***Jane Eyre***

***Vol-2 Chapter 11***

***Chapter 26***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* In the morning, Sophie dresses Jane in her wedding gown and plain veil (since the fancy veil was destroyed by the mysterious vampire-like woman in the previous chapter).
* Mr. Rochester is impatient to get to the church and then to start off for London for the beginning of the honeymoon.
* The church is just past the gate of Thornfield, so Rochester and Jane walk the short way there. They have no attendants, family, or friends there for the wedding—just the usual servants.
* Rochester is practically marching Jane to the church, holding her arm in an iron grasp. As they arrive in the churchyard, he realizes he’s being cruel to her, and lets her catch her breath.
* While they’re waiting in the churchyard, Jane notices two men, strangers. They slip around the corner of the church. Mr. Rochester doesn’t see them.
* Jane and Rochester enter the church; the priest is there waiting, and so are the two strangers. The wedding ceremony begins.
* When the priest gets to the part where he asks if anyone knows any reason why the bride and groom "may not lawfully be joined together in matrimony"—you know, the "speak now, or forever hold your peace" bit—one of the strangers comes forward and says he does know a reason.
* Rochester stands frozen and rigid, refusing to turn and look at the stranger.
* The reason that Rochester can’t marry Jane, according to the stranger, is that *Rochester is already married to someone else.*
* Jane looks to Rochester, but all he does is hold her close to him and ask the stranger to describe his supposed wife.
* The stranger, a lawyer named Mr. Briggs, reads a statement from Richard Mason, which claims that, fifteen years before, Rochester married a woman named Bertha Mason in Jamaica, and that he has a copy of the marriage certificate to prove it.
* Rochester says that the statement proves he was once married, but not that his wife is alive today.
* Briggs says that he has a witness who saw Bertha alive three months before. The second stranger comes forward—and it’s Richard Mason.
* Rochester is so furious that the priest has to remind him he’s in church before he does something to Mason.
* Mason says that he is Bertha’s brother and that he saw her at Thornfield hall in April (it’s now just after mid-summer, sometime in late June).
* The priest, Mr. Wood, says that he has lived in the area for a long time and never heard of a Mrs. Rochester at Thornfield. Mr. Rochester says he made sure nobody would hear about her.
* Somewhat angrily, Rochester explains that he was, in fact, trying to commit bigamy, and that he realizes how sinful and immoral this makes him.
* Rochester reminds Wood, and everyone else there, that they may not have heard of a Mrs. Rochester, but they probably have heard that there’s a strange lunatic kept at Thornfield Hall. Some of the rumors are that the lunatic is his half-sister; other people say she’s his former mistress; but now he admits that she is his wife, Bertha Mason.
* Bertha, according to Rochester, is insane; madness runs in her family, and he was tricked into marrying her before he realized that she had inherited it. He invites everyone in the church to come back to Thornfield and see just what his "wife" is like.
* Rochester also emphasizes to them that Jane didn’t know about Rochester’s previous marriage and thought that the wedding was completely legal.
* Rochester, Jane, Mr. Wood, Mr. Briggs, and Mr. Mason walk back to Thornfield. Rochester sends away the carriage, because they won’t need it—there isn’t going to be a honeymoon.
* Rochester takes everyone up to the third floor and unlocks the door of the room where Mason was bitten and stabbed.
* They go through a second door into the next room and find Grace Poole cooking something over the fire and Bertha on the other side of the room, moving on all fours, growling and behaving like a wild animal.
* Rochester asks Grace how her patient is doing, and Grace says that she’s all right today—but when Bertha sees Rochester, she goes crazy. Rochester protects Jane by coming between her and Bertha, and Bertha attacks Rochester, trying to bite his cheek.
* Rochester and Bertha struggle until he gets her arms behind her back, and Grace Poole helps him tie her to a chair.
* Rochester asks everyone to consider the kind of "marriage" he’s likely to have with Bertha and to compare her to Jane. Then he throws everyone out of the room except himself, Grace, and Bertha, and stays behind to give some instructions.
* As Jane and the others leave, Mr. Briggs tells her that he and Mr. Mason know her uncle, Mr. John Eyre, who is currently living in Madeira.
* Mason and John Eyre were friends, and when Jane wrote a letter to her uncle telling him that she was going to marry Mr. Rochester, Mason heard about it and came back to England to prevent Rochester from committing bigamy.
* Mr. Briggs tells Jane that her uncle is dying, but that he will probably die before she could reach him if she went to Madeira to see him.
* Mr. Briggs, Mr. Mason, and Mr. Wood leave, and Jane locks herself in her room. She takes off the wedding dress and puts on one of her regular, plain dresses. Then she starts to try to think about what’s just happened.
* All Jane’s hopes have been crushed, and although she still loves Mr. Rochester, she doesn’t trust him in the same way. She knows she has to leave Thornfield.
* Jane thinks of a prayer, but can’t seem to say the words, and she feels hit by a flood of anguish and depression. Cheery, eh?

