I

have been vexed, because you wouldn't come. And Papa swore it was owing to me;

he called me a pitiful, shuffling, worthless thing; and said you despised me;

and if he had been in my place, he would be more the master of the Grange than

your father, by this time. But you don't despise me, do you, Miss -"

"I wish you would say Catherine, or Cathy," interrupted my young lady.

"Despise you? No! Next to Papa, and Ellen, I love you better than anybody

living. I don't love Mr. Heathcliff, though; and I dare not come when he

returns; will he stay away many days?"

"Not many," answered Linton; "but he goes on to the moors frequently, since

the shooting season commenced; and you might spend an hour or two with me in

his absence. Do! say you will! I think I should not be peevish with you: you'd

not provoke me, and you'd be always ready to help me, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," said Catherine, stroking his long soft hair, "if I could only get

Papa's consent, I'd spend half my time with you. Pretty Linton! I wish you

were my brother."

"And then you would like me as well as your father?" observed he, more

cheerfully. "But Papa says you would love me better than him and all the

world, if you were my wife; so I'd rather you were that."

"No! I should never love anybody better than Papa," she returned gravely. "And

people hate their wives, sometimes; but not their sisters and brothers; and if

you were the latter, you would live with us, and Papa would be as fond of you

as he is of me."

Linton denied that people ever hated their wives; but Cathy affirmed they did,

and, in her wisdom, instanced his own father's aversion to her aunt. I

endeavoured to stop her thoughtless tongue. I couldn't succeed till everything

she knew was out. Master Heathcliff, much irritated, asserted her relation was

false.

"Papa told me; and Papa does not tell falsehoods," she answered pertly.

"My papa scorns yours!" cried Linton. "He calls him a sneaking fool!"

"Yours is a wicked man," retorted Catherine; "and you are very naughty to dare

to repeat what he says. He must be wicked to have made Aunt Isabella leave him

as she did!"

"She didn't leave him," said the boy; "you shan't contradict me!"

"She did!" cried my young lady.

"Well, I'll tell you something!" said Linton. "Your mother hated your father:

now then."

"Oh!" exclaimed Catherine, too enraged to continue.

"And she loved mine!" added he.

"You little liar! I hate you now!" she panted, and her face grew red with

passion.

"She did! she did!" sang Linton, sinking into the recess of his chair, and

leaning back his head to enjoy the agitation of the other disputant, who stood

behind.

"Hush, Master Heathcliff!" I said; "that's your father's tale too, I suppose."

"It isn't: you hold your tongue!" he answered. "She did, she did, Catherine!

she did, she did!"

Cathy, beside herself, gave the chair a violent push, and caused him to fall

against one arm. He was immediately seized by a suffocating cough that soon

ended his triumph. It lasted so long that it frightened even me. As to his

cousin, she wept, with all her might, aghast at the mischief she had done,

though she said nothing. I held him till the fit exhausted itself. Then he

thrust me away, and leant his head down silently. Catherine quelled her

lamentations also, took a seat opposite, and looked solemnly into the fire.

"How do you feel now, Master Heathcliff?" I inquired, after waiting ten minutes.

"I wish she felt as I do," he replied; "spiteful, cruel thing! Hareton never

touches me, -he never struck me in his life. And I was better today, and there

-" His voice died in a whimper.

"I didn't strike you!" muttered Cathy, chewing her lip to prevent another

burst of emotion.

He sighed and moaned like one under great suffering, and kept it up for a

quarter of an hour, -on purpose to distress his cousin, apparently, for

whenever he caught a stifled sob from her he put renewed pain and pathos into

the inflections of his voice.

"I'm sorry I hurt you, Linton," she said at length, racked beyond endurance.

"But I couldn't have been hurt by that little push, and I had no idea that you

could, either: you're not much, are you, Linton? Don't let me go home thinking

I've done you harm. Answer! speak to me."

"I can't speak to you," he murmured; "you've hurt me so, that I shall lie

awake all night, choking with this cough! If you had it you'd know what it

was; but you'll be comfortably asleep, while I'm in agony, and nobody near me!

I wonder how you would like to pass those fearful nights!" And he began to

wail aloud, for very pity of himself.

"Since you are in the habit of passing dreadful nights," I said, "it won't be

Miss who spoils your ease, -you'd be the same had she never come. However, she

shall not disturb you again; and perhaps you'll get quieter when we leave you."

"Must I go?" asked Catherine dolefully, bending over him. "Do you want me to

go, Linton?"

"You can't alter what you've done," he replied pettishly, shrinking from her,

"unless you alter it for the worse, by teasing me into a fever."

"Well, then, I must go?" she repeated.

"Let me alone, at least," said he; "I can't bear your talking!"

She lingered, and resisted my persuasions to departure a tiresome while; but

as he neither looked up nor spoke, she finally made a movement to the door and

I followed. We were recalled by a scream. Linton had slid from his seat on to

the hearthstone, and lay writhing in the mere perverseness of an indulged

plague of a child, determined to be as grievous and harassing as it can. I

thoroughly gauged his disposition from his behaviour, and saw at once it would

be folly to attempt humouring him. Not so my companion: she ran back in

terror, knelt down, and cried, and soothed, and entreated, till he grew quiet

from lack of breath, -by no means from compunction at distressing her.

"I shall lift him on the settle," I said, "and he may roll about as he

pleases: we can't stop to watch him. I hope you are satisfied, Miss Cathy,

that you are not the person to benefit him, and that his condition of health

is not occasioned by attachment to you. Now then, there he is! Come away; as

soon as he knows there is nobody by to care for his nonsense, he'll be glad to

lie still."

She placed a cushion under his head, and offered him some water; he rejected

the latter, and tossed uneasily on the former, as if it were a stone or a

block of wood. She tried to put it more comfortably.

"I can't do with that," he said; "it's not high enough!"

Catherine brought another to lay above it.

"That's too high!" murmured the provoking thing.

"How must I arrange it, then?" she asked despairingly.

He twined himself up to her, as she half knelt by the settle, and converted

her shoulder into a support.

"No, that won't do," I said. "You'll be content with the cushion, Master

Heathcliff. Miss has wasted too much time on you already: we cannot remain

five minutes longer."

"Yes, yes, we can!" replied Cathy. "He's good and patient now. He's beginning

to think I shall have far greater misery than he will tonight, if I believe he

is the worse for my visit; and then, I dare not come again. Tell the truth

about it, Linton; for I mustn't come, if I have hurt you."

"You must come, to cure me," he answered. "You ought to come, because you have

hurt me -you know you have, extremely! I was not as ill when you entered as I

am at present -was I?"

"But you've made yourself ill by crying and being in a passion."

"I didn't do it all," said his cousin. "However, we'll be friends now. And you

really want me, -you would wish to see me sometimes, really?"

"I told you I did," he replied impatiently. "Sit on the settle, and let me

lean on your knee. That's as Mamma used to do, whole afternoons together. Sit

quite still, and don't talk; but you may sing a song, if you can sing; or you

may say a nice long interesting ballad -one of those you promised to teach me;

or a story. I'd rather have a ballad, though: begin."

Catherine repeated the longest she could remember. The employment pleased both

mightily. Linton would have another, and after that another, notwithstanding

my strenuous objections; and so they went on until the clock struck twelve,

and we heard Hareton in the court, returning for his dinner.

"And tomorrow, Catherine, will you be here tomorrow?" asked young Heathcliff,

holding her frock as she rose reluctantly.

"No!" I answered, "nor next day neither." She, however, gave a different

response, evidently, for his forehead cleared as she stooped and whispered in

his ear.

"You won't go tomorrow, recollect, Miss!" I commenced, when we were out of the

house. "You are not dreaming of it, are you?"

She smiled.

"Oh, I'll take good care," I continued; "I'll have that lock mended, and you

can escape by no way else."

"I can get over the wall," she said, laughing. "The Grange is not a prison,

Ellen, and you are not my jailer. And besides, I'm almost seventeen -I'm a

woman. And I'm certain Linton would recover quickly if he had me to look after

him. I'm older than he is, you know, and wiser: less childish, am I not? And

he'll soon do as I direct him, with some slight coaxing. He's a pretty little

darling when he's good. I'd make such a pet of him, if he were mine. We should

never quarrel, should we, after we were used to each other? Don't you like

him, Ellen?"

"Like him?" I exclaimed. "The worst-tempered bit of a sickly slip that ever

struggled into its teens! Happily, as Mr. Heathcliff conjectured, he'll not

win twenty! I doubt whether he'll see spring, indeed. And small loss to his

family whenever he drops off. And lucky it is for us that his father took him:

the kinder he was treated, the more tedious and selfish he'd be! I'm glad you

have no chance of having him for a husband, Miss Catherine."

My companion waxed serious at hearing this speech. To speak of his death so

regardlessly wounded her feelings.

"He's younger than I," she answered, after a protracted pause of meditation,

"and he ought to live the longest: he will -he must live as long as I do. He's

as strong now as when he first came into the North, -I'm positive of that.

It's only a cold that ails him, the same as Papa has. You say Papa will get

better, and why shouldn't he?"

"Well, well," I cried, "after all, we needn't trouble ourselves; for listen,

Miss -and mind, I'll keep my word -if you attempt going to Wuthering Heights

again, with or without me, I shall inform Mr. Linton, and, unless he allow it,

the intimacy with your cousin must not be revived."

"It has been revived!" muttered Cathy sulkily.

"Must not be continued, then," I said.

"We'll see!" was her reply, and she set off at a gallop, leaving me to toil in

the rear.

We both reached home before our dinner-time; my master supposed we had been

wandering through the park, and therefore he demanded no explanation of our

absence. As soon as I entered, I hastened to change my soaked shoes and

stockings; but sitting such a while at the Heights had done the mischief. On

the succeeding morning I was laid up, and during three weeks I remained

incapacitated for attending to my duties, -a calamity never experienced prior

to that period, and never, I am thankful to say, since.

My little mistress behaved like an angel, in coming to wait on me, and cheer

my solitude: the confinement brought me exceedingly low. It is wearisome, to a

stirring active body; but few have slighter reasons for complaint than I had.

The moment Catherine left Mr. Linton's room, she appeared at my bedside. Her

day was divided between us; no amusement usurped a minute: she neglected her

meals, her studies, and her play, and she was the fondest nurse that ever

watched. She must have had a warm heart, when she loved her father so, to give

so much to me. I said her days were divided between us; but the master retired

early, and I generally needed nothing after six o'clock, thus the evening was

her own. Poor thing! I never considered what she did with herself after tea.

And though frequently, when she looked in to bid me good-night, I remarked a

fresh colour in her cheeks and a pinkness over her slender fingers; instead of

fancying the hue borrowed from a cold ride across the moors, I laid it to the

charge of a hot fire in the library.

Chapter 24

At the close of three weeks, I was able to quit my chamber, and move about the

house. And on the first occasion of my sitting up in the evening, I asked

Catherine to read to me, because my eyes were weak. We were in the library,

the master having gone to bed; she consented, rather unwillingly, I fancied,

and, imagining my sort of books did not suit her, I bid her please herself in

the choice of what she perused. She selected one of her own favourites, and

got forward steadily about an hour; then came frequent questions.

"Ellen, are not you tired? Hadn't you better lie down now? You'll be sick,

keeping up so long, Ellen."

"No, no, dear, I'm not tired," I returned, continually.

Perceiving me immovable, she essayed another method of showing her disrelish

for her occupation. It changed to yawning, and stretching, and:

"Ellen, I'm tired."

"Give over then, and talk," I answered.

That was worse; she fretted and sighed, and looked at her watch till eight,

and finally went to her room, completely overdone with sleep, judging by her

peevish, heavy look, and the constant rubbing she inflicted on her eyes. The

following night she seemed more impatient still; and on the third from

recovering my company, she complained of a headache, and left me. I thought

her conduct odd; and having remained alone a long while, I resolved on going

and inquiring whether she were better, and asking her to come and lie on the

sofa, instead of upstairs in the dark. No Catherine could I discover upstairs,

and none below. The servants affirmed they had not seen her. I listened at Mr.

Edgar's door; all was silence. I returned to her apartment, extinguished my

candle, and seated myself in the window.

The moon shone bright; a sprinkling of snow covered the ground, and I

reflected that she might, possibly, have taken it into her head to walk about

the garden, for refreshment. I did detect a figure creeping along the inner

fence of the park; but it was not my young mistress: on its emerging into the

light, I recognised one of the grooms. He stood a considerable period, viewing

the carriage-road through the grounds; then started off at a brisk pace, as if

he had detected something, and reappeared presently, leading Miss's pony; and

there she was, just dismounted, and walking by its side. The man took his

charge stealthily across the grass towards the stable. Cathy entered by the

casement-window of the drawing-room, and glided noiselessly up to where I

awaited her. She put the door gently to, slipped off her snowy shoes, untied

her hat, and was proceeding, unconscious of my espionage, to lay aside her

mantle, when I suddenly rose and revealed myself. The surprise petrified her

an instant, -she uttered an inarticulate exclamation, and stood fixed.

"My dear Miss Catherine," I began, too vividly impressed by her recent

kindness to break into a scold, "where have you been riding out at this hour?

And why should you try to deceive me, by telling a tale? Where have you been?

Speak!"

"To the bottom of the park," she stammered. "I didn't tell a tale."

"And nowhere else?" I demanded.

"No," was the muttered reply.

"Oh, Catherine!" I cried, sorrowfully. "You know you have been doing wrong, or

you wouldn't be driven to uttering an untruth to me. That does grieve me. I'd

rather be three months ill, than hear you frame a deliberate lie."

She sprang forward and, bursting into tears, threw her arms round my neck.

"Well, Ellen, I'm so afraid of you being angry," she said. "Promise not to be

angry, and you shall know the very truth: I hate to hide it."

We sat down in the window-seat; I assured her I would not scold, whatever her

secret might be, and I guessed it, of course; so she commenced:

"I've been to Wuthering Heights, Ellen, and I've never missed going a day

since you fell ill; except thrice before and twice after you left your room. I

gave Michael books and pictures to prepare Minny every evening, and to put her

back in the stable -you mustn't scold him either, mind. I was at the Heights

by half-past six, and generally stayed till half-past eight, and then galloped

home. It was not to amuse myself that I went, -I was often wretched all the

time. Now and then, I was happy; once in a week perhaps. At first, I expected

there would be sad work persuading you to let me keep my word to Linton; for I

had engaged to call again next day, when we quitted him; but, as you stayed

upstairs on the morrow, I escaped that trouble; and while Michael was

refastening the lock of the park door in the afternoon, I got possession of

the key, and told him how my cousin wished me to visit him, because he was

sick, and couldn't come to the Grange; and how Papa would object to my going;

and then I negotiated with him about the pony. He is fond of reading, and he

thinks of leaving soon to get married; so he offered, if I would lend him

books out of the library, to do what I wished; but I preferred giving him my

own, and that satisfied him better.

"On my second visit, Linton seemed in lively spirits; and Zillah (that is

their housekeeper) made us a clean room and a good fire, and told us that, as

Joseph was out at a prayer-meeting and Hareton Earnshaw was off with his dogs

-robbing our woods of pheasants, as I heard afterwards -we might do what we

liked. She brought me some warm wine and gingerbread, and appeared exceedingly

good-natured; and Linton sat in the armchair, and I in the little

rocking-chair on the hearthstone, and we laughed and talked so merrily, and

found so much to say: we planned where we would go, and what we would do in

summer. I needn't repeat that, because you would call it silly.

"One time, however, we were near quarrelling. He said the pleasantest manner

of spending a hot July day was lying from morning till evening on a bank of

heath in the middle of the moors, with the bees humming dreamily about among

the bloom, and the larks singing high up overhead, and the blue sky and bright

sun shining steadily and cloudlessly. That was his most perfect idea of

heaven's happiness: mine was rocking in a rustling green tree, with a west

wind blowing, and bright white clouds flitting rapidly above; and not only

larks, but throstles, and blackbirds, and linnets, and cuckoos pouring out

music on every side, and the moors seen at a distance, broken into cool dusky

dells; but close by great swells of long grass undulating in waves to the

breeze; and woods and sounding water, and the whole world awake and wild with

joy. He wanted all to lie in an ecstasy of peace; I wanted all to sparkle and

dance in a glorious jubilee. I said his heaven would be only half alive, and

he said mine would be drunk; I said I should fall asleep in his, and he said

he could not breathe in mine, and began to grow very snappish. At last, we

agreed to try both, as soon as the right weather came; and then we kissed each

other and were friends.

"After sitting still an hour, I looked at the great room with its smooth

uncarpeted floor, and thought how nice it would be to play in, if we removed

the table; and I asked Linton to call Zillah in to help us, -and we'd have a

game at blind-man's buff: she should try to catch us -you used to, you know,

Ellen. He wouldn't: there was no pleasure in it, he said; but he consented to

play at ball with me. We found two in a cupboard, among a heap of old toys:

tops, and hoops, battledoors, and shuttlecocks. One was marked C., and the

other H.; I wished to have the C., because that stood for Catherine, and the

H. might be for Heathcliff, his name; but the bran came out of H., and Linton

didn't like it. I beat him constantly, and he got cross again, and coughed,

and returned to his chair. That night, though, he easily recovered his good

humour: he was charmed with two or three pretty songs -your songs, Ellen; and

when I was obliged to go, he begged and entreated me to come the following

evening; and I promised. Minny and I went flying home as light as air; and I

dreamt of Wuthering Heights and my sweet, darling cousin, till morning.

"On the morrow, I was sad; partly because you were poorly, and partly that I

wished my father knew, and approved of my excursions: but it was beautiful

moonlight after tea; and, as I rode on, the gloom cleared. I shall have

another happy evening, I thought to myself, and what delights me more, my

pretty Linton will. I trotted up their garden, and was turning round to the

back, when that fellow Earnshaw met me, took my bridle, and bid me go in by

the front entrance. He patted Minny's neck, and said she was a bonny beast,

and appeared as if he wanted me to speak to him. I only told him to leave my

horse alone, or else it would kick him. He answered in his vulgar accent, `It

wouldn't do mitch hurt if it did'; and surveyed its legs with a smile. I was

half inclined to make it try; however, he moved off to open the door, and, as

he raised the latch, he looked up to the inscription above, and said, with a

stupid mixture of awkwardness and elation:

" `Miss Catherine! I can read yon, nah.'

" `Wonderful,' I exclaimed. `Pray let us hear you -you are grown clever!'

"He spelt, and drawled over by syllables, the name -`Hareton Earnshaw.'

" `And the figures?' I cried encouragingly, perceiving that he came to a dead

halt.

" `I cannot tell them yet,' he answered.

" `Oh, you dunce!' I said, laughing heartily at his failure.

"The fool stared, with a grin hovering about his lips, and a scowl gathering

over his eyes, as if uncertain whether he might not join in my mirth, -whether

it were not pleasant familiarity, or what it really was, contempt. I settled

his doubts, by suddenly retrieving my gravity and desiring him to walk away,

for I came to see Linton, not him. He reddened -I saw that by the moonlight

-dropped his hand from the latch, and skulked off, a picture of mortified

vanity. He imagined himself to be as accomplished as Linton, I suppose,

because he could spell his own name; and was marvellously discomfited that I

didn't think the same."

"Stop, Miss Catherine, dear!" I interrupted. "I shall not scold, but I don't

like your conduct there. If you had remembered that Hareton was your cousin as

much as Master Heathcliff, you would have felt how improper it was to behave

in that way. At least, it was praiseworthy ambition for him to desire to be as

accomplished as Linton; and probably he did not learn merely to show off: you

had made him ashamed of his ignorance before, I have no doubt, and he wished

to remedy it and please you. To sneer at his imperfect attempt was very bad

breeding. Had you been brought up in his circumstances, would you be less

rude? He was as quick and as intelligent a child as ever you were; and I'm

hurt that he should be despised now, because that base Heathcliff has treated

him so unjustly."

"Well, Ellen, you won't cry about it, will you?" she exclaimed, surprised at

my earnestness. "But wait, and you shall hear if he conned his A B C to please

me; and if it were worth while being civil to the brute. I entered; Linton was

lying on the settle, and half got up to welcome me.

" `I'm ill tonight, Catherine, love,' he said; `and you must have all the

talk, and let me listen. Come, and sit by me. I was sure you wouldn't break

your word, and I'll make you promise again, before you go.'

