**43.00**

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

**JANE:** No sir.

*Rochester laughs.*

**ROCHESTER:** What fault do you find with me? Ihave all my limbs and features -

**JANE:** I beg your pardon. I ought to havereplied that beauty is of littleconsequence -

**ROCHESTER:** You’re blushing Miss Eyre. And thoughyou’re not pretty any more than I am

handsome, I must say it becomes you... And now I see you're fascinated by the flowers on the rug.

*Jane senses his mockery.*

**ROCHESTER:** Come, speak to me.The fact is, Miss Eyre, I’d like todraw you out. You have rather thelook of another world and I don'twish to treat you as inferior.

**JANE:** Yet you'd command me to speak?

**ROCHESTER:** I have a right to be abrupt andexacting - on the grounds of mysuperiority in age and experience.

**JANE:** Your claim to superiority depends onthe use you’ve made of your age andexperience.

**ROCHESTER:** Which is indifferent. And this iswhy I sit, galled by my own thoughts- and order you to divert me. Areyou very hurt by my tone of command?

*Jane smiles.*

**JANE:** There are few masters who'd troubleto enquire whether their paidsubordinates were hurt by theircommands.

**ROCHESTER:** Paid subordinate... I'd forgottenthe salary. Well on that mercenaryground, will you consent to speak asmy equal - without thinking that therequest arises from insolence?

**JANE:** I'd never mistake informality forinsolence, sir. One, I rather like.The other, nothing free born shouldever submit to - even for a salary.

**ROCHESTER:** Humbug. Most free-born things wouldsubmit to anything for a salary. But

I mentally shake hands with you for your answer. Not three in three thousand schoolgirl governesses would have answered me as you've just done.

**JANE:** Then you've not spent much time inthe company of schoolgirlgovernesses, sir. I'm the same plainkind of bird as all the rest, withmy common tale of woe.

**ROCHESTER:** I envy you.

**JANE:** How?

**ROCHESTER:** Your openness, your unpollutedmind. If I were eighteen I think wetruly would be equals. Nature meantme to be a good man but as you see,I am not so.

**JANE:** Are you a villain then, sir?

**ROCHESTER:** I'm a trite commonplace sinner,hackneyed in all the dissipationsthat the rich and worthless try toput on life.*(He sighs.)*When I was your age, fate dealt mea blow. Dread remorse, Miss Eyre.It is the poison of life.

*Rochester takes in her open, puzzled face.*

**ROCHESTER:** And since happiness is denied me,I've a right to get pleasure in itsstead. And I will get it, cost whatit may.

**JANE:** Then you'll degenerate still more.

**ROCHESTER:** But, Miss Eyre, if the pleasure Iwas seeking was sweet and fresh; ifit was an inspiration; if it worethe robes of an angel of light...what then?

**JANE:** To speak truth, I don't understandyou at all. I fear the conversationhas got out of my depth.

*Rochester laughs.*

**ROCHESTER:** You're afraid of me because I talklike a sphynx.

**JANE:** I'm not afraid. I've simply no wishto talk nonsense.

**ROCHESTER:** Do you never laugh, Miss Eyre?

*This question cuts Jane to the quick.*

**ROCHESTER:** Only rarely, perhaps. But you're notnaturally austere, any more than I'mnaturally vicious. I can see in you the glance of a curious sort of bird through the close set bars of a cage: a vivid, restless captive. Were itbut free, it would soar. Cloud high.