***Synopsis:***

Sophie helps Jane dress for the wedding, and Rochester and Jane walk to the church. Jane notes a pair of strangers reading the headstones in the churchyard cemetery. When Jane and Rochester enter the church, the two strangers are also present. When the priest asks if anyone objects to the ceremony, one of the strangers answers: “The marriage cannot go on: I declare the existence of an impediment.” Rochester attempts to proceed with the ceremony, but the stranger explains that Rochester is already married—his wife is a Creole woman whom Rochester wed fifteen years earlier in Jamaica. The speaker explains that he is a solicitor from London, and he introduces himself as Mr. Briggs. He produces a signed letter from Richard Mason affirming that Rochester is married to Mason’s sister, Bertha. Mr. Mason himself then steps forward to corroborate the story. After a moment of inarticulate fury, Rochester admits that his wife is alive and that in marrying Jane he would have been knowingly taking a second wife. No one in the community knows of his wife because she is mad, and Rochester keeps her locked away under the care of Grace Poole. But, he promises them all, Jane is completely ignorant of Bertha’s existence. He orders the crowd to come to Thornfield to see her, so that they may understand what impelled him to his present course of action.

At Thornfield, the group climbs to the third story. Rochester points out the room where Bertha bit and stabbed her brother, and then he lifts a tapestry to uncover a second door. Inside the hidden room is Bertha Mason, under the care of Grace Poole. Jane writes:

*In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.*

Bertha attempts to strangle Rochester, who reminds his audience, “this is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know.” Jane leaves the room with Mason and Briggs, who tells her that he learned of her intent to marry Jane via a letter from Jane’s uncle, John Eyre, to Mason. It turns out that the two men are acquaintances, and Mason had stopped in Madeira on his way back to Jamaica when John received Jane’s letter. Approaching death, John asked Mason to hurry to England to save his niece. After the wedding crowd disperses, Jane locks herself in her room and plunges into an inexpressible grief. She thinks about the almost calm manner in which the morning’s events unfolded and how it seems disproportionate to the immense effect those events will have on her life. She prays to God to be with her.

The incident of the “madwoman in the attic” is probably the most famous in*Jane Eyre,* and it has given rise to innumerable interpretations and symbolic readings. For example, Bertha Mason could represent the horror of Victorian marriage. Rochester claims to have imprisoned her because she is mad, but it is easy to imagine an opposite relation of cause and effect, in which years of enforced imprisonment and isolation have made her violently insane or, at least, increased her insanity. Thus, the madwoman in the attic could represent the confining and repressive aspects of Victorian wifehood, suggesting that the lack of autonomy and freedom in marriage suffocates women, threatening their mental and emotional health. Bertha’s tearing of Jane’s wedding veil could be seen as symbolizing her revolt against the institution of marriage.

Another interpretation is that Rochester’s marriage to Bertha represents the British Empire’s cultural and economic exploitation of its colonial subjects. Briggs’s letter states that Bertha’s mother is a “Creole,” which could mean either that she is a person of European descent born in the colonies or that she is of black or mixed descent. In either case, Bertha might have evoked British anxieties about having to deal with the other cultures under Britain’s dominion, and Bertha’s imprisonment might signify Britain’s attempt to control and contain the influence of these subject cultures by metaphorically “locking them in the attic.”

Still another interpretation of Bertha is that she is a double for Jane herself, the embodiment of Jane’s repressed fear and anger, both in regard to her specific situation and in regard to oppression. For although Jane declares her love for Rochester, her dreams and apprehensions suggest that she also secretly fears being married to him, perhaps even that she secretly wants to rage against the imprisonment that marriage could become for her. Although Jane does not manifest this fear or rage, Bertha does. Thus, Bertha tears the bridal veil, and it is Bertha’s existence that stops the wedding from going forth.