"I knew now that I mustn't tease him, as he was ill; and I spoke softly and

put no questions, and avoided irritating him in any way. I had brought some of

my nicest books for him; he asked me to read a little of one, and I was about

to comply, when Earnshaw burst the door open, having gathered venom with

reflection. He advanced direct to us, seized Linton by the arm, and swung him

off the seat.

" `Get to thy own room!' he said in a voice almost inarticulate with passion;

and his face looked swelled and furious. `Take her there if she comes to see

thee: thou shalln't keep me out of this. Begone, wi' ye both!'

"He swore at us, and left Linton no time to answer, nearly throwing him into

the kitchen; and he clenched his fist as I followed, seemingly longing to

knock me down. I was afraid for a moment, and I let one volume fall; he kicked

it after me, and shut us out. I heard a malignant, crackly laugh by the fire,

and turning, beheld that odious Joseph standing rubbing his bony hands, and

quivering.

" `Aw wer sure he'd sarve ye aht! He's a grand lad! He's getten t' raight

sperrit in him! He knaws -Ay, he knaws, as weel as Aw do, who sud be t'

maister yonder -Ech, ech, ech! He mad ye skift properly! Ech, ech, ech!'

" `Where must we go?' I said to my cousin, disregarding the old wretch's

mockery.

"Linton was white and trembling. He was not pretty then, Ellen, -Oh no! he

looked frightful! for his thin face and large eyes were wrought into an

expression of frantic, powerless fury. He grasped the handle of the door, and

shook it; it was fastened inside.

" `If you don't let me in I'll kill you! -If you don't let me in I'll kill

you!' he rather shrieked than said. `Devil! devil! -I'll kill you -I'll kill

you!'

"Joseph uttered his croaking laugh again.

" `Thear that's t' father!' he cried. `That's father! We've allas summut uh

orther side in us. Niver heed, Hareton, lad -dunnut be 'feared -he cannot get

at thee!'

"I took hold of Linton's hands, and tried to pull him away; but he shrieked so

shockingly that I dared not proceed. At last, his cries were choked by a

dreadful fit of coughing; blood gushed from his mouth, and he fell on the

ground. I ran into the yard, sick with terror, and called for Zillah, as loud

as I could. She soon heard me: she was milking the cows in a shed behind the

barn, and hurrying from her work, she inquired what there was to do? I hadn't

breath to explain; dragging her in, I looked about for Linton. Earnshaw had

come out to examine the mischief he had caused, and he was then conveying the

poor thing upstairs. Zillah and I ascended after him; but he stopped me at the

top of the steps, and said I shouldn't go in, -I must go home. I exclaimed

that he had killed Linton, and I would enter. Joseph locked the door, and

declared I should do `no sich stuff', and asked me whether I were `bahn to be

as mad as him'. I stood crying, till the housekeeper reappeared. She affirmed

that he would be better in a bit, but he couldn't do with that shrieking and

din; and she took me, and nearly carried me into the house.

"Ellen, I was ready to tear my hair off my head! I sobbed and wept so that my

eyes were almost blind; and the ruffian you have such sympathy with stood

opposite, presuming every now and then to bid me `wisht', and denying that it

was his fault; and finally, frightened by my assertions that I would tell

Papa, and that he should be put in prison and hanged, he commenced blubbering

himself, and hurried out to hide his cowardly agitation. Still, I was not rid

of him: when at length they compelled me to depart, and I had got some hundred

yards off the premises, he suddenly issued from the shadow of the roadside,

and checked Minny and took hold of me.

" `Miss Catherine, I'm ill grieved,' he began, `but it's rayther too bad -'

"I gave him a cut with my whip, thinking perhaps he would murder me. He let

go, thundering one of his horrid curses, and I galloped home more than half

out of my senses.

"I didn't bid you good-night, that evening, and I didn't go to Wuthering

Heights, the next: I wished to, exceedingly; but I was strangely excited, and

dreaded to hear that Linton was dead, sometimes; and sometimes shuddered at

the thought of encountering Hareton. On the third day I took courage, -at

least, I couldn't bear longer suspense, and stole off once more. I went at

five o'clock, and walked, fancying I might manage to creep into the house, and

up to Linton's room, unobserved. However, the dogs gave notice of my approach.

Zillah received me, and saying `the lad was mending nicely', showed me into a

small, tidy, carpeted apartment, where, to my inexpressible joy, I beheld

Linton laid on a little sofa, reading one of my books. But he would neither

speak to me nor look at me, through a whole hour, Ellen: he has such an

unhappy temper. And what quite confounded me, when he did open his mouth it

was to utter the falsehood that I had occasioned the uproar, and Hareton was

not to blame! Unable to reply, except passionately, I got up and walked from

the room. He sent after me a faint `Catherine!' He did not reckon on being

answered so; but I wouldn't turn back; and the morrow was the second day on

which I stayed at home, nearly determined to visit him no more. But it was so

miserable going to bed, and getting up, and never hearing anything about him,

that my resolution melted into air before it was properly formed. It had

appeared wrong to take the journey once; now it seemed wrong to refrain.

Michael came to ask if he must saddle Minny; I said `Yes', and considered

myself doing a duty as she bore me over the hills. I was forced to pass the

front windows to get to the court; it was no use trying to conceal my presence.

" `Young master is in the house,' said Zillah, as she saw me making for the

parlour. I went in; Earnshaw was there also, but he quitted the room directly.

Linton sat in the great armchair half asleep; walking up to the fire, I began

in a serious tone, partly meaning it to be true:

" `As you don't like me, Linton, and as you think I come on purpose to hurt

you, and pretend that I do so every time, this is our last meeting: let us say

good-bye; and tell Mr. Heathcliff that you have no wish to see me, and that he

mustn't invent any more falsehoods on the subject.'

" `Sit down and take your hat off, Catherine,' he answered. `You are so much

happier than I am, you ought to be better. Papa talks enough of my defects,

and shows enough scorn of me, to make it natural I should doubt myself. I

doubt whether I am not altogether as worthless as he calls me, frequently; and

then I feel so cross and bitter, I hate everybody! I am worthless, and bad in

temper, and bad in spirit, almost always; and, if you choose, you may say

good-bye: you'll get rid of an annoyance. Only, Catherine, do me this justice:

believe that if I might be as sweet, and as kind, and as good as you are, I

would be, as willingly, and more so, than as happy and as healthy. And believe

that your kindness has made me love you deeper than if I deserved your love;

and though I couldn't, and cannot help showing my nature to you, I regret it

and repent it; and shall regret and repent it till I die!'

"I felt he spoke the truth; and I felt I must forgive him: and, though he

should quarrel the next moment, I must forgive him again. We were reconciled;

but we cried, both of us, the whole time I stayed, -not entirely for sorrow,

yet I was sorry Linton had that distorted nature. He'll never let his friends

be at ease, and he'll never be at ease himself! I have always gone to his

little parlour, since that night; because his father returned the day after.

"About three times, I think, we have been merry and hopeful, as we were the

first evening; the rest of my visits were dreary and troubled: now with his

selfishness and spite, and now with his sufferings; but I've learnt to endure

the former with nearly as little resentment as the latter. Mr. Heathcliff

purposely avoids me; I have hardly seen him at all. Last Sunday, indeed,

coming earlier than usual, I heard him abusing poor Linton, cruelly, for his

conduct of the night before. I can't tell how he knew of it, unless he

listened. Linton had certainly behaved provokingly; however, it was the

business of nobody but me, and I interrupted Mr. Heathcliff's lecture by

entering and telling him so. He burst into a laugh, and went away, saying he

was glad I took that view of the matter. Since then, I've told Linton he must

whisper his bitter things. Now, Ellen, you have heard all; and I can't be

prevented from going to Wuthering Heights, except by inflicting misery on two

people; whereas, if you'll only not tell Papa, my going need disturb the

tranquillity of none. You'll not tell, will you? It will be very heartless if

you do."

"I'll make up my mind on that point by tomorrow, Miss Catherine," I replied.

"It requires some study; and so I'll leave you to your rest, and go think it

over."

I thought it over aloud, in my master's presence; walking straight from her

room to his, and relating the whole story: with the exception of her

conversations with her cousin, and any mention of Hareton. Mr. Linton was

alarmed and distressed more than he would acknowledge to me. In the morning,

Catherine learnt my betrayal of her confidence, and she learnt also that her

secret visits were to end. In vain she wept and writhed against the interdict,

and implored her father to have pity on Linton: all she got to comfort her was

a promise that he would write, and give him leave to come to the Grange when

he pleased; but explaining that he must no longer expect to see Catherine at

Wuthering Heights. Perhaps, had he been aware of his nephew's disposition and

state of health, he would have seen fit to withhold even that slight

consolation.

Chapter 25

These things happened last winter, sir," said Mrs. Dean; "hardly more than a

year ago. Last winter, I did not think, at another twelve months' end, I

should be amusing a stranger to the family with relating them! Yet, who knows

how long you'll be a stranger? You're too young to rest always contented,

living by yourself; and I some way fancy no one could see Catherine Linton,

and not love her. You smile; but why do you look so lively and interested,

when I talk about her? and why have you asked me to hang her picture over your

fireplace? and why -"

"Stop, my good friend!" I cried. "It may be very possible that I should love

her; but would she love me? I doubt it too much to venture my tranquillity by

running into temptation; and then my home is not here. I'm of the busy world,

and to its arms I must return. Go on. Was Catherine obedient to her father's

commands?"

"She was," continued the housekeeper. "Her affection for him was still the

chief sentiment in her heart; and he spoke without anger: he spoke in the deep

tenderness of one about to leave his treasure amid perils and foes, where his

remembered words would be the only aid that he could bequeath to guide her. He

said to me, a few days afterwards:

" `I wish my nephew would write, Ellen, or call. Tell me, sincerely, what you

think of him: is he changed for the better, or is there a prospect of

improvement, as he grows a man?'

" `He's very delicate, sir,' I replied; `and scarcely likely to reach manhood;

but this I can say, he does not resemble his father; and if Miss Catherine had

the misfortune to marry him, he would not be beyond her control; unless she

were extremely and foolishly indulgent. However, master, you'll have plenty of

time to get acquainted with him, and see whether he would suit her: it wants

four years and more to his being of age.' "

Edgar sighed; and, walking to the window, looked out towards Gimmerton Kirk.

It was a misty afternoon, but the February sun shone dimly, and we could just

distinguish the two fir-trees in the yard, and the sparely scattered

gravestones.

"I've prayed often," he half soliloquised, "for the approach of what is

coming; and now I begin to shrink, and fear it. I thought the memory of the

hour I came down that glen a bridegroom would be less sweet than the

anticipation that I was soon, in a few months, or, possibly, weeks, to be

carried up, and laid in its lonely hollow! Ellen, I've been very happy with my

little Cathy. Through winter nights and summer days she was a living hope at

my side. But I've been as happy musing by myself among those stones, under

that old church: lying, through the long June evenings, on the green mound of

her mother's grave, and wishing, yearning for the time when I might lie

beneath it. What can I do for Cathy? How must I quit her? I'd not care one

moment for Linton being Heathcliff's son; nor for his taking her from me, if

he could console her for my loss. I'd not care that Heathcliff gained his

ends, and triumphed in robbing me of my last blessing! But should Linton be

unworthy -only a feeble tool to his father -I cannot abandon her to him! And,

hard though it be to crush her buoyant spirit, I must persevere in making her

sad while I live, and leaving her solitary when I die. Darling! I'd rather

resign her to God, and lay her in the earth before me."

"Resign her to God, as it is, sir," I answered; "and if we should lose you

-which may He forbid -under His providence, I'll stand her friend and

counsellor to the last. Miss Catherine is a good girl: I don't fear that she

will go wilfully wrong; and people who do their duty are always finally

rewarded."

Spring advanced; yet my master gathered no real strength, though he resumed

his walks in the grounds with his daughter. To her inexperienced notions, this

itself was a sign of convalescence; and then his cheek was often flushed, and

his eyes were bright, -she felt sure of his recovering. On her seventeenth

birthday, he did not visit the churchyard: it was raining, and I observed:

"You'll surely not go out tonight, sir?"

He answered:

"No, I'll defer it, this year, a little longer."

He wrote again to Linton, expressing his great desire to see him; and, had the

invalid been presentable, I've no doubt his father would have permitted him to

come. As it was, being instructed, he returned an answer, intimating that Mr.

Heathcliff objected to his calling at the Grange; but his uncle's kind

remembrance delighted him, and he hoped to meet him, sometimes, in his

rambles, and personally to petition that his cousin and he might not remain

long so utterly divided.

That part of his letter was simple, and probably his own. Heathcliff knew he

could plead eloquently enough for Catherine's company, then.

"I do not ask," he said, "that she may visit here; but, am I never to see her,

because my father forbids me to go to her home, and you forbid her to come to

mine? Do, now and then, ride with her toward the Heights; and let us exchange

a few words, in your presence! We have done nothing to deserve this

separation; and you are not angry with me, -you have no reason to dislike me,

you allow, yourself. Dear uncle! send me a kind note tomorrow, and leave to

join you anywhere you please, except at Thrushcross Grange. I believe an

interview would convince you that my father's character is not mine: he

affirms I am more your nephew than his son; and though I have faults which

render me unworthy of Catherine, she has excused them, and, for her sake, you

should also. You inquire after my health -it is better; but while I remain cut

off from all hope, and doomed to solitude, or the society of those who never

did and never will like me, how can I be cheerful and well?"

Edgar, though he felt for the boy, could not consent to grant his request;

because he could not accompany Catherine. He said, in summer, perhaps, they

might meet; meantime, he wished him to continue writing at intervals, and

engaged to give him what advice and comfort he was able by letter; being well

aware of his hard position in his family. Linton complied; and had he been

unrestrained, would probably have spoiled all by filling his epistles with

complaints and lamentations; but his father kept a sharp watch over him, and,

of course, insisted on every line that my master sent being shown; so, instead

of penning his peculiar personal sufferings and distresses, the themes

constantly uppermost in his thoughts, he harped on the cruel obligation of

being held asunder from his friend and love; and gently intimated that Mr.

Linton must allow an interview soon, or he should fear he was purposely

deceiving him with empty promises.

Cathy was a powerful ally at home; and, between them, they at length persuaded

my master to acquiesce in their having a ride or a walk together, about once a

week, under my guardianship, and on the moors nearest the Grange; for June

found him still declining; and, though he had set aside, yearly, a portion of

his income for my young lady's fortune, he had a natural desire that she might

retain -or at least return in a short time to -the house of her ancestors; and

he considered her only prospect of doing that was by a union with his heir: he

had no idea that the latter was failing almost as fast as himself; nor had any

one, I believe, -no doctor visited the Heights, and no one saw Master

Heathcliff to make report of his condition, among us. I, for my part, began to

fancy my forebodings were false, and that he must be actually rallying, when

he mentioned riding and walking on the moors, and seemed so earnest in

pursuing his object. I could not picture a father treating a dying child as

tyrannically and wickedly as I afterwards learned Heathcliff had treated him,

to compel this apparent eagerness; his efforts redoubling the more imminently

his avaricious and unfeeling plans were threatened with defeat by death.

Chapter 26

Summer was already past its prime, when Edgar reluctantly yielded his assent

to their entreaties, and Catherine and I set out on our first ride to join her

cousin. It was a close, sultry day, devoid of sunshine, but with a sky too

dappled and hazy to threaten rain; and our place of meeting had been fixed at

the guide-stone, by the crossroads. On arriving there, however, a little

herd-boy, despatched as a messenger, told us that:

"Maister Linton wer just ut this side th' Heights: and he'd be mitch obleeged

to us to gang on a bit further."

"Then Master Linton has forgot the first injunction of his uncle," I observed:

"he bid us keep on the Grange land, and here we are, off at once."

"Well, we'll turn our horses' heads round, when we reach him," answered my

companion, "our excursion shall lie towards home."

But when we reached him, and that was scarcely a quarter of a mile from his

own door, we found he had no horse; and we were forced to dismount, and leave

ours to graze. He lay on the heath, awaiting our approach, and did not rise

till we came within a few yards. Then he walked so feebly, and looked so pale,

that I immediately exclaimed:

"Why, Master Heathcliff, you are not fit for enjoying a ramble, this morning.

How ill you do look!"

Catherine surveyed him with grief and astonishment; and changed the

ejaculation of joy on her lips to one of alarm, and the congratulation on

their long-postponed meeting to an anxious inquiry, whether he were worse than

usual.

"No -better -better!" he panted, trembling, and retaining her hand as if he

needed its support, while his large blue eyes wandered timidly over her, the

hollowness round them transforming to haggard wildness the languid expression

they once possessed.

"But you have been worse," persisted his cousin, "worse than when I saw you

last; you are thinner, and -"

"I'm tired," he interrupted hurriedly. "It is too hot for walking, let us rest

here. And, in the morning, I often feel sick -Papa says I grow so fast."

Badly satisfied, Cathy sat down, and he reclined beside her.

"This is something like your paradise," said she, making an effort at

cheerfulness. "You recollect the two days we agreed to spend in the place and

the way each thought pleasantest? This is nearly yours, only there are clouds;

but then they are so soft and mellow, it is nicer than sunshine. Next week, if

you can, we'll ride down to the Grange Park, and try mine."

Linton did not appear to remember what she talked of; and he had evidently

great difficulty in sustaining any kind of conversation. His lack of interest

in the subjects she started, and his equal incapacity to contribute to her

entertainment, were so obvious, that she could not conceal her disappointment.

An indefinite alteration had come over his whole person and manner. The

pettishness that might be caressed into fondness had yielded to a listless

apathy; there was less of the peevish temper of a child which frets and teases

on purpose to be soothed, and more of the self-absorbed moroseness of a

confirmed invalid, repelling consolation, and ready to regard the

good-humoured mirth of others as an insult. Catherine perceived, as well as I

did, that he held it rather a punishment, than a gratification, to endure our

company; and she made no scruple of proposing, presently, to depart. That

proposal, unexpectedly, roused Linton from his lethargy, and threw him into a

strange state of agitation. He glanced fearfully towards the Heights, begging

she would remain another half-hour, at least.

"But, I think," said Cathy, "you'd be more comfortable at home than sitting

here; and I cannot amuse you today, I see, by my tales, and songs, and

chatter: you have grown wiser than I, in these six months; you have little

taste for my diversions now; or else, if I could amuse you, I'd willingly stay."

"Stay to rest yourself," he replied. "And, Catherine, don't think, or say that

I'm very unwell: it is the heavy weather and heat that make me dull; and I

walked about, before you came, a great deal, for me. Tell Uncle, I'm in

tolerable health, will you?"

"I'll tell him that you say so, Linton. I couldn't affirm that you are,"

observed my young lady, wondering at his pertinacious assertion of what was

evidently an untruth.

"And be here again next Thursday," continued he, shunning her puzzled gaze.

"And give him my thanks for permitting you to come -my best thanks, Catherine.

And -and, if you did meet my father, and he asked you about me, don't lead him

to suppose that I've been extremely silent and stupid -don't look sad and

downcast, as you are doing, -he'll be angry."

"I care nothing for his anger," exclaimed Cathy, imagining she would be its

object.

"But I do," said her cousin, shuddering. "Don't provoke him against me,

Catherine, for he is very hard."

"Is he severe to you, Master Heathcliff?" I inquired. "Has he grown weary of

indulgence, and passed from passive to active hatred?"

Linton looked at me, but did not answer; and, after keeping her seat by his

side another ten minutes, during which his head fell drowsily on his breast,

and he uttered nothing except suppressed moans of exhaustion or pain, Cathy

began to seek solace in looking for bilberries, and sharing the produce of her

researches with me: she did not offer them to him, for she saw further notice

would only weary and annoy.

"Is it half-an-hour now, Ellen!" she whispered in my ear, at last. "I can't

tell why we should stay. He's asleep, and Papa will be wanting us back."

"Well, we must not leave him asleep," I answered; "wait till he wakes, and be

patient. You were mighty eager to set off, but your longing to see poor Linton

has soon evaporated!"

"Why did he wish to see me?" returned Catherine. "In his crossest humours,

formerly, I liked him better than I do in his present curious mood. It's just

as if it were a task he was compelled to perform -this interview -for fear his

father should scold him. But I'm hardly going to come to give Mr. Heathcliff

pleasure, whatever reason he may have for ordering Linton to undergo this

penance. And, though I'm glad he's better in health, I'm sorry he's so much

less pleasant, and so much less affectionate to me."

"You think he is better in health, then?" I said.

"Yes," she answered; "because he always made such a great deal of his

sufferings, you know. He is not tolerably well, as he told me to tell Papa;

but he's better, very likely."

