**Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte**

***Chapter XIII***

Mr. Rochester must have been aware of the entrance of Mrs. Fairfax and myself; but it appeared he was not in the mood to notice us, for he never lifted his head as we approached.

‘Here is Miss Eyre, sir,’ said Mrs. Fairfax, in her quiet way.

He bowed, still not taking his eyes from the group of the dog and child.

‘Let Miss Eyre be seated,’ said he: and there was something in the forced stiff bow, in the impatient yet formal tone, which seemed further to express, ‘What the deuce is it to me whether Miss Eyre be there or not? At this moment I am not disposed to accost her.’

I sat down quite disembarrassed. A reception of finished politeness would probably have confused me: I could not have returned or repaid it by answering grace and elegance on my part; but harsh caprice laid me under no obligation; on the contrary, a decent quiescence, under the freak of manner, gave me the advantage. Besides, the eccentricity of the proceeding was piquant: I felt interested to see how he would go on.

He went on as a statue would, that is, he neither spoke nor moved. Mrs. Fairfax seemed to think it necessary that some one should be amiable, and she began to talk. Kindly, as usual—and, as usual, rather trite—she condoled with him on the pressure of business he had had all day; on the annoyance it must have been to him with that painful sprain: then she commended his patience and perseverance in going through with it.

‘Madam, I should like some tea,’ was the sole rejoinder she got. She hastened to ring the bell; and when the tray came, she proceeded to arrange the cups, spoons, &c., with assiduous celerity. I and Adele went to the table; but the master did not leave his couch.

‘Will you hand Mr. Rochester’s cup?’ said Mrs. Fairfax to me; ‘Adele might perhaps spill it.’

I did as requested. As he took the cup from my hand, Adele, thinking the moment propitious for making a request in my favour, cried out—

‘N’est-ce pas, monsieur, qu’il y a un cadeau pour Mademoiselle Eyre dans votre petit coffre?’

‘Who talks of cadeaux?’ said he gruffly. ‘Did you expect a present, Miss Eyre? Are you fond of presents?’ and he searched my face with eyes that I saw were dark, irate, and piercing.

‘I hardly know, sir; I have little experience of them: they are generally thought pleasant things.’

‘Generally thought? But what do YOU think?’

‘I should be obliged to take time, sir, before I could give you an answer worthy of your acceptance: a present has many faces to it, has it not? and one should consider all, before pronouncing an opinion as to its nature.’

‘Miss Eyre, you are not so unsophisticated as Adele: she demands a ‘cadeau,’ clamorously, the moment she sees me: you beat about the bush.’