Each of these arguments provides an interesting way of thinking about the text, but it is also important to recognize that Bertha does not function merely as a symbol. Her presence is also a gripping story element and a source of external psychological distress for Jane, from which Jane develops and grows. Similarly, Thornfield could be seen as “British Society at Large,” but Thornfield is more than just an allegory. The relationships between Thornfield’s inhabitants as well as its architecture and grounds are all important to Jane’s story. Lastly, Jane herself, while possessing many proto-feminist viewpoints, is not simply a symbol for the “Victorian Woman.” Her individual psychology cannot be read as representing the mindset of all Victorian women.

***Analysis:***

At seven o'clock on Jane's wedding day, Sophie arrives to help her dress. Jane wears the plain blond veil she has made herself, rather than the fancy veil that was destroyed by Bertha. In her wedding dress, Jane looks so different from her usual self that she seems a stranger to herself. As they drive to the church, Rochester looks grim, and Jane is so nervous that she doesn't notice whether the day is fair or foul. In the cemetery near the church, Jane observes two strangers and sees them again in the shadows of the church. When the clergyman is about to ask Rochester whether he takes Jane for his wife, a voice declares the wedding can't continue because of an "impediment." Rochester has another wife who is still living: Bertha Antoinetta Mason, a Creole woman he married fifteen years ago in Jamaica. Richard Mason appears, confirming this evidence, and Rochester admits that he had planned to commit bigamy.

Rochester commands everyone back to Thornfield to see his wife. Refusing to let go of Jane's hand, Rochester leads her up to the secret room on the third floor. They find Bertha groveling on all fours, running backwards and forwards like a beast. Her hair, wild as an animal's mane, hides her face. The woman attacks Rochester, almost throttling him, until finally he binds her to a chair.

Briggs surprises Jane by telling her that her uncle, John Eyre, had alerted Richard Mason to the marriage. John Eyre is a business associate of Mason's, so when Jane's letter arrived, announcing her engagement, he shared the information with Mason, who was resting in Madeira on his return voyage to Jamaica. John Eyre was dying and couldn't return to England to rescue Jane, so he sent Mason instead. Everyone leaves the attic, and Jane locks herself in her room. All her hopes are dead. In this moment of despair, Jane returns to God, silently praying that he remain with her.

Rochester's secret has been revealed. In the previous chapter, Bertha was merely an apparition; in this one, she becomes fully flesh and blood. An insane, Creole woman, Bertha represents British fears of both foreigners and women. Part human, part beast, Bertha is Jane's double, representing all of her rage and anger over the loss of identity the marriage promises to bring. Unlike Jane, who submissively gives in to Rochester's demands, Bertha refuses to be controlled; a woman whose stature almost equals her husband's, she fights with him, showing a "virile" force that almost masters the athletic Rochester. Finally, she is roped to a chair, much as Jane almost was in the incident in the red-room. Post-colonialist critics, such as Gayatri Spivak, have argued that Bertha, the foreign woman, is sacrificed so that British Jane can achieve self-identity, and the novelist Jean Rhys has written a novel called The Wide Sargasso Sea that presents Bertha's life in Jamaica before her madness. Both of these women writers suggest Rochester's relationship with Bertha wasn't as innocent as he claims; as a colonialist, he was in Jamaica to make money and to overpower colonized women. In the nineteenth-century, men had almost complete legal power over women, and perhaps this lack of power contributed to Bertha's madness, just as it caused Jane's temporary insanity in the red-room. These critics remind the reader that Jane Eyre isn't merely a story critiquing the social injustices against women, but also exposing the brutality of colonialism. In the previous chapter, Jane had joked about leading a rebellion of the women in Rochester's imaginary seraglio; now she has almost become a member of that harem, but Bertha leads the resistance.

Brontë's use of ice imagery in this chapter contrasts with the fiery images of the previous few chapters. In Chapter 25, for example, the wild wind and blood-red moon symbolized Jane's passion, but here all of that energy has drained away. Bertha's red eyes and virile force emphasize her excessive, crazy passions, but Jane has become a husk. Gone is the "ardent, expectant woman," and in her place is the "cold, solitary girl again." Jane imagines nature mimicking her desolation and chill: a Christmas frost has whirled through June, and "ice glazed the ripe apples, drifts crushed the blowing roses; on hayfield and cornfield lay a frozen shroud." All the world has symbolically become icy, frozen, snowy in sympathy with Jane's dead hopes. For Jane, the world has become a white waste, a chill, stark corpse that will never revive.