"There you differ with me, Miss Cathy," I remarked; "I should conjecture him

to be far worse."

Linton here started from his slumber in bewildered terror, and asked if any

one had called his name.

"No," said Catherine; "unless in dreams. I cannot conceive how you manage to

doze out of doors, in the morning."

"I thought I heard my father," he gasped, glancing up to the frowning nab

above us. "You are sure nobody spoke?"

"Quite sure," replied his cousin. "Only Ellen and I were disputing concerning

your health. Are you truly stronger, Linton, than when we separated in winter?

If you be, I'm certain one thing is not stronger, -your regard for me -speak,

are you?"

The tears gushed from Linton's eyes as he answered, "Yes, yes, I am!" And,

still under the spell of the imaginary voice, his gaze wandered up and down to

detect its owner. Cathy rose. "For today we must part," she said. "And I won't

conceal that I have been sadly disappointed with our meeting, though I'll

mention it to nobody but you: not that I stand in awe of Mr. Heathcliff!"

"Hush," murmured Linton; "for God's sake, hush! He's coming." And he clung to

Catherine's arm, striving to detain her; but at that announcement she hastily

disengaged herself, and whistled to Minny, who obeyed like a dog.

"I'll be here next Thursday," she cried, springing to the saddle. "Good-bye.

Quick, Ellen!"

And so we left him, scarcely conscious of our departure, so absorbed was he in

anticipating his father's approach.

Before we reached home, Catherine's displeasure softened into a perplexed

sensation of pity and regret, largely blended with vague, uneasy doubts about

Linton's actual circumstances, physical and social; in which I partook, though

I counselled her not to say much, for a second journey would make us better

judges. My master requested an account of our ongoings. His nephew's offering

of thanks was duly delivered, Miss Cathy gently touching on the rest; I also

threw little light on his inquiries, for I hardly knew what to hide, and what

to reveal.

Chapter 27

Seven days glided away, every one marking its course by the henceforth rapid

alteration of Edgar Linton's state. The havoc that months had previously

wrought was now emulated by the inroads of hours. Catherine, we would fain

have deluded yet; but her own quick spirit refused to delude her: it divined

in secret, and brooded on the dreadful probability, gradually ripening into

certainty. She had not the heart to mention her ride, when Thursday came

round; I mentioned it for her, and obtained permission to order her out of

doors; for the library, where her father stopped a short time daily -the brief

period he could bear to sit up -and his chamber, had become her whole world.

She grudged each moment that did not find her bending over his pillow, or

seated by his side. Her countenance grew wan with watching and sorrow, and my

master gladly dismissed her to what he flattered himself would be a happy

change of scene and society; drawing comfort from the hope that she would not

now be left entirely alone after his death.

He had a fixed idea, I guessed by several observations he let fall, that, as

his nephew resembled him in person, he would resemble him in mind; for

Linton's letters bore few or no indications of his defective character. And I,

through pardonable weakness, refrained from correcting the error; asking

myself what good there would be in disturbing his last moments with

information that he had neither power nor opportunity to turn to account.

We deferred our excursion till the afternoon; a golden afternoon of August,

-every breath from the hills so full of life that it seemed whoever respired

it, though dying, might revive. Catherine's face was just like the landscape

-shadows and sunshine flitting over it in rapid succession; but the shadows

rested longer, and the sunshine was more transient; and her poor little heart

reproached itself for even that passing forgetfulness of its cares.

We discerned Linton watching at the same spot he had selected before. My young

mistress alighted, and told me that as she was resolved to stay a very little

while, I had better hold the pony and remain on horseback; but I dissented: I

wouldn't risk losing sight of the charge committed to me a minute; so we

climbed the slope of heath together. Master Heathcliff received us with

greater animation on this occasion -not the animation of high spirits though,

nor yet of joy; it looked more like fear.

"It is late!" he said, speaking short and with difficulty. "Is not your father

very ill? I thought you wouldn't come."

"Why won't you be candid?" cried Catherine, swallowing her greeting. "Why

cannot you say at once you don't want me? It is strange, Linton, that for the

second time you have brought me here on purpose, apparently, to distress us

both, and for no reason besides!"

Linton shivered, and glanced at her, half supplicating, half ashamed; but his

cousin's patience was not sufficient to endure this enigmatical behaviour.

"My father is very ill," she said; "and why am I called from his bedside -why

didn't you send to absolve me from my promise, when you wished I wouldn't keep

it? Come! I desire an explanation: playing and trifling are completely

banished out of my mind; and I can't dance attendance on your affectations now!"

"My affectations!" he murmured; "what are they? For heaven's sake, Catherine,

don't look so angry! Despise me as much as you please; I am a worthless,

cowardly wretch, -I can't be scorned enough! but I'm too mean for your anger

-hate my father, and spare me for contempt."

"Nonsense!" cried Catherine, in a passion. "Foolish, silly boy! And there! he

trembles, as if I were really going to touch him! You needn't bespeak

contempt, Linton; anybody will have it spontaneously, at your service. Get

off! I shall return home; it is folly dragging you from the hearthstone, and

pretending -what do we pretend? Let go my frock! If I pitied you for crying

and looking so very frightened, you should spurn such pity. Ellen, tell him

how disgraceful this conduct is. Rise, and don't degrade yourself into an

abject reptile -don't!"

With streaming face and an expression of agony, Linton had thrown his

nerveless frame along the ground: he seemed convulsed with exquisite terror.

"Oh!" he sobbed, "I cannot bear it! Catherine, Catherine, I'm a traitor too,

and I dare not tell you! But leave me, and I shall be killed! Dear Catherine,

my life is in your hands: and you have said you loved me, and if you did, it

wouldn't harm you. You'll not go, then? kind, sweet, good Catherine! And

perhaps you will consent -and he'll let me die with you!"

My young lady, on witnessing his intense anguish, stooped to raise him. The

old feeling of indulgent tenderness overcame her vexation, and she grew

thoroughly moved and alarmed.

"Consent to what?" she asked. "To stay? Tell me the meaning of this strange

talk, and I will. You contradict your own words, and distract me! Be calm and

frank, and confess at once all that weighs on your heart. You wouldn't injure

me, Linton, would you? You wouldn't let any enemy hurt me, if you could

prevent it? I'll believe you are a coward for yourself, but not a cowardly

betrayer of your best friend."

"But my father threatened me," gasped the boy, clasping his attenuated

fingers, "and I dread him -I dread him! I dare not tell!"

"Oh well!" said Catherine, with scornful compassion, "keep your secret, I'm no

coward -save yourself; I'm not afraid!"

Her magnanimity provoked his tears: he wept wildly, kissing her supporting

hands, and yet could not summon courage to speak out. I was cogitating what

the mystery might be, and determined Catherine should never suffer to benefit

him or any one else, by my good will, when hearing a rustle among the ling, I

looked up and saw Mr. Heathcliff almost close upon us, descending the Heights.

He didn't cast a glance towards my companions, though they were sufficiently

near for Linton's sobs to be audible; but hailing me in the almost hearty tone

he assumed to none besides, and the sincerity of which I couldn't avoid

doubting, he said:

"It is something to see you so near to my house, Nelly! How are you at the

Grange? Let us hear! The rumour goes," he added in a lower tone, "that Edgar

Linton is on his deathbed: perhaps they exaggerated his illness?"

"No; my master is dying," I replied; "it is true enough. A sad thing it will

be for us all, but a blessing for him!"

"How long will he last, do you think?" he asked.

"I don't know," I said.

"Because," he continued, looking at the two young people, who were fixed under

his eye -Linton appeared as if he could not venture to stir, or raise his

head, and Catherine could not move, on his account -"because that lad yonder

seems determined to beat me; and I'd thank his uncle to be quick, and go

before him. Hallo! has the whelp been playing that game long? I did give him

some lessons about snivelling. Is he pretty lively with Miss Linton generally?"

"Lively? no -he has shown the greatest distress," I answered. "To see him, I

should say, that instead of rambling with his sweetheart on the hills, he

ought to be in bed, under the hands of a doctor."

"He shall be, in a day or two," muttered Heathcliff. "But first -get up,

Linton! Get up!" he shouted. "Don't grovel on the ground, there -up this

moment!"

Linton had sunk prostrate again in another paroxysm of helpless fear, caused

by his father's glance towards him, I suppose: there was nothing else to

produce such humiliation. He made several efforts to obey, but his little

strength was annihilated for the time, and he fell back again with a moan. Mr.

Heathcliff advanced, and lifted him to lean against a ridge of turf.

"Now," said he, with curbed ferocity, "I'm getting angry; and if you don't

command that paltry spirit of yours -Damn you! get up, directly!"

"I will, Father!" he panted. "Only, let me alone, or I shall faint! I've done

as you wished, I'm sure. Catherine will tell you that I -that I -have been

cheerful. Ah! keep by me, Catherine; give me your hand."

"Take mine," said his father; "stand on your feet. There now -she'll lend you

her arm -that's right, look at her. You would imagine I was the devil himself,

Miss Linton, to excite such horror. Be so kind as to walk home with him, will

you? He shudders, if I touch him."

"Linton, dear!" whispered Catherine, "I can't go to Wuthering Heights, -Papa

has forbidden me. He'll not harm you: why are you so afraid?"

"I can never re-enter that house," he answered. "I'm not to re-enter it

without you!"

"Stop!" cried his father. "We'll respect Catherine's filial scruples. Nelly,

take him in, and I'll follow your advice concerning the doctor, without delay."

"You'll do well," replied I; "but I must remain with my mistress: to mind your

son is not my business."

"You are very stiff," said Heathcliff, "I know that -but you'll force me to

pinch the baby, and make it scream, before it moves your charity. Come then,

my hero. Are you willing to return, escorted by me?"

He approached once more, and made as if he would seize the fragile being; but,

shrinking back, Linton clung to his cousin, and implored her to accompany him,

with a frantic importunity that admitted no denial. However I disapproved, I

couldn't hinder her; indeed, how could she have refused him herself? What was

filling him with dread we had no means of discerning, but there he was,

powerless under its gripe, and any addition seemed capable of shocking him

into idiocy. We reached the threshold; Catherine walked in, and I stood

waiting till she had conducted the invalid to a chair, expecting her out

immediately; when Mr. Heathcliff, pushing me forward, exclaimed:

"My house is not stricken with the plague, Nelly; and I have a mind to be

hospitable today: sit down, and allow me to shut the door."

He shut and locked it also. I started.

"You shall have tea, before you go home," he added. "I am by myself. Hareton

is gone with some cattle to the Lees, and Zillah and Joseph are off on a

journey of pleasure; and, though I'm used to being alone, I'd rather have some

interesting company, if I can get it. Miss Linton, take your seat by him. I

give you what I have, -the present is hardly worth accepting, but I have

nothing else to offer. It is Linton, I mean. How she does stare! It's odd what

a savage feeling I have to anything that seems afraid of me! Had I been born

where laws are less strict, and tastes less dainty, I should treat myself to a

slow vivisection of those two, as an evening's amusement."

He drew in his breath, struck the table, and swore to himself, "By hell! I

hate them."

"I'm not afraid of you!" exclaimed Catherine, who could not hear the latter

part of his speech. She stepped close up, her black eyes flashing with passion

and resolution. "Give me that key -I will have it!" she said. "I wouldn't eat

or drink here, if I were starving."

Heathcliff had the key in his hand that remained on the table. He looked up,

seized with a sort of surprise at her boldness; or, possibly, reminded by her

voice and glance of the person from whom she inherited it. She snatched at the

instrument, and half succeeded in getting it out of his loosened fingers; but

her action recalled him to the present; he recovered it speedily.

"Now, Catherine Linton," he said, "stand off, or I shall knock you down; and

that will make Mrs. Dean mad."

Regardless of this warning, she captured his closed hand and its contents

again. "We will go!" she repeated, exerting her utmost efforts to cause the

iron muscles to relax; and finding that her nails made no impression, she

applied her teeth pretty sharply. Heathcliff glanced at me a glance that kept

me from interfering a moment. Catherine was too intent on his fingers to

notice his face. He opened them suddenly, and resigned the object of dispute;

but, ere she had well secured it, he seized her with the liberated hand, and,

pulling her on his knee, administered with the other a shower of terrific

slaps on both sides of the head, each sufficient to have fulfilled his threat,

had she been able to fall.

At this diabolical violence, I rushed on him furiously. "You villain!" I began

to cry, "you villain!" A touch on the chest silenced me: I am stout, and soon

put out of breath; and, what with that and the rage, I staggered dizzily back,

and felt ready to suffocate, or to burst a blood-vessel. The scene was over in

two minutes; Catherine, released, put her two hands to her temples, and looked

just as if she were not sure whether her ears were off or on. She trembled

like a reed, poor thing, and leant against the table perfectly bewildered.

"I know how to chastise children, you see," said the scoundrel, grimly, as he

stooped to repossess himself of the key, which had dropped to the floor. "Go

to Linton now, as I told you; and cry at your ease! I shall be your father,

tomorrow -all the father you'll have in a few days -and you shall have plenty

of that, -you can bear plenty; you're no weakling: you shall have a daily

taste, if I catch such a devil of a temper in your eyes again!"

Cathy ran to me instead of Linton, and knelt down, and put her burning cheek

on my lap, weeping aloud. Her cousin had shrunk into a corner of the settle,

as quiet as a mouse, congratulating himself, I daresay, that the correction

had lighted on another than him. Mr. Heathcliff, perceiving us all confounded,

rose, and expeditiously made the tea himself. The cups and saucers were laid

ready. He poured it out, and handed me a cup.

"Wash away your spleen," he said. "And help your own naughty pet and mine. It

is not poisoned, though I prepared it. I'm going out to seek your horses."

Our first thought, on his departure, was to force an exit somewhere. We tried

the kitchen door, but that was fastened outside; we looked at the windows

-they were too narrow for even Cathy's little figure.

"Master Linton," I cried, seeing we were regularly imprisoned, "you know what

your diabolical father is after, and you shall tell us, or I'll box your ears,

as he has done your cousin's."

"Yes, Linton; you must tell," said Catherine. "It was for your sake I came,

and it will be wickedly ungrateful if you refuse."

"Give me some tea, I'm thirsty, and then I'll tell you," he answered. "Mrs.

Dean, go away. I don't like you standing over me. Now, Catherine, you are

letting your tears fall into my cup. I won't drink that. Give me another."

Catherine pushed another to him, and wiped her face. I felt disgusted at the

little wretch's composure, since he was no longer in terror for himself. The

anguish he had exhibited on the moor subsided as soon as ever he entered

Wuthering Heights; so I guessed he had been menaced with an awful visitation

of wrath if he failed in decoying us there; and, that accomplished, he had no

further immediate fears.

"Papa wants us to be married," he continued, after sipping some of the liquid.

"And he knows your papa wouldn't let us marry now; and he's afraid of my

dying, if we wait; so we are to be married in the morning, and you are to stay

here all night; and, if you do as he wishes, you shall return home next day,

and take me with you."

"Take you with her, pitiful changeling?" I exclaimed. "You marry? Why, the man

is mad; or he thinks us fools, every one. And do you imagine that beautiful

young lady, that healthy, hearty girl, will tie herself to a little perishing

monkey like you? Are you cherishing the notion that anybody, let alone Miss

Catherine Linton, would have you for a husband? You want whipping for bringing

us in here at all, with your dastardly, puling tricks; and -don't look so

silly now! I've a very good mind to shake you severely, for your contemptible

treachery, and your imbecile conceit."

I did give him a slight shaking; but it brought on the cough, and he took to

his ordinary resource of moaning and weeping, and Catherine rebuked me.

"Stay all night? No!" she said, looking slowly round. "Ellen, I'll burn that

door down, but I'll get out."

And she would have commenced the execution of her threat directly, but Linton

was up in alarm for his dear self again. He clasped her in his two feeble

arms, sobbing:

"Won't you have me, and save me -not let me come to the Grange? Oh! darling

Catherine! you mustn't go, and leave me, after all. You must obey my father,

you must!"

"I must obey my own," she replied, "and relieve him from this cruel suspense.

The whole night! What would he think? He'll be distressed already. I'll either

break or burn a way out of the house. Be quiet! You're in no danger; but, if

you hinder me -Linton, I love Papa better than you!"

The mortal terror he felt of Mr. Heathcliff's anger restored to the boy his

coward's eloquence. Catherine was near distraught; still, she persisted that

she must go home, and tried entreaty, in her turn, persuading him to subdue

his selfish agony. While they were thus occupied, our jailer re-entered.

"Your beasts have trotted off," he said, "and -now, Linton! snivelling again?

What has she been doing to you? Come, come -have done, and get to bed. In a

month or two, my lad, you'll be able to pay her back her present tyrannies,

with a vigorous hand. You're pining for pure love, are you not? nothing else

in the world -and she shall have you! There, to bed! Zillah won't be here

tonight; you must undress yourself. Hush! hold your noise! Once in your own

room, I'll not come near you, you needn't fear. By chance, you've managed

tolerably. I'll look to the rest."

He spoke these words, holding the door open for his son to pass; and the

latter achieved his exit exactly as a spaniel might, which suspected the

person who attended on it of designing a spiteful squeeze. The lock was

resecured. Heathcliff approached the fire, where my mistress and I stood

silent. Catherine looked up, and instinctively raised her hand to her cheek:

his neighbourhood revived a painful sensation. Anybody else would have been

incapable of regarding the childish act with sternness, but he scowled on her,

and muttered:

"Oh, you are not afraid of me? Your courage is well disguised, -you seem

damnably afraid!"

"I am afraid now," she replied; "because if I stay, Papa will be miserable;

and how can I endure making him miserable, when he -when he -Mr. Heathcliff,

let me go home! I promise to marry Linton: Papa would like me to, and I love

him -and why should you wish to force me to do what I'll willingly do of

myself?"

"Let him dare to force you!" I cried. "There's law in the land, thank God,

there is! though we be in an out-of-the-way place. I'd inform, if he were my

own son, and it's felony without benefit of clergy!"

"Silence!" said the ruffian. "To the devil with your clamour! I don't want you

to speak. Miss Linton, I shall enjoy myself remarkably in thinking your father

will be miserable: I shall not sleep for satisfaction. You could have hit on

no surer way of fixing your residence under my roof for the next twenty-four

hours than informing me that such an event would follow. As to your promise to

marry Linton, I'll take care you shall keep it; for you shall not quit this

place till it is fulfilled."

"Send Ellen, then, to let Papa know I'm safe!" exclaimed Catherine, weeping

bitterly. "Or marry me now. Poor Papa! Ellen, he'll think we're lost. What

shall we do?"

"Not he! He'll think you are tired of waiting on him, and run off for a little

amusement," answered Heathcliff. "You cannot deny that you entered my house of

your own accord, in contempt of his injunctions to the contrary. And it is

quite natural that you should desire amusement at your age, and that you

should weary of nursing a sick man, and that man only your father. Catherine,

his happiest days were over when your days began. He cursed you, I daresay,

for coming into the world (I did, at least); and it would just do if he cursed

you as he went out of it. I'd join him. I don't love you! How should I? Weep

away. As far as I can see, it will be your chief diversion hereafter, unless

Linton make amends for other losses, -and your provident parent appears to

fancy he may. His letters of advice and consolation entertained me vastly. In

his last, he recommended my jewel to be careful of his, and kind to her when

he got her. Careful and kind -that's paternal. But Linton requires his whole

stock of care and kindness for himself. Linton can play the little tyrant

well. He'll undertake to torture any number of cats, if their teeth be drawn

and their claws pared. You'll be able to tell his uncle fine tales of his

kindness, when you get home again, I assure you."

"You're right there!" I said; "explain your son's character. Show his

resemblance to yourself; and then, I hope, Miss Cathy will think twice before

she takes the cockatrice!"

"I don't much mind speaking of his amiable qualities now," he answered,

"because she must either accept him or remain a prisoner, and you along with

her, till your master dies. I can detain you both, quite concealed, here. If

you doubt, encourage her to retract her word, and you'll have an opportunity

of judging!"

"I'll not retract my word," said Catherine. "I'll marry him, within this hour,

if I may go to Thrushcross Grange afterwards. Mr. Heathcliff, you're a cruel

man, but you're not a fiend; and you won't, from mere malice, destroy,

irrevocably, all my happiness. If Papa thought I had left him on purpose, and

if he died before I returned, could I bear to live? I've given over crying;

but I'm going to kneel here, at your knee; and I'll not get up, and I'll not

take my eyes from your face, till you look back at me! No, don't turn away! do

look! You'll see nothing to provoke you. I don't hate you. I'm not angry that

you struck me. Have you never loved anybody in all your life, Uncle? never?

