**35: 47**

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

ADELE: Monsieur, this is mademoiselle.

ROCHESTER: *(Without looking up)* Let her sit.

*He is looking through Jane's portfolio of sketches and watercolours. She approaches feeling utterly exposed – as if her diary is being read. She sits. Mrs Fairfax and Leah return with tea. Mrs Fairfax quietly fusses. Rochester continues to study Jane’s work.*

ROCHESTER: I’ve examined Adele and I find you've taken great pains with her. She's not bright, she has no talents - yet in a short time she's improved.

*Adele is gazing at him uncomprehending.*

JANE: Thank you, Mr. Rochester.

ROCHESTER: You've been resident here three months?

JANE: Yes, sir.

ROCHESTER: (finally looking up) And from whence do you hail; what’s your tale of woe?

JANE: Pardon?

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

JANE: *(Slightly insulted)* I was brought up by my Aunt, Mrs. Reed of Gateshead, in a house even

finer than this. I then attended Lowood school where I received as good an education as I could hope

for. I have no tale of woe, sir.

ROCHESTER: Where are your parents?

JANE: Dead.

ROCHESTER: Do you remember them?

JANE: No.

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

JANE: She cast me off, sir.

ROCHESTER: Why?

JANE: Because I was burdensome and she disliked me.

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

JANE: Yes.

ROCHESTER: How long did you survive there?

JANE: Eight years.

ROCHESTER: No tale of woe...

MRS FAIRFAX: *(placing his tea)* I daily thank providence for sendingus Miss Eyre. She's an invaluable –

ROCHESTER: Don't trouble yourself to give her acharacter. I'll judge for myself. Ihave her to thank for this sprain.

MRS FAIRFAX: Sir?

ROCHESTER: You bewitched my horse.

*For a second Mrs Fairfax thinks Rochester might be addressing her. But he is giving Jane a piercing stare. Mrs Fairfax looks at Jane, bewildered.*

JANE: I did not.

ROCHESTER: Were you waiting for your people on that lane?

JANE: I have no people, sir.

ROCHESTER: I mean for the imps and elves and the little green men.

JANE: The sad truth is they are gone. The elves have all left England for some wilder country where the woods are still savage and the population scant.

ROCHESTER: You lie. I broke through one of your rings and you spread that causeway with your ice.

*Mrs Fairfax puts her tea down, supremely perplexed by this line of conversation. Rochester lifts one of Jane’swatercolours.*

ROCHESTER: Adele brought me these; are they yours?

JANE: Yes, sir.

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

ROCHESTER: Where did you get your copies?

JANE: Out of my head.

ROCHESTER: That head I now see on your shoulders?

JANE: Yes, sir.

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

ROCHESTER: Who's this?

JANE: The evening star.

*Rochester gives her a direct gaze. He looks at the next. A dark turbanned figure with a wreath of white flame above its head. Mrs Fairfax is cutting a dark cake.*

ROCHESTER: Where you happy when you painted these?

*Mrs Fairfax sets the cake out, glancing at Jane’s gloomy water colours. She doesn’t like them.*

JANE: Yes. To paint is one of the keenest pleasures I have ever known.

ROCHESTER: Then your pleasures have been few ... Are you satisfied with them?

JANE: Far from it. I imagine things I’m powerless to execute.

ROCHESTER: Not quite. You’ve secured the shadow of your thoughts. Yet the drawings are, for a schoolgirl... peculiar.

*Jane has no reply. Rochester looks at her for longer than is comfortable. Then he abruptly dismisses her.*

ROCHESTER: Goodnight.

JANE: Come, Adele!