Ah! you must look once; I'm so wretched -you can't help being sorry and

pitying me."

"Keep your eft's fingers off; and move, or I'll kick you!" cried Heathcliff,

brutally repulsing her. "I'd rather be hugged by a snake. How the devil can

you dream of fawning on me? I detest you!"

He shrugged his shoulders, -shook himself, indeed, as if his flesh crept with

aversion, and thrust back his chair; while I got up, and opened my mouth, to

commence a downright torrent of abuse; but I was rendered dumb in the middle

of the first sentence, by a threat that I should be shown into a room by

myself the very next syllable I uttered. It was growing dark -we heard a sound

of voices at the garden gate. Our host hurried out instantly: he had his wits

about him; we had not. There was a talk of two or three minutes, and he

returned alone.

"I thought it had been your cousin, Hareton," I observed to Catherine. "I wish

he would arrive! Who knows but he might take our part?"

"It was three servants sent to seek you from the Grange," said Heathcliff,

overhearing me. "You should have opened a lattice and called out: but I could

swear that chit is glad you didn't. She's glad to be obliged to stay, I'm

certain."

At learning the chance we had missed, we both gave vent to our grief without

control; and he allowed us to wail on till nine o'clock. Then he bid us go

upstairs, through the kitchen, to Zillah's chamber; and I whispered my

companion to obey: perhaps we might contrive to get through the window there,

or into a garret, and out by its skylight. The window, however, was narrow,

like those below, and the garret trap was safe from our attempts; for we were

fastened in as before. We neither of us lay down: Catherine took her station

by the lattice, and watched anxiously for morning; a deep sigh being the only

answer I could obtain to my frequent entreaties that she would try to rest. I

seated myself in a chair, and rocked to and fro, passing harsh judgment on my

many derelictions of duty, from which, it struck me then, all the misfortunes

of all my employers sprang. It was not the case, in reality, I am aware; but

it was, in my imagination, that dismal night; and I thought Heathcliff himself

less guilty than I.

At seven o'clock he came, and inquired if Miss Linton had risen. She ran to

the door immediately, and answered, "Yes." -"Here, then," he said, opening it,

and pulling her out. I rose to follow, but he turned the lock again. I

demanded my release.

"Be patient," he replied; "I'll send up your breakfast in a while."

I thumped on the panels, and rattled the latch angrily; and Catherine asked

why I was still shut up? He answered, I must try to endure it another hour;

and they went away. I endured it two or three hours; at length, I heard a

footstep, not Heathcliff's.

"I've brought you something to eat," said a voice; "oppen t' door!"

Complying eagerly, I beheld Hareton, laden with food enough to last me all day.

"Tak it," he added, thrusting the tray into my hand.

"Stay one minute," I began.

"Nay!" cried he, and retired, regardless of any prayers I could pour forth to

detain him.

And there I remained enclosed the whole day, and the whole of the next night;

and another, and another. Five nights and four days I remained, altogether,

seeing nobody but Hareton, once every morning; and he was a model of a jailer,

-surly, and dumb, and deaf to every attempt at moving his sense of justice or

compassion.

Chapter 28

On the fifth morning, or rather afternoon, a different step approached

-lighter and shorter -and, this time, the person entered the room. It was

Zillah; donned in her scarlet shawl, with a black silk bonnet on her head, and

a willow basket swung to her arm.

"Eh, dear! Mrs. Dean," she exclaimed. "Well! there is a talk about you at

Gimmerton. I never thought you were sunk in the Blackhorse marsh, and Missy

with you, till master told me you'd been found, and he'd lodged you here!

What, and you must have got on an island, sure? And how long were you in the

hole? Did master save you, Mrs. Dean? But you're not so thin -you've not been

so poorly, have you?"

"Your master is a true scoundrel!" I replied. "But he shall answer for it. He

needn't have raised that tale; it shall all be laid bare!"

"What do you mean?" asked Zillah. "It's not his tale; they tell that in the

village -about your being lost in the marsh; and I calls to Earnshaw, when I

came in -`Eh, they's queer things, Mr. Hareton, happened since I went off.

It's a sad pity of that likely young lass, and cant Nelly Dean.' He stared. I

thought he had not heard aught, so I told him the rumour. The master listened,

and he just smiled to himself, and said, `If they have been in the marsh, they

are out now, Zillah. Nelly Dean is lodged, at this minute, in your room. You

can tell her to flit, when you go up; here is the key. The bog-water got into

her head, and she would have run home quite flighty, but I fixed her, till she

came round to her senses. You can bid her go to the Grange at once, if she be

able, and carry a message from me, that her young lady will follow in time to

attend the squire's funeral.' "

"Mr. Edgar is not dead?" I gasped. "Oh! Zillah, Zillah!"

"No, no; sit you down, my good mistress," she replied, "you're right sickly

yet. He's not dead; Doctor Kenneth thinks he may last another day. I met him

on the road and asked."

Instead of sitting down, I snatched my outdoor things, and hastened below, for

the way was free. On entering the house, I looked about for some one to give

information of Catherine. The place was filled with sunshine, and the door

stood wide open; but nobody seemed at hand. As I hesitated whether to go off

at once, or return and seek my mistress, a slight cough drew my attention to

the hearth. Linton lay on the settle, sole tenant, sucking a stick of

sugar-candy, and pursuing my movements with apathetic eyes. "Where is Miss

Catherine?" I demanded sternly, supposing I could frighten him into giving

intelligence, by catching him thus, alone. He sucked on like an innocent.

"Is she gone?" I said.

"No," he replied; "she's upstairs: she's not to go; we won't let her."

"You won't let her, little idiot!" I exclaimed. "Direct me to her room

immediately, or I'll make you sing out sharply."

"Papa would make you sing out, if you attempted to get there," he answered.

"He says I'm not to be soft with Catherine: she's my wife, and it's shameful

that she should wish to leave me. He says she hates me, and wants me to die,

that she may have my money; but she shan't have it; and she shan't go home!

She never shall! -she may cry, and be sick as much as she pleases!"

He resumed his former occupation, closing his lids, as if he meant to drop

asleep.

"Master Heathcliff," I resumed, "have you forgotten all Catherine's kindness

to you last winter, when you affirmed you loved her, and when she brought you

books, and sung you songs, and came many a time through wind and snow to see

you? She wept to miss one evening, because you would be disappointed; and you

felt then that she was a hundred times too good to you: and now you believe

the lies your father tells, though you know he detests you both! And you join

him against her. That's fine gratitude, is it not?"

The corner of Linton's mouth fell, and he took the sugar-candy from his lips.

"Did she come to Wuthering Heights because she hated you?" I continued. "Think

for yourself! As to your money, she does not even know that you will have any.

And you say she's sick; and yet, you leave her alone, up there in a strange

house! You, who have felt what it is to be so neglected! You could pity your

own sufferings, and she pitied them, too, but you won't pity hers! I shed

tears, Master Heathcliff, you see -an elderly woman, and a servant merely -and

you, after pretending such affection, and having reason to worship her,

almost, store every tear you have for yourself, and lie there quite at ease.

Ah! you're a heartless, selfish boy!"

"I can't stay with her," he answered crossly. "I'll not stay, by myself. She

cries so I can't bear it. And she won't give over, though I say I'll call my

father. I did call him once, and he threatened to strangle her, if she was not

quiet; but she began again, the instant he left the room, moaning and grieving

all night long, though I screamed for vexation that I couldn't sleep."

"Is Mr. Heathcliff out?" I inquired, perceiving that the wretched creature had

no power to sympathise with his cousin's mental tortures.

"He's in the court," he replied, "talking to Doctor Kenneth, who says Uncle is

dying, truly, at last. I'm glad, for I shall be master of the Grange after

him; and Catherine always spoke of it as her house. It isn't hers! It's mine:

Papa says everything she has is mine. All her nice books are mine, -she

offered to give me them, and her pretty birds, and her pony Minny, if I would

get the key of our room, and let her out; but I told her she had nothing to

give, they were all, all mine. And then she cried, and took a little picture

from her neck, and said I should have that; two pictures in a gold case, -on

one side her mother, and on the other, Uncle, when they were young. That was

yesterday -I said they were mine, too; and tried to get them from her. The

spiteful thing wouldn't let me: she pushed me off, and hurt me. I shrieked out

-that frightens her -she heard Papa coming, and she broke the hinges, and

divided the case, and gave me her mother's portrait; the other she attempted

to hide; but Papa asked what was the matter, and I explained it. He took the

one I had away, and ordered her to resign hers to me; she refused, and he -he

struck her down, and wrenched it off the chain, and crushed it with his foot."

"And were you pleased to see her struck?" I asked, having my designs in

encouraging his talk.

"I winked," he answered. "I wink to see my father strike a dog, or a horse, he

does it so hard. Yet I was glad at first -she deserved punishing for pushing

me; but when Papa was gone, she made me come to the window, and showed me her

cheek cut on the inside, against her teeth, and her mouth filling with blood;

and then she gathered up the bits of the picture, and went and sat down with

her face to the wall, and she has never spoken to me since: and I sometimes

think she can't speak for pain. I don't like to think so; but she's a naughty

thing for crying continually; and she looks so pale and wild, I'm afraid of

her!"

"And you can get the key if you choose?" I said.

"Yes, when I am upstairs," he answered; "but I can't walk upstairs now."

"In what apartment is it?" I asked.

"Oh," he cried, "I shan't tell you where it is! It is our secret. Nobody,

neither Hareton nor Zillah are to know. There! you've tired me -go away, go

away!" And he turned his face on to his arm, and shut his eyes again.

I considered it best to depart without seeing Mr. Heathcliff, and bring a

rescue for my young lady, from the Grange. On reaching it, the astonishment of

my fellow-servants to see me, and their joy also, was intense; and when they

heard that their little mistress was safe, two or three were about to hurry up

and shout the news at Mr. Edgar's door, but I bespoke the announcement of it,

myself. How changed I found him, even in those few days! He lay an image of

sadness and resignation waiting his death. Very young he looked; though his

actual age was thirty-nine, one would have called him ten years younger, at

least. He thought of Catherine; for he murmured her name. I touched his hand,

and spoke.

"Catherine is coming, dear master!" I whispered; "she is alive and well, and

will be here, I hope, tonight."

I trembled at the first effects of this intelligence: he half rose up, looked

eagerly round the apartment, and then sunk back in a swoon. As soon as he

recovered, I related our compulsory visit, and detention at the Heights. I

said Heathcliff forced me to go in, -which was not quite true. I uttered as

little as possible against Linton; nor did I describe all his father's brutal

conduct -my intentions being to add no bitterness, if I could help it, to his

already overflowing cup.

He divined that one of his enemy's purposes was to secure the personal

property, as well as the estate, to his son, or rather himself; yet why he did

not wait till his decease was a puzzle to my master, because ignorant how

nearly he and his nephew would quit the world together. However, he felt that

his will had better be altered: instead of leaving Catherine's fortune at her

own disposal, he determined to put it in the hands of trustees, for her use

during life, and for her children, if she had any, after her. By that means,

it could not fall to Mr. Heathcliff should Linton die.

Having received his orders, I despatched a man to fetch the attorney, and four

more, provided with serviceable weapons, to demand my young lady of her

jailer. Both parties were delayed very late. The single servant returned

first. He said Mr. Green, the lawyer, was out when he arrived at his house,

and he had to wait two hours for his re-entrance; and then Mr. Green told him

he had a little business in the village that must be done, but he would be at

Thrushcross Grange before morning. The four men came back unaccompanied, also.

They brought word that Catherine was ill -too ill to quit her room -and

Heathcliff would not suffer them to see her. I scolded the stupid fellows

well, for listening to that tale, which I would not carry to my master;

resolving to take a whole bevy up to the Heights, at daylight, and storm it,

literally, unless the prisoner were quietly surrendered to us. Her father

shall see her, I vowed, and vowed again, if that devil be killed on his own

doorstones in trying to prevent it!

Happily, I was spared the journey, and the trouble. I had gone downstairs at

three o'clock to fetch a jug of water, and was passing through the hall with

it in my hand, when a sharp knock at the front door made me jump. "Oh! it is

Green," I said, recollecting myself, "only Green," and I went on, intending to

send somebody else to open it; but the knock was repeated, not loud, and still

importunately. I put the jug on the banister, and hastened to admit him

myself. The harvest moon shone clear outside. It was not the attorney. My own

sweet little mistress sprung on my neck, sobbing:

"Ellen! Ellen! Is Papa alive?"

"Yes!" I cried, "yes, my angel, he is. God be thanked, you are safe with us

again!"

She wanted to run, breathless as she was, upstairs to Mr. Linton's room; but I

compelled her to sit down on a chair, and made her drink, and washed her pale

face, chafing it into a faint colour with my apron. Then I said I must go

first, and tell of her arrival; imploring her to say, she should be happy with

young Heathcliff. She stared, but soon comprehending why I counselled her to

utter the falsehood, she assured me she would not complain.

I couldn't abide to be present at their meeting. I stood outside the chamber

door a quarter of an hour, and hardly ventured near the bed, then. All was

composed, however; Catherine's despair was as silent as her father's joy. She

supported him calmly, in appearance; and he fixed on her features his raised

eyes, that seemed dilating with ecstasy.

He died blissfully, Mr. Lockwood: he died so. Kissing her cheek, he murmured:

"I am going to her; and you, darling child, shall come to us;" and never

stirred or spoke again; but continued that rapt, radiant gaze, till his pulse

imperceptibly stopped, and his soul departed. None could have noticed the

exact minute of his death, it was so entirely without a struggle.

Whether Catherine had spent her tears, or whether the grief were too weighty

to let them flow, she sat there dry-eyed till the sun rose: she sat till noon,

and would still have remained, brooding over that deathbed, but I insisted on

her coming away, and taking some repose. It was well I succeeded in removing

her, for at dinnertime appeared the lawyer, having called at Wuthering Heights

to get his instructions how to behave. He had sold himself to Mr. Heathcliff,

and that was the cause of his delay in obeying my master's summons.

Fortunately, no thought of worldly affairs crossed the latter's mind, to

disturb him, after his daughter's arrival.

Mr. Green took upon himself to order everything and everybody about the place.

He gave all the servants but me notice to quit. He would have carried his

delegated authority to the point of insisting that Edgar Linton should not be

buried beside his wife, but in the chapel, with his family. There was the

will, however, to hinder that, and my loud protestations against any

infringement of its directions. The funeral was hurried over; Catherine, Mrs.

Linton Heathcliff now, was suffered to stay at the Grange till her father's

corpse had quitted it.

She told me that her anguish had at last spurred Linton to incur the risk of

liberating her. She heard the men I sent, disputing at the door, and she

gathered the sense of Heathcliff's answer. It drove her desperate. Linton, who

had been conveyed up to the little parlour soon after I left, was terrified

into fetching the key before his father reascended. He had the cunning to

unlock and relock the door, without shutting it; and when he should have gone

to bed, he begged to sleep with Hareton, and his petition was granted, for

once. Catherine stole out before break of day. She dare not try the doors,

lest the dogs should raise an alarm; she visited the empty chambers, and

examined their windows; and, luckily, lighting on her mother's, she got easily

out of its lattice, and on to the ground, by means of the fir-tree close by.

Her accomplice suffered for his share in the escape, notwithstanding his timid

contrivances.

Chapter 29

The evening after the funeral, my young lady and I were seated in the library,

now musing mournfully -one of us despairingly -on our loss, now venturing

conjectures as to the gloomy future.

We had just agreed the best destiny which could await Catherine would be a

permission to continue resident at the Grange; at least during Linton's life:

he being allowed to join her there, and I to remain as housekeeper. That

seemed rather too favourable an arrangement to be hoped for; and yet I did

hope, and began to cheer up under the prospect of retaining my home, and my

employment, and, above all, my beloved young mistress, when a servant -one of

the discarded ones, not yet departed -rushed hastily in, and said "that devil

Heathcliff" was coming through the court: should he fasten the door in his face?

If we had been mad enough to order that proceeding, we had not time. He made

no ceremony of knocking or announcing his name -he was master, and availed

himself of the master's privilege to walk straight in, without saying a word.

The sound of our informant's voice directed him to the library; he entered,

and motioning him out, shut the door.

It was the same room into which he had been ushered, as a guest, eighteen

years before; the same moon shone through the window, and the same autumn

landscape lay outside. We had not yet lighted a candle, but all the apartment

was visible, even to the portraits on the wall, -the splendid head of Mrs.

Linton, and the graceful one of her husband. Heathcliff advanced to the

hearth. Time had little altered his person either. There was the same man: his

dark face rather sallower and more composed, his frame a stone or two heavier,

perhaps, and no other difference. Catherine had risen, with an impulse to dash

out, when she saw him.

"Stop!" he said, arresting her by the arm. "No more runnings away! Where would

you go? I'm come to fetch you home; and I hope you'll be a dutiful daughter,

and not encourage my son to further disobedience. I was embarrassed how to

punish him, when I discovered his part in the business: he's such a cobweb, a

pinch would annihilate him; but you'll see by his look that he has received

his due! I brought him down one evening, the day before yesterday, and just

set him in a chair, and never touched him afterwards. I sent Hareton out, and

we had the room to ourselves. In two hours, I called Joseph to carry him up

again; and since then my presence is as potent on his nerves as a ghost; and I

fancy he sees me often, though I am not near. Hareton says he wakes and

shrieks in the night by the hour together, and calls you to protect him from

me; and, whether you like your precious mate or not, you must come, -he's your

concern now; I yield all my interest in him to you."

"Why not let Catherine continue here?" I pleaded, "and send Master Linton to

her. As you hate them both, you'd not miss them; they can only be a daily

plague to your unnatural heart."

"I'm seeking a tenant for the Grange," he answered; "and I want my children

about me, to be sure -besides, that lass owes me her services for her bread;

I'm not going to nurture her in luxury and idleness after Linton is gone. Make

haste and get ready now. And don't oblige me to compel you."

"I shall," said Catherine. "Linton is all I have to love in the world, and

though you have done what you could to make him hateful to me, and me to him,

you cannot make us hate each other. and I defy you to hurt him when I am by,

and I defy you to frighten me!"

"You are a boastful champion," replied Heathcliff; "but I don't like you well

enough to hurt him: you shall get the full benefit of the torment, as long as

it lasts. It is not I who will make him hateful to you, -it is his own sweet

spirit. He's as bitter as gall at your desertion, and its consequences; don't

expect thanks for this noble devotion. I heard him draw a pleasant picture to

Zillah of what he would do, if he were as strong as I: the inclination is

there, and his very weakness will sharpen his wits to find a substitute for

strength."

"I know he has a bad nature," said Catherine: "he's your son. But I'm glad

I've a better, to forgive it; and I know he loves me, and for that reason I

love him. Mr. Heathcliff, you have nobody to love you; and, however miserable

you make us, we shall still have the revenge of thinking that your cruelty

arises from your greater misery! You are miserable, are you not? Lonely, like

the devil, and envious like him? Nobody loves you -nobody will cry for you

when you die! I wouldn't be you!"

Catherine spoke with a kind of dreary triumph: she seemed to have made up her

mind to enter into the spirit of her future family, and draw pleasure from the

griefs of her enemies.

"You shall be sorry to be yourself presently," said her father-in-law, "if you

stand there another minute. Begone, witch, and get your things!"

She scornfully withdrew. In her absence, I began to beg for Zillah's place at

the Heights, offering to resign mine to her; but he would suffer it on no

account. He bid me be silent; and then, for the first time, allowed himself a

glance round the room, and a look at the pictures. Having studied Mrs. Linton,

he said:

"I shall have that home. Not because I need it, but -" He turned abruptly to

the fire, and continued, with what, for lack of a better word, I must call a

smile -"I'll tell you what I did yesterday! I got the sexton, who was digging

Linton's grave, to remove the earth off her coffin-lid, and I opened it. I

thought, once, I would have stayed there, when I saw her face again -it is

hers yet -he had hard work to stir me; but he said it would change if the air

blew on it, and so I struck one side of the coffin loose, and covered it up

-not Linton's side, damn him! I wish he'd been soldered in lead -and I bribed

the sexton to pull it away, when I'm laid there, and slide mine out too. I'll

have it made so; and then, by the time Linton gets to us, he'll not know which

is which!"

"You were very wicked, Mr. Heathcliff!" I exclaimed; "were you not ashamed to

disturb the dead?"

"I disturbed nobody, Nelly," he replied, "and I gave some ease to myself. I

shall be a great deal more comfortable now; and you'll have a better chance of

keeping me underground, when I get there. Disturbed her? No! she has disturbed

me, night and day, through eighteen years -incessantly -remorselessly -till

yesternight; and yesternight I was tranquil. I dreamt I was sleeping the last

sleep by that sleeper, with my heart stopped and my cheek frozen against hers."

"And if she had been dissolved into earth, or worse, what would you have

dreamt of then?" I said.

"Of dissolving with her, and being more happy still!" he answered. "Do you

suppose I dread any change of that sort? I expected such a transformation on

raising the lid; but I'm better pleased that it should not commence till I

share it. Besides, unless I had received a distinct impression of her

passionless features, that strange feeling would hardly have been removed. It

began oddly. You know, I was wild after she died, and eternally, from dawn to

dawn, praying her to return to me, -her spirit -I have a strong faith in

ghosts; I have a conviction that they can, and do exist, among us! The day she

was buried there came a fall of snow. In the evening I went to the churchyard.

It blew bleak as winter -all round was solitary: I didn't fear that her fool

of a husband would wander up the den so late, and no one else had business to

bring them there. Being alone, and conscious two yards of loose earth was the

sole barrier between us, I said to myself `I'll have her in my arms again! If

she be cold, I'll think it is this north wind that chills me; and if she be

motionless, it is sleep.' I got a spade from the toolhouse, and began to delve

with all my might -it scraped the coffin; I fell to work with my hands; the

wood commenced cracking about the screws; I was on the point of attaining my

object, when it seemed that I heard a sigh from some one above, close at the

edge of the grave, and bending down. `If I can only get this off,' I muttered,

`I wish they may shovel in the earth over us both!' and I wrenched at it more

desperately still. There was another sigh, close at my ear. I appeared to feel

the warm breath of it displacing the sleet-laden wind. I knew no living thing

in flesh and blood was by; but as certainly as you perceive the approach to

some substantial body in the dark, though it cannot be discerned, so certainly

I felt that Cathy was there: not under me, but on the earth. A sudden sense of

relief flowed from my heart through every limb. I relinquished my labour of

agony, and turned consoled at once, unspeakably consoled. Her presence was

with me; it remained while I refilled the grave, and led me home. You may

laugh, if you will; but I was sure I should see her there. I was sure she was

with me, and I could not help talking to her. Having reached the Heights, I

rushed eagerly to the door. It was fastened; and, I remember, that accursed

Earnshaw and my wife opposed my entrance. I remember stopping to kick the

breath out of him, and then hurrying upstairs, to my room, and hers. I looked

round impatiently -I felt her by me -I could almost see her, and yet I could

not! I ought to have sweat blood then, from the anguish of my yearning -from

the fervour of my supplications to have but one glimpse! I had not one. She

showed herself, as she often was in life, a devil to me! And, since then,

sometimes more and sometimes less, I've been the sport of that intolerable

torture! Infernal! -keeping my nerves at such a stretch that, if they had not

resembled catgut, they would long ago have relaxed to the feebleness of

Linton's. When I sat in the house with Hareton, it seemed that on going out, I

should meet her; when I walked on the moors I should meet her coming in. When

I went from home, I hastened to return: she must be somewhere at the Heights,

I was certain! And when I slept in her chamber, I was beaten out of that -I

couldn't lie there; for the moment I closed my eyes, she was either outside

the window, or sliding back the panels, or entering the room, or even resting

her darling head on the same pillow as she did when a child; and I must open

my lids to see. And so I opened and closed them a hundred times a night -to be

always disappointed! It racked me! I've often groaned aloud, till that old

rascal Joseph no doubt believed that my conscience was playing the fiend

inside of me. Now, since I've seen her, I'm pacified -a little. It was a

strange way of killing, -not by inches, but by fractions of hairbreadths, to

beguile me with the spectre of a hope, through eighteen years!"

Mr. Heathcliff paused and wiped his forehead; his hair clung to it, wet with

perspiration; his eyes were fixed on the red embers of the fire; the brows not

contracted, but raised next the temples, diminishing the grim aspect of his

countenance, but imparting a peculiar look of trouble, and a painful

appearance of mental tension towards one absorbing subject. He only half

addressed me, and I maintained silence -I didn't like to hear him talk! After

a short period, he resumed his meditation on the picture, took it down and

leant it against the sofa to contemplate it at better advantage; and while so

occupied, Catherine entered, announcing that she was ready, when her pony

should be saddled.

"Send that over tomorrow," said Heathcliff to me; then turning to her he

added, "you may do without your pony; it is a fine evening, and you'll need no

ponies at Wuthering Heights; for what journeys you take, your own feet will

serve you. Come along."

"Good-bye, Ellen!" whispered my dear little mistress. As she kissed me, her

lips felt like ice. "Come and see me, Ellen; don't forget."

"Take care you do no such thing, Mrs. Dean!" said her new father. "When I wish

to speak to you I'll come here. I want none of your prying at my house!"

He signed her to precede him; and casting back a look that cut my heart, she

obeyed. I watched them from the window walk down the garden, Heathcliff fixed

Catherine's arm under his, though she disputed the act at first, evidently,

and with rapid strides he hurried her into the alley, whose trees concealed

them.

Chapter 30

I have paid a visit to the Heights, but I have not seen her since she left:

Joseph held the door in his hand when I called to ask after her, and wouldn't

let me pass. He said Mrs. Linton was "thrang", and the master was not in.

Zillah has told me something of the way they go on, otherwise I should hardly

know who was dead and who living. She thinks Catherine haughty, and does not

like her, I can guess by her talk. My young lady asked some aid of her when

she first came; but Mr. Heathcliff told her to follow her own business, and

let his daughter-in-law look after herself; and Zillah willingly acquiesced,

being a narrow-minded, selfish woman. Catherine evinced a child's annoyance at

this neglect; repaid it with contempt, and thus enlisted my informant among

her enemies, as securely as if she had done her some great wrong. I had a long

talk with Zillah about six weeks ago, a little before you came, one day when

we foregathered on the moor; and this is what she told me.

"The first thing Mrs. Linton did," she said, "on her arrival at the Heights,

was to run upstairs, without even wishing good-evening to me and Joseph; she

shut herself into Linton's room, and remained till morning. Then, while the

master and Earnshaw were at breakfast, she entered the house, and asked all in

a quiver if the doctor might be sent for? her cousin was very ill.

" `We know that!' answered Heathcliff; `but his life is not worth a farthing,

and I won't spend a farthing on him.'

" `But I cannot tell how to do," she said; `and if nobody will help me, he'll

die!'

" `Walk out of the room,' cried the master, `and let me never hear a word more

about him! None here care what becomes of him; if you do, act the nurse; if

you do not, lock him up and leave him.'

"Then she began to bother me, and I said I'd had enough plague with the

tiresome thing; we each had our tasks, and hers was to wait on Linton, Mr.

Heathcliff bid me leave that labour to her.

"How they managed together, I can't tell. I fancy he fretted a great deal, and

moaned hisseln, night and day; and she had precious little rest, one could

guess by her white face and heavy eyes. She sometimes came into the kitchen

all wildered like, and looked as if she would fain beg assistance; but I was

not going to disobey the master, -I never dare disobey him, Mrs. Dean; and

though I thought it wrong that Kenneth should not be sent for, it was no

concern of mine, either to advise or complain; and I always refused to meddle.

Once or twice, after we had gone to bed, I've happened to open my door again,

and seen her sitting crying on the stairs' top; and then I've shut myself in,

quick, for fear of being moved to interfere. I did pity her then, I'm sure;

still I didn't wish to lose my place, you know!

"At last, one night she came boldly into my chamber, and frightened me out of

my wits, by saying:

" `Tell Mr. Heathcliff that his son is dying -I'm sure he is, this time. Get

up, instantly, and tell him!'

"Having uttered this speech, she vanished again. I lay a quarter of an hour

listening and trembling. Nothing stirred -the house was quiet.

"She's mistaken, I said to myself. He's got over it. I needn't disturb them;

and I began to doze. But my sleep was marred a second time by a sharp ringing

of the bell -the only bell we have, put up on purpose for Linton; and the

master called to me to see what was the matter, and inform them that he

wouldn't have that noise repeated.

"I delivered Catherine's message. He cursed to himself, and in a few minutes

came out with a lighted candle, and proceeded to their room. I followed. Mrs.

Heathcliff was seated by the bedside, with her hands folded on her knees. Her

father-in-law went up, held the light to Linton's face, looked at him, and

touched him; afterwards he turned to her.

" `Now -Catherine,' he said, `how do you feel?'

"She was dumb.

" `How do you feel, Catherine?' he repeated.

" `He's safe, and I'm free,' she answered: `I should feel well -but,' she

continued with a bitterness she couldn't conceal, `you have left me so long to

struggle against death, alone, that I feel and see only death! I feel like

death!'

"And she looked like it, too! I gave her a little wine. Hareton and Joseph,

who had been wakened by the ringing, and the sound of feet, and heard our talk

from outside, now entered. Joseph was fain, I believe, of the lad's removal;

Hareton seemed a thought bothered, though he was more taken up with staring at

Catherine than thinking of Linton. But the master bid him get off to bed

again: we didn't want his help. He afterwards made Joseph remove the body to

his chamber, and told me to return to mine, and Mrs. Heathcliff remained by

herself.

"In the morning, he sent me to tell her she must come down to breakfast: she

had undressed, and appeared going to sleep, and said she was ill; at which I

hardly wondered. I informed Mr. Heathcliff, and he replied:

" `Well, let her be till after the funeral; and go up now and then to get her

what is needful; and, as soon as she seems better, tell me.' "

Cathy stayed upstairs a fortnight, according to Zillah, who visited her twice

a day, and would have been rather more friendly, but her attempts at

increasing kindness were proudly and promptly repelled.

Heathcliff went up at once, to show her Linton's will. He had bequeathed the

whole of his and what had been her movable property to his father: the poor

creature was threatened, or coaxed, into that act during her week's absence,

when his uncle died. The lands, being a minor, he could not meddle with.

However, Mr. Heathcliff has claimed and kept them in his wife's right, and his

also -I suppose legally: at any rate, Catherine, destitute of cash and

friends, cannot disturb his possession.

"Nobody," said Zillah, "ever approached her door, except that once, but I; and

nobody asked anything about her. The first occasion of her coming down into

the house was on a Sunday afternoon. She had cried out, when I carried up her

dinner, that she couldn't bear any longer being in the cold; and I told her

the master was going to Thrushcross Grange, and Earnshaw and I needn't hinder

her from descending; so, as soon as she heard Heathcliff's horse trot off, she

made her appearance, donned in black, and her yellow curls combed back behind

her ears, as plain as a Quaker: she couldn't comb them out.

"Joseph and I generally go to chapel on Sundays," (the Kirk, you know, has no

minister now, explained Mrs. Dean; and they call the Methodists' or Baptists'

place, I can't say which it is, at Gimmerton, a chapel). "Joseph had gone,"

she continued, "but I thought proper to bide at home. Young folks are always

the better for an elder's over-looking; and Hareton, with all his bashfulness,

isn't a model of nice behaviour. I let him know that his cousin would very

likely sit with us, and she had been always used to see the Sabbath respected;

so he had as good leave his guns and bits of indoor work alone, while she

stayed. He coloured up at the news, and cast his eyes over his hands and

clothes. The train-oil and gunpowder were shoved out of sight in a minute. I

saw he meant to give her his company, and I guessed, by his way, he wanted to

be presentable; so, laughing, as I durst not laugh when the master is by, I

offered to help him, if he would, and joked at his confusion. He grew sullen,

and began to swear.

"Now, Mrs. Dean," she went on, seeing me not pleased by her manner, "you

happen think your young lady too fine for Mr. Hareton, -and happen you're

right; but, I own, I should love well to bring her pride a peg lower. And what

will all her learning and her daintiness do for her, now? She's as poor as you

or I: poorer, I'll be bound, -you're saving, and I'm doing my little all, that

road."

Hareton allowed Zillah to give him her aid; and she flattered him into a good

humour; so, when Catherine came, half forgetting her former insults, he tried

to make himself agreeable, by the housekeeper's account.

"Missis walked in," she said, "as chill as an icicle, and as high as a

princess. I got up and offered her my seat in the armchair. No, she turned up

her nose at my civility. Earnshaw rose too, and bid her come to the settle,

and sit close by the fire: he was sure she was starved.

" `I've been starved a month and more,' she answered, resting on the word, as

scornful as she could.

"And she got a chair for herself, and placed it at a distance from both of us.

Having sat till she was warm, she began to look round, and discovered a number

of books in the dresser; she was instantly upon her feet again, stretching to

reach them; but they were too high up. Her cousin, after watching her

endeavours a while, at last summoned courage to help her; she held her frock,

and he filled it with the first that came to hand.

"That was a great advance for the lad. She didn't thank him; still, he felt

gratified that she had accepted his assistance, and ventured to stand behind

as she examined them, and even to stoop and point out what struck his fancy in

certain old pictures which they contained; nor was he daunted by the saucy

style in which she jerked the page from his finger: he contented himself with

going a bit farther back, and looking at her instead of the book. She

continued reading, or seeking for something to read. His attention became, by

degrees, quite centred in the study of her thick, silky curls: her face he

couldn't see, and she couldn't see him. And, perhaps, not quite awake to what

he did, but attracted like a child to a candle, at last he proceeded from

staring to touching; he put out his hand and stroked one curl, as gently as if

it were a bird. He might have stuck a knife into her neck, she started round

in such a taking.

" `Get away, this moment! How dare you touch me? Why are you stopping there?'

she cried, in a tone of disgust. `I can't endure you! I'll go upstairs again,

if you come near me.'

"Mr. Hareton recoiled, looking as foolish as he could do; he sat down in the

settle, very quiet, and she continued turning over her volumes another

half-hour; finally, Earnshaw crossed over, and whispered to me:

" `Will you ask her to read to us, Zillah? I'm stalled of doing naught; and I

do like -I could like to hear her! Dunnot say I wanted it, but ask of yourseln.'

" `Mr. Hareton wishes you would read to us, ma'am,' I said immediately. `He'd

take it very kind -he'd be much obliged.'

"She frowned; and, looking up, answered:

" `Mr. Hareton, and the whole set of you, will be good enough to understand

that I reject any pretence at kindness you have the hypocrisy to offer! I

despise you, and will have nothing to say to any of you! When I would have

given my life for one kind word, even to see one of your faces, you all kept

off. But I won't complain to you! I'm driven down here by the cold, not either

to amuse you, or enjoy your society.'

" `What could I ha' done?' began Earnshaw. `How was I to blame?'

" `Oh! you are an exception,' answered Mrs. Heathcliff. `I never missed such a

concern as you.'

" `But I offered more than once, and asked,' he said, kindling up at her

pertness, `I asked Mr. Heathcliff to let me wake for you -'

" `Be silent! I'll go out of doors, or anywhere, rather than have your

disagreeable voice in my ear!' said my lady.

"Hareton muttered, she might go to hell, for him! and unslinging his gun,

restrained himself from his Sunday occupations no longer. He talked now,

freely enough; and she presently saw fit to retreat to her solitude; but the

frost had set in, and, in spite of her pride, she was forced to condescend to

our company, more and more. However, I took care there should be no further

scorning at my good nature: ever since, I've been as stiff as herself; and she

has no lover or liker among us, -and she does not deserve one, for, let them

say the least word to her, and she'll curl back without respect of any one!

She'll snap at the master himself, and as good as dares him to thrash her; and

the more hurt she gets, the more venomous she grows."

At first, on hearing this account from Zillah, I determined to leave my

situation, take a cottage, and get Catherine to come and live with me; but Mr.

Heathcliff would as soon permit that as he would set up Hareton in an

independent house; and I can see no remedy, at present, unless she could marry

again; and that scheme it does not come within my province to arrange.

Thus ended Mrs. Dean's story. Notwithstanding the doctor's prophecy, I am

rapidly recovering strength; and, though it be only the second week in

January, I propose getting out on horseback in a day or two, and riding over

to Wuthering Heights, to inform my landlord that I shall spend the next six

months in London; and, if he likes, he may look out for another tenant to take

the place, after October. I would not pass another winter here for much.

Chapter 31

Yesterday was bright, calm, and frosty. I went to the Heights as I proposed;

my housekeeper entreated me to bear a little note from her to her young lady,

and I did not refuse, for the worthy woman was not conscious of anything odd

in her request. The front door stood open, but the jealous gate was fastened,

as at my last visit; I knocked, and invoked Earnshaw from among the garden

beds; he unchained it, and I entered. The fellow is as handsome a rustic as

need be seen. I took particular notice of him this time; but then he does his

best, apparently, to make the least of his advantages.

I asked if Mr. Heathcliff were at home. He answered, No; but he would be in at

dinner-time. It was eleven o'clock, and I announced my intention of going in,

and waiting for him, at which he immediately flung down his tools and

accompanied me, in the office of watchdog, not as a substitute for the host.

We entered together; Catherine was there, making herself useful in preparing

some vegetables for the approaching meal; she looked more sulky and less

spirited than when I had seen her first. She hardly raised her eyes to notice

me, and continued her employment with the same disregard to common forms of

politeness as before; never returning my bow and good-morning by the slightest

acknowledgment.

"She does not seem so amiable," I thought, "as Mrs. Dean would persuade me to

believe. She's a beauty, it is true; but not an angel."

Earnshaw surlily bid her remove her things to the kitchen. "Remove them

yourself," she said, pushing them from her as soon as she had done, and

retiring to a stool by the window, where she began to carve figures of birds

and beasts out of the turnip parings in her lap. I approached her, pretending

to desire a view of the garden; and, as I fancied, adroitly dropped Mrs.

Dean's note on to her knee, unnoticed by Hareton -but she asked aloud, "What

is that?" and chucked it off.

"A letter from your old acquaintance, the housekeeper at the Grange," I

answered, annoyed at her exposing my kind deed, and fearful lest it should be

imagined a missive of my own. She would gladly have gathered it up at this

information, but Hareton beat her; he seized and put it in his waistcoat,

saying Mr. Heathcliff should look at it first. Thereat, Catherine silently

turned her face from us, and, very stealthily, drew out her

pocket-handkerchief and applied it to her eyes; and her cousin, after

struggling a while to keep down his softer feelings, pulled out the letter and

flung it on the floor beside her, as ungraciously as he could. Catherine

caught and perused it eagerly; then she put a few questions to me concerning

the inmates, rational and irrational, of her former home; and gazing towards

the hills, murmured in soliloquy:

"I should like to be riding Minny down there! I should like to be climbing up

there! Oh! I'm tired -I'm stalled, Hareton!" And she leant her pretty head

back against the sill, with half a yawn and half a sigh, and lapsed into an

aspect of abstracted sadness: neither caring nor knowing whether we remarked

her.

"Mrs. Heathcliff," I said, after sitting some time mute, "are you not aware

that I am an acquaintance of yours? so intimate, that I think it strange you

won't come and speak to me. My housekeeper never wearies of talking about and

praising you; and she'll be greatly disappointed if I return with no news of

or from you, except that you received her letter and said nothing!"

She appeared to wonder at this speech and asked:

"Does Ellen like you?"

"Yes, very well," I replied unhesitatingly.

"You must tell her," she continued, "that I would answer her letter, but I

have no materials for writing, -not even a book from which I might tear a leaf."

"No books!" I exclaimed. "How do you contrive to live here without them? if I

may take the liberty to inquire. Though provided with a large library, I'm

frequently very dull at the Grange; take my books away, and I should be

desperate!"

"I was always reading, when I had them," said Catherine; "and Mr. Heathcliff

never reads; so he took it into his head to destroy my books. I have not had a

glimpse of one for weeks. Only once, I searched through Joseph's store of

theology, to his great irritation; and once, Hareton, I came upon a secret

stock in your room, -some Latin and Greek, and some tales and poetry, all old

friends. I brought the last here -and you gathered them, as a magpie gathers

silver spoons, for the mere love of stealing! They are of no use to you; or

else you concealed them in the bad spirit, that as you cannot enjoy them,

nobody else shall. Perhaps your envy counselled Mr. Heathcliff to rob me of my

treasures? But I've most of them written on my brain and printed in my heart,

and you cannot deprive me of those!"

Earnshaw blushed crimson when his cousin made this revelation of his private

literary accumulations, and stammered an indignant denial of her accusations.

"Mr. Hareton is desirous of increasing his amount of knowledge," I said,

coming to his rescue. "He is not envious but emulous of your attainments.

He'll be a clever scholar in a few years."

"And he wants me to sink into a dunce, meantime," answered Catherine. "Yes, I

hear him trying to spell and read to himself, and pretty blunders he makes! I

wish you would repeat Chevy Chase as you did yesterday: it was extremely

funny! I heard you; and I heard you turning over the dictionary to seek out

the hard words, and then cursing, because you couldn't read their explanations!"

The young man evidently thought it too bad that he should be laughed at for

his ignorance, and then laughed at for trying to remove it. I had a similar

notion, and, remembering Mrs. Dean's anecdote of his first attempt at

enlightening the darkness in which he had been reared, I observed:

"But, Mrs. Heathcliff, we have each had a commencement, and each stumbled and

tottered on the threshold; and had our teachers scorned instead of aiding us,

we should stumble and totter yet."

"Oh!" she replied, "I don't wish to limit his acquirements: still, he had no

right to appropriate what is mine, and make it ridiculous to me with his vile

mistakes and mispronunciations! Those books, both prose and verse, were

consecrated to me by other associations, and I hate to have them debased and

profaned in his mouth! Besides, of all, he has selected my favourite pieces

that I love the most to repeat, as if out of deliberate malice!"

Hareton's chest heaved in silence a minute: he laboured under a severe sense

of mortification and wrath, which it was no easy task to suppress. I rose,

and, from a gentlemanly idea of relieving his embarrassment, took up my

station in the doorway, surveying the external prospect as I stood. He

followed my example, and left the room; but presently reappeared, bearing half

a dozen volumes in his hands, which he threw into Catherine's lap, exclaiming:

"Take them! I never want to hear, or read, or think of them again!"

"I won't have them now," she answered. "I shall connect them with you, and

hate them."

She opened one that had obviously been often turned over, and read a portion

in the drawling tone of a beginner; then laughed, and threw it from her. "And

listen," she continued provokingly, commencing a verse of an old ballad in the

same fashion.

But his self-love would endure no further torment; I heard, and not altogether

disapprovingly, a manual check given to her saucy tongue. The little wretch

had done her utmost to hurt her cousin's sensitive though uncultivated

feelings, and a physical argument was the only mode he had of balancing the

account and repaying its effects on the inflicter. He afterwards gathered the

books and hurled them on the fire. I read in his countenance what anguish it

was to offer that sacrifice to spleen: I fancied that as they were consumed,

he recalled the pleasure they had already imparted, and the triumph and

ever-increasing pleasure he had anticipated from them; and I fancied I guessed

the incitement to his secret studies, also. He had been content with daily

labour and rough animal enjoyments, till Catherine crossed his path. Shame at

her scorn, and hope of her approval, were his first prompters to higher

pursuits; and, instead of guarding him from one and winning him the other, his

endeavours to raise himself had produced just the contrary result.

"Yes; that's all the good that such a brute as you can get from them!" cried

Catherine, sucking her damaged lip, and watching the conflagration with

indignant eyes.

"You'd better hold your tongue, now!" he answered fiercely.

And his agitation precluding further speech; he advanced hastily to the

entrance, where I made way for him to pass. But ere he had crossed the

doorstones, Mr. Heathcliff, coming up the causeway, encountered him, and

laying hold of his shoulder, asked:

"What's to do now, my lad?"

"Naught, naught!" he said, and broke away, to enjoy his grief and anger in

solitude.

Heathcliff gazed after him, and sighed.

"It will be odd if I thwart myself!" he muttered, unconscious that I was

behind him. "But when I look for his father in his face, I find her every day

more! How the devil is he so like? I can hardly bear to see him."

He bent his eyes to the ground, and walked moodily in. There was a restless,

anxious expression in his countenance I had never remarked there before, and

he looked sparer in person. His daughter-in-law, on perceiving him through the

window, immediately escaped to the kitchen, so that I remained alone.

"I'm glad to see you out of doors again, Mr. Lockwood," he said, in reply to

my greeting; "from selfish motives partly: I don't think I could readily

supply your loss in this desolation. I've wondered, more than once, what

brought you here."

"An idle whim, I fear, sir," was my answer; "or else an idle whim is going to

spirit me away. I shall set out for London next week; and I must give you

warning that I feel no disposition to retain Thrushcross Grange beyond the

twelve months I agreed to rent it. I believe I shall not live there any more."

"Oh, indeed! you're tired of being banished from the world, are you?" he said.

"But if you be coming to plead off paying for a place you won't occupy, your

journey is useless; I never relent in exacting my due from any one."

"I'm coming to plead off nothing about it!" I exclaimed, considerably

irritated. "Should you wish it, I'll settle with you now," and I drew my

note-book from my pocket.

"No, no," he replied coolly; "you'll leave sufficient behind to cover your

debts, if you fail to return: I'm not in such a hurry. Sit down and take your

dinner with us; a guest that is safe from repeating his visit can generally be

made welcome. Catherine! bring the things in -where are you?"

Catherine reappeared, bearing a tray of knives and forks.

"You may get your dinner with Joseph," muttered Heathcliff aside, "and remain

in the kitchen till he is gone."

She obeyed his directions very punctually: perhaps she had no temptation to

transgress. Living among clowns and misanthropists, she probably cannot

appreciate a better class of people when she meets them.

With Mr. Heathcliff, grim and saturnine, on one hand, and Hareton, absolutely

dumb, on the other, I made a somewhat cheerless meal, and bid adieu early. I

would have departed by the back way, to get a last glimpse of Catherine, and

annoy old Joseph; but Hareton received orders to lead up my horse, and my host

himself escorted me to the door, so I could not fulfill my wish.

"How dreary life gets over in that house!" I reflected, while riding down the

road. "What a realisation of something more romantic than a fairytale it would

have been for Mrs. Linton Heathcliff, had she and I struck up an attachment,

as her good nurse desired, and migrated together into the stirring atmosphere

of the town!"

Chapter 32

1802 -

This September, I was invited to devastate the moors of a friend, in the

North; and on my journey to his abode, I unexpectedly came within fifteen

miles of Gimmerton. The hostler at a roadside public-house was holding a pail

of water to refresh my horses, when a cart of very green oats, newly reaped,

passed by, and he remarked:

"Yon's frough Gimmerton, nah! They're allas three wick after other folk wi'

ther harvest."

"Gimmerton?" I repeated -my residence in that locality had already grown dim

and dreamy. "Ah! I know! How far is it from this?"

"Happen fourteen mile o'er th' hills, and a rough road," he answered.

A sudden impulse seized me to visit Thrushcross Grange. It was scarcely noon,

and I conceived that I might as well pass the night under my own roof, as in

an inn. Besides, I could spare a day easily, to arrange matters with my

landlord, and thus save myself the trouble of invading the neighbourhood

again. Having rested a while, I directed my servant to inquire the way to the

village; and, with great fatigue to our beasts, we managed the distance in

some three hours.

I left him there, and proceeded down the valley alone. The grey church looked

greyer, and the lonely churchyard lonelier. I distinguished a moor sheep

cropping the short turf on the graves. It was sweet, warm weather -too warm

for travelling; but the heat did not hinder me from enjoying the delightful

scenery above and below: had I seen it nearer August, I'm sure it would have

tempted me to waste a month among its solitudes. In winter nothing more

dreary, in summer nothing more divine, than those glens shut in by hills, and

those bluff, bold swells of heath.

I reached the Grange before sunset, and knocked for admittance; but the family

had retreated into the back premises, I judged by one thin, blue wreath

curling from the kitchen chimney, and they did not hear. I rode into the

court. Under the porch, a girl of nine or ten sat knitting, and an old woman

reclined on the house-steps, smoking a meditative pipe.

"Is Mrs. Dean within?" I demanded of the dame.

"Mistress Dean? Nay!" she answered, "shoo doesn't bide here; shoo's up at th'

Heights."

"Are you the housekeeper, then?" I continued.

"Eea, Aw keep th' hause," she replied.

"Well, I'm Mr. Lockwood, the master. Are there any rooms to lodge me in, I

wonder? I wish to stay here all night."

"T' maister!" she cried in astonishment. "Whet, whoiver knew yah wur coming?

Yah sud ha' send word! They's nowt norther dry nor mensful abaht t' place;

nowt there isn't!"

She threw down her pipe and bustled in, the girl followed, and I entered too;

soon perceiving that her report was true, and, moreover, that I had almost

upset her wits by my unwelcome apparition. I bid her be composed: I would go

out for a walk; and, meantime, she must try to prepare a corner of a

sitting-room for me to sup in, and a bedroom to sleep in. No sweeping and

dusting, only good fires and dry sheets were necessary. She seemed willing to

do her best; though she thrust the hearth-brush into the grates in mistake for

the poker, and malappropriated several other articles of her craft; but I

retired, confiding in her energy for a resting-place against my return.

Wuthering Heights was the goal of my proposed excursion. An afterthought

brought me back, when I had quitted the court.

"All well at the Heights?" I inquired of the woman.

"Eea f'r owt Ee knaw!" she answered, scurrying away with a pan of hot cinders.

I would have asked why Mrs. Dean had deserted the Grange, but it was

impossible to delay her at such a crisis, so I turned away and made my exit,

rambling leisurely along, with the glow of a sinking sun behind, and the mild

glory of a rising moon in front -one fading, and the other brightening -as I

quitted the park, and climbed the stony by-road branching off to Mr.

Heathcliff's dwelling. Before I arrived in sight of it, all that remained of

day was a beamless, amber light along the west; but I could see every pebble

on the path, and every blade of grass, by that splendid moon. I had neither to

climb the gate, nor to knock -it yielded to my hand. That is an improvement, I

thought. And I noticed another, by the aid of my nostrils, -a fragrance of

stocks and wallflowers, wafted on the air, from amongst the homely fruit-trees.

Both doors and lattices were open; and yet, as is usually the case in a coal

district, a fine, red fire illumined the chimney: the comfort which the eye

derives from it renders the extra heat endurable. But the house of Wuthering

Heights is so large, that the inmates have plenty of space for withdrawing out

of its influence; and, accordingly, what inmates there were had stationed

themselves not far from one of the windows. I could both see them and hear

them talk before I entered, and looked and listened in consequence, being

moved thereto by a mingled sense of curiosity and envy that grew as I lingered.

"Con-trary!" said a voice as sweet as a silver bell -"That for the third time,

you dunce! I'm not going to tell you again. Recollect, or I pull your hair!"

"Contrary, then," answered another, in deep but softened tones. "And now, kiss

me, for minding so well."

"No, read it over first correctly, without a single mistake."

The male speaker began to read. He was a young man, respectably dressed, and

seated at a table, having a book before him. His handsome features glowed with

pleasure, and his eyes kept impatiently wandering from the page to a small

white hand over his shoulder, which recalled him by a smart slap on the cheek,

whenever its owner detected such signs of inattention. Its owner stood behind;

her light shining ringlets blending, at intervals, with his brown locks, as

she bent to superintend his studies; and her face -it was lucky he could not

see her face, or he would never have been so steady -I could, and I bit my

lip, in spite, at having thrown away the chance I might have had of doing

something besides staring at its smiting beauty.

The task was done, not free from further blunders, but the pupil claimed a

reward, and received at least five kisses, which, however, he generously

returned. Then they came to the door, and from their conversation I judged

they were about to issue out and have a walk on the moors. I supposed I should

be condemned in Hareton Earnshaw's heart, if not by his mouth, to the lowest

pit in the infernal regions, if I showed my unfortunate person in his

neighbourhood then; and feeling very mean and malignant, I skulked round to

seek refuge in the kitchen. There was unobstructed admittance on that side

also, and, at the door, sat my old friend Nelly Dean, sewing and singing a

song, which was often interrupted from within by harsh words of scorn and

intolerance, uttered in far from musical accents.

"Aw'd rayther, by th' haulf, hev 'em swearing i' my lugs frough morn tuh

neeght, nur hearken yah, hahsiver!" said the tenant of the kitchen, in answer

to an unheard speech of Nelly's. "It's a blazing shaime, ut Aw cannut oppen t'

Blessed Book, bud yah set up them glories tuh Sattan, un all t' flaysome

wickednesses ut iver wer born intuh t' warld! Oh! yah're a raight nowt; un

shoo's another; un that poor lad 'ull be lost, atween ye. Poor lad!" he added,

with a groan; "he's witched, Aw'm sartin on't! O Lord, judge 'em, fur they's

norther law nur justice amang wer rullers!"

"No! or we should be sitting in flaming fagots, I suppose," retorted the

singer. "But wisht, old man, and read your Bible like a Christian, and never

mind me. This is `Fairy Annie's Wedding' -a bonny tune -it goes to a dance."

Mrs. Dean was about to recommence, when I advanced; and recognising me

directly, she jumped to her feet, crying:

"Why, bless you, Mr. Lockwood! How could you think of returning in this way?

All's shut up at Thrushcross Grange. You should have given us notice!"

"I've arranged to be accommodated there, for as long as I shall stay," I

answered. "I depart again tomorrow. And how are you transplanted here, Mrs.

Dean? tell me that."

"Zillah left, and Mr. Heathcliff wished me to come, soon after you went to

London, and stay till you returned. But, step in, pray! Have you walked from

Gimmerton this evening?"

"From the Grange," I replied; "and, while they make me lodging room there, I

want to finish my business with your master, because I don't think of having

another opportunity in a hurry."

"What business, sir?" said Nelly, conducting me into the house. "He's gone out

at present, and won't return soon."

"About the rent," I answered.

"Oh! then it is with Mrs. Heathcliff you must settle," she observed; "or

rather with me. She has not learnt to manage her affairs yet, and I act for

her -there's nobody else."

I looked surprised.

"Ah! you have not heard of Heathcliff's death, I see!" she continued.

"Heathcliff dead?" I exclaimed, astonished. "How long ago?"

"Three months since; but sit down, and let me take your hat, and I'll tell you

all about it. Stop, you have had nothing to eat, have you?"

"I want nothing: I have ordered supper at home. You sit down too. I never

dreamt of his dying! Let me hear how it came to pass. You say you don't expect

them back for some time -the young people?"

"No -I have to scold them every evening for their late rambles; but they don't

care for me. At least, have a drink of our old ale; it will do you good, -you

seem weary."

She hastened to fetch it, before I could refuse, and I heard Joseph asking

whether "it warn't a crying scandal that she should have fellies at her time

of life? And then, to get them jocks out uh t' Maister's cellar! He fair

shaamed to bide still and see it."

She did not stay to retaliate, but re-entered, in a minute, bearing a reaming

silver pint, whose content I lauded with becoming earnestness. And afterwards

she furnished me with the sequel of Heathcliff's history. He had a "queer"

end, as she expressed it.

I was summoned to Wuthering Heights within a fortnight of your leaving us, she

said; and I obeyed joyfully, for Catherine's sake. My first interview with her

grieved and shocked me: she had altered so much since our separation. Mr.

Heathcliff did not explain his reasons for taking a new mind about my coming

here; he only told me he wanted me, and he was tired of seeing Catherine: I

must make the little parlour my sitting-room, and keep her with me. It was

enough if he were obliged to see her once or twice a day. She seemed pleased

at this arrangement; and, by degrees, I smuggled over a great number of books,

and other articles, that had formed her amusement at the Grange; and flattered

myself we should get on in tolerable comfort. The delusion did not last long.

Catherine, contented at first, in a brief space grew irritable and restless.

For one thing, she was forbidden to move out of the garden, and it fretted her

sadly to be confined to its narrow bounds, as spring drew on; for another, in

following the house, I was forced to quit her frequently, and she complained

of loneliness: she preferred quarrelling with Joseph in the kitchen to sitting

at peace in her solitude. I did not mind their skirmishes; but Hareton was

often obliged to seek the kitchen also, when the master wanted to have the

house to himself; and though, in the beginning, she either left it at his

approach, or quietly joined in my occupations, and shunned remarking or

addressing him -and though he was always as sullen and silent as possible

-after a while, she changed her behaviour, and became incapable of letting him

alone: talking at him; commenting on his stupidity and idleness; expressing

her wonder how he could endure the life he lived -how he could sit a whole

evening staring into the fire, and dozing.

"He's just like a dog, is he not, Ellen?" she once observed, "or a carthorse?

He does his work, eats his food, and sleeps, eternally! What a blank, dreary

mind he must have! Do you ever dream, Hareton? And, if you do, what is it

about? But you can't speak to me!"

Then she looked at him; but he would neither open his mouth nor look again.

"He's perhaps dreaming now," she continued. "He twitched his shoulder as Juno

twitches hers. Ask him, Ellen."

"Mr. Hareton will ask the master to send you upstairs, if you don't behave!" I

said. He had not only twitched his shoulder but clenched his fist, as if

tempted to use it.

"I know why Hareton never speaks, when I am in the kitchen," she exclaimed, on

another occasion. "He is afraid I shall laugh at him. Ellen, what do you

think? He began to teach himself to read once; and because I laughed, he

burned his books, and dropped it -was he not a fool?"

"Were not you naughty?" I said; "answer me that."

"Perhaps I was," she went on; "but I did not expect him to be so silly.

Hareton, if I gave you a book, would you take it now? I'll try!"

She placed one she had been perusing on his hand; he flung it off, and

muttered, if she did not give over, he would break her neck.

"Well, I shall put it here," she said, "in the table drawer; and I'm going to

bed."

Then she whispered me to watch whether he touched it, and departed. But he

would not come near it; and so I informed her in the morning, to her great

disappointment. I saw she was sorry for his persevering sulkiness and

indolence: her conscience reproved her for frightening him off improving

himself -she had done it effectually. But her ingenuity was at work to remedy

the injury: while I ironed, or pursued other such stationary employments as I

could not well do in the parlour, she would bring some pleasant volume and

read it aloud to me. When Hareton was there, she generally paused in an

interesting part, and left the book lying about: that she did repeatedly; but

he was as obstinate as a mule, and, instead of snatching at her bait, in wet

weather he took to smoking with Joseph; and they sat like automatons, one on

each side of the fire, the elder happily too deaf to understand her wicked

nonsense, as he would have called it, the younger doing his best to seem to

disregard it. On fine evenings the latter followed his shooting expeditions,

and Catherine yawned and sighed, and teased me to talk to her, and ran off

into the court or garden the moment I began; and, as a last resource, cried,

and said she was tired of living -her life was useless.

Mr. Heathcliff, who grew more and more disinclined to society, had almost

banished Earnshaw out of his apartment. Owing to an accident, at the

commencement of March, he became for some days a fixture in the kitchen. His

gun burst while out on the hills by himself; a splinter cut his arm, and he

lost a good deal of blood before he could reach home. The consequence was

that, perforce, he was condemned to the fireside and tranquillity, till he

made it up again. It suited Catherine to have him there; at any rate, it made

her hate her room upstairs more than ever; and she would compel me to find out

business below, that she might accompany me.

On Easter Monday, Joseph went to Gimmerton fair with some cattle; and, in the

afternoon, I was busy getting up linen in the kitchen. Earnshaw sat, morose as

usual, at the chimney corner, and my little mistress was beguiling an idle

hour with drawing pictures on the window-panes, varying her amusement by

smothered bursts of songs, and whispered ejaculations, and quick glances of

annoyance and impatience in the direction of her cousin, who steadfastly

smoked, and looked into the grate. At a notice that I could do with her no

longer intercepting my light, she removed to the hearthstone. I bestowed

little attention on her proceedings, but, presently, I heard her begin:

"I've found out, Hareton, that I want -that I'm glad -that I should like you

to be my cousin now, if you had not grown so cross to me, and so rough."

Hareton returned no answer.

"Hareton, Hareton, Hareton! do you hear?" she continued.

"Get off wi' ye!" he growled, with uncompromising gruffness.

"Let me take that pipe," she said, cautiously advancing her hand, and

abstracting it from his mouth.

Before he could attempt to recover it, it was broken, and behind the fire. He

swore at her, and seized another.

"Stop," she cried, "you must listen to me, first; and I can't speak while

those clouds are floating in my face."

"Will you go to the devil!" he exclaimed ferociously, "and let me be!"

"No," she persisted, "I won't -I can't tell what to do to make you talk to me;

and you are determined not to understand. When I call you stupid, I don't mean

anything -I don't mean that I despise you. Come, you shall take notice of me,

Hareton: you are my cousin, and you shall own me."

"I shall have naught to do wi' you and your mucky pride, and your damned

mocking tricks!" he answered. "I'll go to hell, body and soul, before I look

sideways after you again. Side out o' t' gait, now, this minute!"

Catherine frowned, and retreated to the window-seat, chewing her lip, and

endeavouring, by humming an eccentric tune, to conceal a growing tendency to

sob.

"You should be friends with your cousin, Mr. Hareton," I interrupted, "since

she repents of her sauciness. It would do you a great deal of good; it would

make you another man, to have her for a companion."

"A companion!" he cried; "when she hates me, and does not think me fit to wipe

her shoon! Nay, if it made me a king, I'd not be scorned for seeking her good

will any more."

"It is not I who hate you, it is you who hate me!" wept Cathy, no longer

disguising her trouble. "You hate me as much as Mr. Heathcliff does, and more."

"You're a damned liar," began Earnshaw: "why have I made him angry, by taking

your part, then, a hundred times? and that, when you sneered at and despised

me, and -Go on plaguing me, and I'll step in yonder, and say you worried me

out of the kitchen!"

"I didn't know you took my part," she answered, drying her eyes; "and I was

miserable and bitter at everybody; but now I thank you, and beg you to forgive

me, -what can I do besides?"

She returned to the hearth, and frankly extended her hand. He blackened and

scowled like a thundercloud, and kept his fists resolutely clenched, and his

gaze fixed on the ground. Catherine, by instinct, must have divined it was

obdurate perversity, and not dislike, that prompted this dogged conduct; for,

after remaining an instant undecided, she stooped, and impressed on his cheek

a gentle kiss. The little rogue thought I had not seen her, and, drawing back,

she took her former station by the window, quite demurely. I shook my head

reprovingly; and then she blushed, and whispered:

"Well! what should I have done, Ellen? He wouldn't shake hands, and he

wouldn't look: I must show him some way that I like him, -that I want to be

friends."

Whether the kiss convinced Hareton, I cannot tell: he was very careful, for

some minutes, that his face should not be seen, and when he did raise it, he

was sadly puzzled where to turn his eyes.

Catherine employed herself in wrapping a handsome book neatly in white paper;

and having tied it with a bit of riband, and addressed it to "Mr. Hareton

Earnshaw," she desired me to be her ambassadress, and convey the present to

its destined recipient.

"And tell him, if he'll take it, I'll come and teach him to read it right,"

she said; "and, if he refuse it, I'll go upstairs, and never tease him again."

I carried it, and repeated the message, anxiously watched by my employer.

Hareton would not open his fingers, so I laid it on his knee. He did not

strike it off, either. I returned to my work. Catherine leaned her head and

arms on the table, till she heard the slight rustle of the covering being

removed; then she stole away, and quietly seated herself beside her cousin. He

trembled, and his face glowed, -all his rudeness and all his surly harshness

had deserted him: he could not summon courage, at first, to utter a syllable

in reply to her questioning look, and her murmured petition.

"Say you forgive me, Hareton, do! You can make me so happy, by speaking that

little word."

He muttered something inaudible.

"And you'll be my friend?" added Catherine, interrogatively.

"Nay! you'll be ashamed of me every day of your life," he answered; "and the

more, the more you know me; and I cannot bide it."

"So, you won't be my friend?" she said, smiling as sweet as honey, and

creeping close up.

I overheard no further distinguishable talk; but, on looking round again, I

perceived two such radiant countenances bent over the page of the accepted

book, that I did not doubt the treaty had been ratified on both sides, and the

enemies were, thenceforth, sworn allies.

The work they studied was full of costly pictures; and those, and their

position, had charm enough to keep them unmoved till Joseph came home. He,

poor man, was perfectly aghast at the spectacle of Catherine seated on the

same bench with Hareton Earnshaw, leaning her hand on his shoulder; and

confounded at his favourite's endurance of her proximity: it affected him too

deeply to allow an observation on the subject that night. His emotion was only

revealed by the immense sighs he drew, as he solemnly spread his large Bible

on the table, and overlaid it with dirty banknotes from his pocket-book, the

produce of the day's transactions. At length, he summoned Hareton from his seat.

"Tak these in tuh t' maister, lad," he said, "un bide theare; Aw's gang up tuh

my awn rahm. This hoile's norther mensful nor seemly fur us: we mun side aht,

and seearch another!"

"Come, Catherine," I said, "we must `side out' too; I've done my ironing, are

you ready to go?"

"It is not eight o'clock!" she answered, rising unwillingly. "Hareton, I'll

leave this book upon the chimney-piece, and I'll bring some more tomorrow."

"Ony books ut yah leave, Aw sall tak intuh th' hahse," said Joseph, "un it

'ull be mitch if yah find 'em agean; soa, yah muh plase yourseln!"

Catherine threatened that his library should pay for hers; and, smiling as she

passed Hareton, went singing upstairs, -lighter of heart, I venture to say,

than ever she had been under that roof before; except, perhaps, during her

earliest visits to Linton.

The intimacy thus commenced grew rapidly; though it encountered temporary

interruptions. Earnshaw was not to be civilised with a wish, and my young lady

was no philosopher, and no paragon of patience; but both their minds tending

to the same point -one loving and desiring to esteem, and the other loving and

desiring to be esteemed -they contrived in the end to reach it.

You see, Mr. Lockwood, it was easy enough to win Mrs. Heathcliff's heart. But

now, I'm glad you did not try. The crown of all my wishes will be the union of

those two. I shall envy no one on their wedding-day -there won't be a happier

woman than myself in England!

Chapter 33

On the morrow of that Monday, Earnshaw being still unable to follow his

ordinary employments, and therefore remaining about the house, I speedily

found it would be impracticable to retain my charge beside me, as heretofore.

She got downstairs before me, and out into the garden, where she had seen her

cousin performing some easy work; and when I went to bid them come to

breakfast, I saw she had persuaded him to clear a large space of ground from

currant and gooseberry bushes, and they were busy planning together an

importation of plants from the Grange.

I was terrified at the devastation which had been accomplished in a brief

half-hour: the blackcurrant trees were the apple of Joseph's eye, and she had

just fixed her choice of a flower-bed in the midst of them!

"There! That will be all shown to the master," I exclaimed, "the minute it is

discovered. And what excuse have you to offer for taking such liberties with

the garden? We shall have a fine explosion on the head of it, see if we don't!

Mr. Hareton, I wonder you should have no more wit, than to go and make that

mess at her bidding!"

"I'd forgotten they were Joseph's," answered Earnshaw, rather puzzled; "but

I'll tell him I did it."

We always ate our meals with Mr. Heathcliff. I held the mistress's post in

making tea and carving, so I was indispensable at table. Catherine usually sat

by me; but today she stole nearer to Hareton; and I presently saw she would

have no more discretion in her friendship than she had in her hostility.

"Now, mind you don't talk with and notice your cousin too much," were my

whispered instructions as we entered the room. "It will certainly annoy Mr.

Heathcliff, and he'll be mad at you both."

"I'm not going to," she answered.

The minute after, she had sidled to him, and was sticking primroses in his

plate of porridge.

He dared not speak to her there, -he dared hardly look; and yet she went on

teasing, till he was twice on the point of being provoked to laugh; and I

frowned, and then, she glanced towards the master, whose mind was occupied on

other subjects than his company, as his countenance evinced; and she grew

serious for an instant, scrutinising him with deep gravity. Afterwards she

turned, and recommenced her nonsense; at last, Hareton uttered a smothered

laugh. Mr. Heathcliff started; his eye rapidly surveyed our faces. Catherine

met it with her accustomed look of nervousness, and yet defiance, which he

abhorred.

"It is well you are out of my reach," he exclaimed. "What fiend possesses you

to stare back at me, continually, with those infernal eyes? Down with them!

and don't remind me of your existence again. I thought I had cured you of

laughing!"

"It was me," muttered Hareton.

"What do you say?" demanded the master.

Hareton looked at his plate, and did not repeat the confession. Mr. Heathcliff

looked at him a bit, and then silently resumed his breakfast and his

interrupted musing. We had nearly finished, and the two young people prudently

shifted wider asunder, so I anticipated no further disturbance during that

sitting; when Joseph appeared at the door, revealing by his quivering lip and

furious eyes that the outrage committed on his precious shrubs was detected.

He must have seen Cathy and her cousin about the spot before he examined it,

for while his jaws worked like those of a cow chewing its cud, and rendered

his speech difficult to understand, he began:

"Aw mun hev my wage, and Aw mun goa! Aw hed aimed tuh dee, wheare Aw'd sarved

fur sixty year; un Aw thowt Aw'd lug my books up intuh t' garret, un all my

bits uh stuff, un they sud hev t' kitchen tuh theirseln; fur t' sake uh

quietness. It wur hard tuh gie up my awn hearthstun, bud Aw thowt Aw could do

that! Bud nah shoo's taan my garden frough me, un by th' heart! Maister, Aw

cannot stand it! Yah muh bend tuh th' yoak, and ye will -Aw'm noan used to 't,

and an ow'd man doesn't sooin get used tuh new barthens. Aw'd rayther arn my

bite an my sup wi' a hammer in th' road!"

"Now, now, idiot!" interrupted Heathcliff, "cut it short! What's your

grievance? I'll interfere in no quarrels between you and Nelly: she may thrust

you into the coal-hole for anything I care."

"It's noan Nelly!" answered Joseph. "Aw sudn't shift for Nelly, -nasty, ill

nowt as shoo is. Thank God! shoo cannot stale t' sowl uh nob'dy! Shoo wer

niver soa handsome, bud whet a body mud look at her baht winking. It's yon

flaysome, graceless quean, ut's witched ahr lad, wi' her bold een, un her

forrard ways -till -Nay! It fair bursts my heart! He's forgetten all E done

for him, un made on him, un goan un riven up a whole row ut t' grandest

currant-trees, i' t' garden!" and here he lamented outright, unmanned by a

sense of his bitter injuries, and Earnshaw's ingratitude and dangerous

condition.

"Is the fool drunk?" asked Mr. Heathcliff. "Hareton, is it you he's finding

fault with?"

"I've pulled up two or three bushes," replied the young man; "but I'm going to

set 'em again."

"And why have you pulled them up?" said the master.

Catherine wisely put in her tongue.

"We wanted to plant some flowers there," she cried. "I'm the only person to

blame, for I wished him to do it."

"And who the devil gave you leave to touch a stick about the place?" demanded

her father-in-law, much surprised. "And who ordered you to obey her?" he

added, turning to Hareton.

The latter was speechless; his cousin replied:

"You shouldn't grudge a few yards of earth for me to ornament, when you have

taken all my land!"

"Your land, insolent slut? you never had any!" said Heathcliff.

"And my money," she continued, returning his angry glare, and meantime biting

a piece of crust, the remnant of her breakfast.

"Silence!" he exclaimed. "Get done, and begone!"

"And Hareton's land, and his money," pursued the reckless thing. "Hareton and

I are friends now, and I shall tell him all about you!"

The master seemed confounded a moment: he grew pale, and rose up, eyeing her

all the while, with an expression of mortal hate.

"If you strike me, Hareton will strike you!" she said; "so you may as well sit

down."

"If Hareton does not turn you out of the room, I'll strike him to hell,"

thundered Heathcliff. "Damnable witch! dare you pretend to rouse him against

me? Off with her! Do you hear? Fling her into the kitchen! I'll kill her,

Ellen Dean, if you let her come into my sight again!"

Hareton tried under his breath to persuade her to go.

"Drag her away!" he cried savagely. "Are you staying to talk?" And he

approached to execute his own command.

"He'll not obey you, wicked man, any more," said Catherine; "and he'll soon

detest you as much as I do!"

"Wisht! wisht!" muttered the young man reproachfully. "I will not hear you

speak so to him. Have done."

"But you won't let him strike me?" she cried.

"Come, then," he whispered earnestly.

It was too late: Heathcliff had caught hold of her.

"Now you go!" he said to Earnshaw. "Accursed witch! this time she has provoked

me when I could not bear it, and I'll make her repent it for ever!"

He had his hand in her hair; Hareton attempted to release the locks,

entreating him not to hurt her that once. His black eyes flashed; he seemed

ready to tear Catherine in pieces, and I was just worked up to risk coming to

the rescue, when of a sudden his fingers relaxed, he shifted his grasp from

her head to her arm, and gazed intently in her face. Then he drew his hand

over his eyes, stood a moment to collect himself apparently, and turning anew

to Catherine, said with assumed calmness, "You must learn to avoid putting me

in a passion, or I shall really murder you some time! Go with Mrs. Dean, and

keep with her, and confine your insolence to her ears. As to Hareton Earnshaw,

if I see him listen to you, I'll send him seeking his bread where he can get

it! Your love will make him an outcast, and a beggar. Nelly, take her; and

leave me, all of you! Leave me!"

I led my young lady out; she was too glad of her escape to resist; the other

followed, and Mr. Heathcliff had the room to himself till dinner. I had

counselled Catherine to get hers upstairs; but, as soon as he perceived her

vacant seat, he sent me to call her. He spoke to none of us, ate very little,

and went out directly afterwards, intimating that he should not return before

evening.

The two new friends established themselves in the house, during his absence,

when I heard Hareton sternly check his cousin, on her offering a revelation of

her father-in-law's conduct to his father. He said he wouldn't suffer a word

to be uttered to him, in his disparagement: if he were the devil, it didn't

signify; he would stand by him; and he'd rather she would abuse himself, as

she used to, than begin on Mr. Heathcliff. Catherine was waxing cross at this;

but he found means to make her hold her tongue, by asking how she would like

him to speak ill of her father? -and then she comprehended that Earnshaw took

the master's reputation home to himself, and was attached by ties stronger

than reason could break, -chains, forged by habit, which it would be cruel to

attempt to loosen. She showed a good heart, thenceforth, in avoiding both

complaints and expressions of antipathy concerning Heathcliff; and confessed

to me her sorrow that she had endeavoured to raise a bad spirit between him

and Hareton; indeed, I don't believe she has ever breathed a syllable, in the

latter's hearing, against her oppressor since.

When this slight disagreement was over, they were thick again, and as busy as

possible, in their several occupations of pupil and teacher. I came in to sit

with them, after I had done my work; and I felt so soothed and comforted to

watch them, that I did not notice how time got on. You know, they both

appeared in a measure my children: I had long been proud of one, and now, I

was sure, the other would be a source of equal satisfaction. His honest, warm,

and intelligent nature shook off rapidly the clouds of ignorance and

degradation in which it had been bred; and Catherine's sincere commendations

acted as a spur to his industry. His brightening mind brightened his features,

and added spirit and nobility to their aspect: I could hardly fancy it the

same individual I had beheld on the day I discovered my little lady at

Wuthering Heights, after her expedition to the Crags. While I admired, and

they laboured, dusk grew on, and with it returned the master. He came upon us

quite unexpectedly, entering by the front way, and had a full view of the

whole three, ere we could raise our heads to glance at him. Well, I reflected,

there was never a pleasanter or more harmless sight; and it will be a burning

shame to scold them. The red firelight glowed on their two bonny heads, and

revealed their faces animated with the eager interest of children; for, though

he was twenty-three, and she eighteen, each had so much of novelty to feel and

learn, that neither experienced nor evinced the sentiments of sober

disenchanted maturity.

They lifted their eyes together, to encounter Mr. Heathcliff: perhaps you have

never remarked that their eyes are precisely similar, and they are those of

Catherine Earnshaw. The present Catherine has no other likeness to her, except

a breadth of forehead, and a certain arch of the nostril that makes her appear

rather haughty, whether she will or not. With Hareton the resemblance is

carried farther: it is singular, at all times -then, it was particularly

striking, because his senses were alert, and his mental faculties wakened to

unwonted activity. I suppose this resemblance disarmed Mr. Heathcliff: he

walked to the hearth in evident agitation; but it quickly subsided as he

looked at the young man: or, I should say, altered its character, for it was

there yet. He took the book from his hand, and glanced at the open page, then

returned it without any observation, merely signing Catherine away; her

companion lingered very little behind her, and I was about to depart also, but

he bid me sit still.

"It is a poor conclusion, is it not," he observed, having brooded a while on

the scene he had just witnessed: "an absurd termination to my violent

exertions? I get levers and mattocks to demolish the two houses, and train

myself to be capable of working like Hercules, and when everything is ready,

and in my power, I find the will to lift a slate off either roof has vanished!

My old enemies have not beaten me; now would be the precise time to revenge

myself on their representatives: I could do it, and none could hinder me. But

where is the use? I don't care for striking, -I can't take the trouble to

raise my hand! That sounds as if I had been labouring the whole time only to

exhibit a fine trait of magnanimity. It is far from being the case: I have

lost the faculty of enjoying their destruction, and I am too idle to destroy

for nothing.

"Nelly, there is a strange change approaching: I'm in its shadow at present. I

take so little interest in my daily life, that I hardly remember to eat and

drink. Those two who have left the room are the only objects which retain a

distinct material appearance to me; and that appearance causes me pain,

amounting to agony. About her I won't speak; and I don't desire to think; but

I earnestly wish she were invisible, -her presence invokes only maddening

sensations. He moves me differently; and yet if I could do it without seeming

insane, I'd never see him again. You'll perhaps think me rather inclined to

become so," he added, making an effort to smile, "if I try to describe the

thousand forms of past associations and ideas he awakens, or embodies. But

you'll not talk of what I tell you; and my mind is so eternally secluded in

itself, it is tempting, at last, to turn it out to another.

"Five minutes ago, Hareton seemed a personification of my youth, not a human

being: I felt to him in such a variety of ways, that it would have been

impossible to have accosted him rationally. In the first place, his startling

likeness to Catherine connected him fearfully with her. That, however, which

you may suppose the most potent to arrest my imagination, is actually the

least; for what is not connected with her to me? and what does not recall her?

I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shaped on the flags! In

every cloud, in every tree -filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses

in every object by day -I am surrounded with her image! The most ordinary

faces of men and women -my own features -mock me with a resemblance. The

entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and

that I have lost her! Well, Hareton's aspect was the ghost of my immortal

love, of my wild endeavours to hold my right, my degradation, my pride, my

happiness, and my anguish -

"But it is frenzy to repeat these thoughts to you: only it will let you know

why, with a reluctance to be always alone, his society is no benefit, -rather

an aggravation of the constant torment I suffer; and it partly contributes to

render me regardless how he and his cousin go on together. I can give them no

attention, any more."

"But what do you mean by a change, Mr. Heathcliff?" I said, alarmed at his

manner, though he was neither in danger of losing his senses, nor dying:

according to my judgment, he was quite strong and healthy; and, as to his

reason, from childhood he had a delight in dwelling on dark things, and

entertaining odd fancies. He might have had a monomania on the subject of his

departed idol; but on every other point his wits were as sound as mine.

"I shall not know that till it comes," he said; "I'm only half conscious of it

now."

"You have no feeling of illness, have you?" I asked.

"No, Nelly, I have not," he answered.

"Then you are not afraid of death?" I pursued.

"Afraid? No!" he replied. "I have neither a fear, nor a presentiment, nor a

hope of death. Why should I? With my hard constitution and temperate mode of

living, and unperilous occupations, I ought to, and probably shall, remain

above ground till there is scarcely a black hair on my head. And yet I cannot

continue in this condition! I have to remind myself to breathe -almost to

remind my heart to beat! And it is like bending back a stiff spring: it is by

compulsion that I do the slightest act not prompted by one thought; and by

compulsion that I notice anything alive or dead, which is not associated with

one universal idea. I have a single wish, and my whole being and faculties are

yearning to attain it. They have yearned towards it so long, and so

unwaveringly, that I'm convinced it will be reached -and soon -because it has

devoured my existence: I am swallowed in the anticipation of its fulfilment.

My confessions have not relieved me; but they may account for some otherwise

unaccountable phases of humour which I show. O, God! It is a long fight; I

wish it were over!"

He began to pace the room, muttering terrible things to himself; till I was

inclined to believe, as he said Joseph did, that conscience had turned his

heart to an earthly hell. I wondered greatly how it would end. Though he

seldom before had revealed this state of mind, even by looks, it was his

habitual mood, I had no doubt: he asserted it himself; but not a soul, from

his general bearing, would have conjectured the fact. You did not, when you

saw him, Mr. Lockwood; and at the period of which I speak, he was just the

same as then, only fonder of continued solitude, and perhaps still more

laconic in company.

Chapter 34

For some days after that evening, Mr. Heathcliff shunned meeting us at meals;

yet he would not consent, formally, to exclude Hareton and Cathy. He had an

aversion to yielding so completely to his feelings, choosing rather to absent

himself; -and eating once in twenty-four hours seemed sufficient sustenance

for him.

One night, after the family were in bed, I heard him go downstairs, and out at

the front door. I did not hear him re-enter, and in the morning I found he was

still away. We were in April then; the weather was sweet and warm, the grass

as green as showers and the sun could make it, and the two dwarf apple-trees

near the southern wall in full bloom. After breakfast, Catherine insisted on

my bringing a chair and sitting with my work under the fir-trees at the end of

the house; and she beguiled Hareton, who had perfectly recovered from his

accident, to dig and arrange her little garden, which was shifted to that

corner by the influence of Joseph's complaints. I was comfortably revelling in

the spring fragrance around, and the beautiful soft blue overhead, when my

young lady, who had run down near the gate to procure some primrose roots for

a border, returned only half laden, and informed us that Mr. Heathcliff was

coming in. "And he spoke to me," she added, with a perplexed countenance.

"What did he say?" asked Hareton.

"He told me to begone as fast as I could," she answered. "But he looked so

different from his usual look that I stopped a moment to stare at him."

"How?" he inquired.

"Why, almost bright and cheerful. No, almost nothing -very much excited, and

wild and glad!" she replied.

"Night-walking amuses him, then," I remarked, affecting a careless manner: in

reality, as surprised as she was, and anxious to ascertain the truth of her

statement; for to see the master looking glad would not be an everyday

spectacle. I framed an excuse to go in. Heathcliff stood at the open door, -he

was pale, and he trembled; yet, certainly, he had a strange, joyful glitter in

his eyes, that altered the aspect of his whole face.

"Will you have some breakfast?" I said. "You must be hungry, rambling about

all night!" I wanted to discover where he had been, but I did not like to ask

directly.

"No, I'm not hungry," he answered, averting his head, and speaking rather

contemptuously, as if he guessed I was trying to divine the occasion of his

good humour.

I felt perplexed: I didn't know whether it were not a proper opportunity to

offer a bit of admonition.

"I don't think it right to wander out of doors," I observed, "instead of being

in bed; it is not wise, at any rate, this moist season. I daresay you'll catch

a bad cold, or a fever, -you have something the matter with you now!"

"Nothing but what I can bear," he replied, "and with the greatest pleasure,

provided you'll leave me alone. Get in, and don't annoy me."

I obeyed; and, in passing, I noticed he breathed as fast as a cat.

"Yes!" I reflected to myself, "we shall have a fit of illness. I cannot

conceive what he has been doing!"

That noon, he sat down to dinner with us, and received a heaped-up plate from

my hands, as if he intended to make amends for previous fasting.

"I've neither cold nor fever, Nelly," he remarked, in allusion to my morning's

speech; "and I'm ready to do justice to the food you give me."

He took his knife and fork, and was going to commence eating, when the

inclination appeared to become suddenly extinct. He laid them on the table,

looked eagerly towards the window, then rose and went out. We saw him walking

to and fro in the garden while we concluded our meal; and Earnshaw said he'd

go and ask why he would not dine: he thought we had grieved him some way.

"Well, is he coming?" cried Catherine, when her cousin returned.

"Nay," he answered; "but he's not angry: he seemed rare and pleased indeed;

only, I made him impatient by speaking to him twice; and then he bid me be off

to you: he wondered how I could want the company of anybody else."

I set his plate to keep warm on the fender; and after an hour or two he

re-entered, when the room was clear, in no degree calmer: the same unnatural

-it was unnatural -appearance of joy under his black brows; the same bloodless

hue, and his teeth visible, now and then, in a kind of smile; his frame

shivering, not as one shivers with chill or weakness, but as a tight-stretched

cord vibrates -a strong thrilling, rather than trembling.

I will ask what is the matter, I thought; or who should? And I exclaimed:

"Have you heard any good news, Mr. Heathcliff? You look uncommonly animated."

"Where should good news come from, to me?" he said. "I'm animated with hunger;

and, seemingly, I must not eat."

"Your dinner is here," I returned; "why won't you get it?"

"I don't want it now," he muttered hastily; "I'll wait till supper. And,

Nelly, once for all, let me beg you to warn Hareton and the other away from

me. I wish to be troubled by nobody; I wish to have this place to myself."

"Is there some new reason for this banishment?" I inquired. "Tell me why you

are so queer, Mr. Heathcliff? Where were you last night? I'm not putting the

question through idle curiosity, but -"

"You are putting the question through very idle curiosity," he interrupted,

with a laugh. "Yet, I'll answer it. Last night, I was on the threshold of

hell. Today, I am within sight of my heaven. I have my eyes on it, -hardly

three feet to sever me! And now you'd better go. You'll neither see nor hear

anything to frighten you, if you refrain from prying."

Having swept the hearth and wiped the table, I departed more perplexed than

ever.

He did not quit the house again that afternoon, and no one intruded on his

solitude; till, at eight o'clock, I deemed it proper, though unsummoned, to

carry a candle and his supper to him. He was leaning against the ledge of an

open lattice, but not looking out, -his face was turned to the interior gloom.

The fire had smouldered to ashes; the room was filled with the damp, mild air

of the cloudy evening; and so still, that not only the murmur of the beck down

Gimmerton was distinguishable, but its ripples and its gurgling over the

pebbles, or through the large stones which it could not cover. I uttered an

ejaculation of discontent at seeing the dismal grate, and commenced shutting

the casements, one after another, till I came to his.

"Must I close this?" I asked, in order to rouse him; for he would not stir.

The light flashed on his features as I spoke. Oh, Mr. Lockwood, I cannot

express what a terrible start I got, by the momentary view! Those deep black

eyes! That smile, and ghastly paleness! It appeared to me, not Mr. Heathcliff,

but a goblin; and, in my terror, I let the candle bend towards the wall, and

it left me in darkness.

"Yes, close it," he replied, in his familiar voice. "There, that is pure

awkwardness! Why did you hold the candle horizontally? Be quick, and bring

another."

I hurried out in a foolish state of dread, and said to Joseph:

"The master wishes you to take him a light and rekindle the fire." For I dared

not go in myself again just then.

Joseph rattled some fire into the shovel, and went; but he brought it back

immediately, with the supper-tray in his other hand, explaining that Mr.

Heathcliff was going to bed, and he wanted nothing to eat till morning. We

heard him mount the stairs directly; he did not proceed to his ordinary

chamber, but turned into that with the panelled bed; -its window, as I

mentioned before, is wide enough for anybody to get through, and it struck me

that he plotted another midnight excursion, which he had rather we had no

suspicion of.

"Is he a ghoul or a vampire?" I mused. I had read of such hideous, incarnate

demons. And then I set myself to reflect how I had tended him in infancy; and

watched him grow to youth; and followed him almost through his whole course;

and what absurd nonsense it was to yield to that sense of horror. "But where

did he come from, the little dark thing, harboured by a good man to his bane?"

muttered superstition, as I dozed into unconsciousness. And I began, half

dreaming, to weary myself with imagining some fit parentage for him; and,

repeating my waking meditations, I tracked his existence over again, with grim

variations; at last, picturing his death and funeral; of which all I can

remember, is being exceedingly vexed at having the task of dictating an

inscription for his monument, and consulting the sexton about it; and, as he

had no surname, and we could not tell his age, we were obliged to content

ourselves with the single word, "Heathcliff". That came true -we were. If you

enter the kirkyard, you'll read on his headstone only that, and the date of

his death.

Dawn restored me to common sense. I rose, and went into the garden, as soon as

I could see, to ascertain if there were any footmarks under his window. There

were none. "He has stayed at home," I thought, "and he'll be all right today."

I prepared breakfast for the household, as was my usual custom, but told

Hareton and Catherine to get theirs ere the master came down, for he lay late.

They preferred taking it out of doors, under the trees, and I set a little

table to accommodate them.

On my re-entrance, I found Mr. Heathcliff below. He and Joseph were conversing

about some farming business; he gave clear, minute directions concerning the

matter discussed, but he spoke rapidly, and turned his head continually aside,

and had the same excited expression, even more exaggerated. When Joseph

quitted the room, he took his seat in the place he generally chose, and I put

a basin of coffee before him. He drew it nearer, and then rested his arms on

the table, and looked at the opposite wall, as I supposed, surveying one

particular portion, up and down, with glittering, restless eyes, and with such

eager interest that he stopped breathing during half a minute together.

"Come now!" I exclaimed, pushing some bread against his hand, "eat and drink

that, while it is hot. It has been waiting near an hour."

He didn't notice me, and yet he smiled. I'd rather have seen him gnash his

teeth than smile so.

"Mr. Heathcliff! master!" I cried, "don't, for God's sake, stare as if you saw

an unearthly vision."

"Don't, for God's sake, shout so loud," he replied. "Turn round, and tell me,

are we by ourselves?"

"Of course," was my answer; "of course we are."

Still, I involuntarily obeyed him, as if I were not quite sure. With a sweep

of his hand he cleared a vacant space in front among the breakfast things, and

leant forward to gaze more at his ease.

Now, I perceived he was not looking at the wall; for when I regarded him

alone, it seemed exactly that he gazed at something within two yards distance.

And whatever it was, it communicated, apparently, both pleasure and pain, in

exquisite extremes; at least, the anguished yet raptured expression of his

countenance suggested that idea. The fancied object was not fixed, either: his

eyes pursued it with unwearied vigilance, and, even in speaking to me, were

never weaned away. I vainly reminded him of his protracted abstinence from

food; if he stirred to touch anything in compliance with my entreaties, if he

stretched his hand out to get a piece of bread, his fingers clenched before

they reached it, and remained on the table, forgetful of their aim.

I sat, a model of patience, trying to attract his absorbed attention from its

engrossing speculation; till he grew irritable, and got up, asking why I would

not allow him to have his own time in taking his meals? and saying that, on

the next occasion, I needn't wait: I might set the things down and go. Having

uttered these words he left the house, slowly sauntered down the garden path,

and disappeared through the gate.

The hours crept anxiously by: another evening came. I did not retire to rest

till late, and when I did, I could not sleep. He returned after midnight, and,

instead of going to bed, shut himself into the room beneath. I listened, and

tossed about; and, finally, dressed, and descended. It was too irksome to lie

up there, harassing my brain with a hundred idle misgivings.

I distinguished Mr. Heathcliff's step, restlessly measuring the floor, and he

frequently broke the silence by a deep inspiration, resembling a groan. He

muttered detached words, also; the only one I could catch was the name of

Catherine, coupled with some wild term of endearment or suffering, and spoken

as one would speak to a person present, -low and earnest, and wrung from the

depth of his soul. I had not courage to walk straight into the apartment; but

I desired to divert him from his reverie, and therefore fell foul of the

kitchen fire, stirred it, and began to scrape the cinders. It drew him forth

sooner than I expected. He opened the door immediately, and said:

"Nelly, come here -is it morning? Come in with your light."

"It is striking four," I answered. "You want a candle to take upstairs -you

might have lit one at this fire."

"No, I don't wish to go upstairs," he said. "Come in, and kindle me a fire,

and do anything there is to do about the room."

"I must blow the coals red first, before I can carry any," I replied, getting

a chair and the bellows.

He roamed to and fro, meantime, in a state approaching distraction; his heavy

sighs succeeding each other so thick as to leave no space for common breathing

between.

"When day breaks I'll send for Green," he said; "I wish to make some legal

inquiries of him while I can bestow a thought on those matters, and while I

can act calmly. I have not written my will yet; and how to leave my property I

cannot determine. I wish I could annihilate it from the face of the earth."

"I would not talk so, Mr. Heathcliff," I interposed. "Let your will be, a

while: you'll be spared to repent of your many injustices yet! I never

expected that your nerves would be disordered: they are, at present,

marvellously so, however, and almost entirely through your own fault. The way

you've passed these three last days might knock up a Titan. Do take some food,

and some repose. You need only look at yourself in a glass to see how you

require both. Your cheeks are hollow, and your eyes bloodshot, like a person

starving with hunger, and going blind with loss of sleep."

"It is not my fault that I cannot eat or rest," he replied. "I assure you it

is through no settled designs. I'll do both, as soon as I possibly can. But

you might as well bid a man struggling in the water rest within arm's length

of the shore! I must reach it first, and then I'll rest. Well, never mind Mr.

Green; as to repenting of my injustices, I've done no injustice, and I repent

of nothing -I'm too happy, and yet I'm not happy enough. My soul's bliss kills

my body, but does not satisfy itself."

"Happy, master?" I cried. "Strange happiness! If you would hear me without

being angry, I might offer some advice that would make you happier."

"What is that?" he asked. "Give it."

"You are aware, Mr. Heathcliff," I said, "that from the time you were thirteen

years old, you have lived a selfish, unchristian life; and probably hardly had

a Bible in your hands during all that period. You must have forgotten the

contents of the book, and you may not have space to search it now. Could it be

hurtful to send for some one -some minister of any denomination, it does not

matter which -to explain it, and show you how very far you have erred from its

precepts, and how unfit you will be for its heaven, unless a change takes

place before you die?"

"I'm rather obliged than angry, Nelly," he said, "for you remind me of the

manner that I desire to be buried in. It is to be carried to the churchyard in

the evening. You and Hareton may, if you please, accompany me; and mind,

particularly, to notice that the sexton obeys my directions concerning the two

coffins! No minister need come, nor need anything be said over me. -I tell

you, I have nearly attained my heaven, and that of others is altogether

unvalued and uncoveted by me!"

"And supposing you persevered in your obstinate fast, and died by that means,

and they refused to bury you in the precincts of the Kirk?" I said, shocked at

his godless indifference. "How would you like it?"

"They won't do that," he replied; "if they did, you must have me removed

secretly; and if you neglect it, you shall prove, practically, that the dead

are not annihilated!"

As soon as he heard the other members of the family stirring he retired to his

den, and I breathed freer. But in the afternoon, while Joseph and Hareton were

at their work, he came into the kitchen again, and with a wild look, bid me

come and sit in the house -he wanted somebody with him. I declined, telling

him plainly that his strange talk and manner frightened me, and I had neither

the nerve nor the will to be his companion alone.

"I believe you think me a fiend!" he said, with his dismal laugh; "something

too horrible to live under a decent roof!" Then turning to Catherine, who was

there, and who drew behind me at his approach, he added, half sneeringly,

"Will you come, chuck? I'll not hurt you. No! to you, I've made myself worse

than the devil. Well, there is one who won't shrink from my company! By God!

she's relentless. Oh, damn it! It's unutterably too much for flesh and blood

to bear -even mine."

He solicited the society of no one more. At dusk, he went into his chamber.

Through the whole night, and far into the morning, we heard him groaning and

murmuring to himself. Hareton was anxious to enter; but I bid him fetch Mr.

Kenneth, and he should go in and see him. When he came, and I requested

admittance and tried to open the door, I found it locked; and Heathcliff bid

us be damned. He was better, and would be left alone; so the doctor went away.

The following evening was very wet; indeed it poured down till day-dawn; and,

as I took my morning walk round the house, I observed the master's window

swinging open, and the rain driving straight in. He cannot be in bed, I

thought: those showers would drench him through! He must either be up or out.

But I'll make no more ado, I'll go boldly and look!

Having succeeded in obtaining entrance with another key, I ran to unclose the

panels, for the chamber was vacant; quickly pushing them aside, I peeped in.

Mr. Heathcliff was there -laid on his back. His eyes met mine so keen and

fierce, I started; and then he seemed to smile. I could not think him dead

-but his face and throat were washed with rain; the bedclothes dripped, and he

was perfectly still. The lattice, flapping to and fro, had grazed one hand

that rested on the sill: no blood trickled from the broken skin, and when I

put my fingers to it, I could doubt no more -he was dead and stark!

I hasped the window; I combed his black long hair from his forehead; I tried

to close his eyes, to extinguish, if possible, that frightful, lifelike gaze

of exultation before any one else beheld it. They would not shut -they seemed

to sneer at my attempts; and his parted lips and sharp white teeth sneered

too! Taken with another fit of cowardice, I cried for Joseph. Joseph shuffled

up, and made a noise, but resolutely refused to meddle with him.

"Th' divil's harried off his soul," he cried, "and he muh hev his carcass

intuh t' bargin, for owt Aw care! Ech! what a wicked un he looks grinning at

death!" and the old sinner grinned in mockery. I thought he intended to cut a

caper round the bed; but suddenly composing himself, he fell on his knees, and

raised his hands, and returned thanks that the lawful master and the ancient

stock were restored to their rights.

I felt stunned by the awful event; and my memory unavoidably recurred to

former times with a sort of oppressive sadness. But poor Hareton, the most

wronged, was the only one that really suffered much. He sat by the corpse all

night, weeping in bitter earnest. He pressed its hand, and kissed the

sarcastic, savage face that every one else shrank from contemplating; and

bemoaned him with that strong grief which springs naturally from a generous

heart, though it be tough as tempered steel.

Kenneth was perplexed to pronounce of what disorder the master died. I

concealed the fact of his having swallowed nothing for four days, fearing it

might lead to trouble; and then, I am persuaded he did not abstain on purpose,

-it was the consequence of his strange illness, not the cause.

We buried him, to the scandal of the whole neighbourhood, as he had wished.

Earnshaw and I, the sexton, and six men to carry the coffin, comprehended the

whole attendance. The six men departed when they had let it down into the

grave; we stayed to see it covered. Hareton, with a streaming face, dug green

sods, and laid them over the brown mould himself: at present it is as smooth

and verdant as its companion mounds -and I hope its tenant sleeps as soundly.

But the country folks, if you asked them, would swear on their Bible that he

walks. There are those who speak to having met him near the church, and on the

moor, and even within this house. Idle tales, you'll say, and so say I. Yet

that old man by the kitchen fire affirms he has seen two on 'em, looking out

of his chamber window, on every rainy night since his death -and an odd thing

happened to me about a month ago. I was going to the Grange one evening -a

dark evening, threatening thunder -and, just at the turn of the Heights, I

encountered a little boy with a sheep and two lambs before him; he was crying

terribly, and I supposed the lambs were skittish, and would not be guided.

"What is the matter, my little man?" I asked.

"They's Heathcliff and a woman, yonder, under t' nab," he blubbered, "un Aw

darnut pass em."

I saw nothing; but neither the sheep nor he would go on; so I bid him take the

road lower down. He probably raised the phantoms from thinking, as he

traversed the moors alone, on the nonsense he had heard his parents and

companions repeat; -yet still, I don't like being out in the dark, now; and I

don't like being left by myself in this grim house: I cannot help it; I shall

be glad when they leave it, and shift to the Grange!

"They are going to the Grange then?" I said.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Dean, "as soon as they are married; and that will be on

New Year's day."

"And who will live here, then?"

"Why, Joseph will take care of the house, and, perhaps, a lad to keep him

company. They will live in the kitchen, and the rest will be shut up."

"For the use of such ghosts as choose to inhabit it," I observed.

"No, Mr. Lockwood," said Nelly, shaking her head. "I believe the dead are at

peace; but it is not right to speak of them with levity."

At that moment the garden gate swung to; the ramblers were returning.

"They are afraid of nothing," I grumbled, watching their approach through the

window. "Together, they would brave Satan and all his legions."

As they stepped onto the doorstones, and halted to take a last look at the

moon -or, more correctly, at each other, by her light -I felt irresistibly

impelled to escape them again; and, pressing a remembrance into the hand of

Mrs. Dean, and disregarding her expostulations at my rudeness, I vanished

through the kitchen as they opened the house-door; and so should have

confirmed Joseph in his opinion of his fellow-servant's gay indiscretions, had

he not, fortunately, recognised me for a respectable character by the sweet

ring of a sovereign at his feet.

My walk home was lengthened by a diversion in the direction of the kirk. When

beneath its walls, I perceived decay had made progress, even in seven months:

many a window showed black gaps deprived of glass; and slates jutted off, here

and there, beyond the right line of the roof, to be gradually worked off in

coming autumn storms.

I sought, and soon discovered, the three headstones on the slope next the

moor: the middle one grey, and half buried in heath, -Edgar Linton's only

harmonised by the turf, and moss creeping up its foot; Heathcliff's still bare.

I lingered round them, under that benign sky; watched the moths fluttering

among the heath and harebells; listened to the soft wind breathing through the

grass; and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the

sleepers in that quiet earth.