***Short study(Ch 24-25):***

Jane and Rochester go to church without any guests. As Jane and Rochester are about to say their wedding vows, a solicitor, Mr. Briggs, appears and objects, saying that Rochester is already married. With Briggs is Mason, who attests that Rochester married Mason's sister, Bertha, in Jamaica and that she is secreted away on the third floor of Thornfield Manor. After some resistance, Rochester admits the basic truth of [Bertha Mason](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Jane-Eyre/character-analysis/#Bertha_Mason)'s existence and his entrapment. He takes the priest, Mr. Briggs, Mr. Mason, and Jane to the third-floor room to see Bertha for themselves. There, attended by Grace Poole, Bertha is behaving like a wild animal, growling and running back and forth on all fours. She attacks Rochester and tries to bite him. With Grace Poole's help, he ties the madwoman to a chair. When they leave the room, Briggs tells Jane that her uncle in Madeira is dying. He explains that, when her uncle had received her letter about her upcoming marriage to Rochester, he happened to mention it to Mason, who knew the truth. Concerned for his niece, but too near his end to travel, her uncle asked Mason to stop the false marriage.

Stunned at the turn of events, Jane shuts herself in her room. She doesn't know what to think of Rochester, but she does know that she must leave Thornfield. Feeling completely alone, she prays for God's help.

The mysteries surrounding Grace Poole, the third floor, the attacks, and the unearthly laughter are finally explained. Rochester had carefully concealed the fact that he was married to the insane woman. Those who knew about the woman may have believed she was a mad half-sister or former mistress.

Rochester feels that, because he was tricked into marrying a woman whose extreme insanity prevents her from being a real wife, he should be allowed to break the marriage bond and seek happiness with Jane. Understanding Jane's upright character, he knows that she would never agree to be with him if she knew about Bertha.

Jane, after the revelations, feels that she doesn't completely know Rochester. She fears that what he feels for her is "only fitful passion." If this is the case, she thinks he will have no desire for her to stay at Thornfield now that his plans have been thwarted.

***Critical Analysis***:

The next morning, Jane prepares for the marriage ceremony. Instead of wearing the elegant veil that was destroyed by the strange woman, Jane wears a plain veil that she made herself; still, Jane is unable to recognize herself in her wedding dress. She and Mr. Rochester head to the nearby church, but Jane notices that Mr. Rochester looks grim rather that happy about the upcoming ceremony. Jane notices that two strangers enter the church before they do. The priest begins the ceremony, but when he asks Rochester if he will take Jane as his wife, one of the strangers declares an “impediment” to the marriage. The man, [Mr. Briggs](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#mr-briggs), introduces himself as a solicitor from London and claims that Mr. Rochester already has a living wife from a previous marriage 15 years ago. Moreover, Briggs asserts that he has a witness to attest to the wife's being alive: [Richard Mason](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#richard-mason). Mason steps forward and reveals that Mr. Rochester's wife was living at Thornfield when he visited three months before, and that he is her brother. Mr. Rochester confesses that the accusation is true, and that his insane wife, Bertha Antoinette Mason, lives in his attic under the careful watch of Grace Poole. He commands that everyone return to the estate to see Bertha and judge for themselves whether or not he was justified in seeking remarriage.

The group goes to Thornfield and up to the third-story attic. In the room where Mason was stabbed and bitten, Grace cooks food while the crazed Bertha runs around like an animal. Bertha lunges at Mr. Rochester and almost strangles him until he ties her to a chair. They all leave the room. Briggs informs Jane that her uncle, John Eyre, is on his sickbed in Madeira but wanted to prevent the marriage, having heard about it from Jane’s letter and then from Mason. He suggests that Jane stay in England until she hears more from her uncle. Briggs and Mason leave, and Jane goes into her room alone, reflecting on her sudden change of fortune. All of her hopes have been destroyed, and she no longer knows how she can love Mr. Rochester. She prays to God for help, but is too devastated to even speak the words aloud.

With the revelation of Mr. Rochester’s marriage to Bertha, Bronte is able to uncover all of the mysteries of Thornfield and Mr. Rochester’s past: the laughter from the third story, Rochester's early error in life and desire for a new wife, Mrs. Fairfax's warning to Jane, the fire in Mr. Rochester's room, and the interloper in Jane's room. Just as Jane has trouble deciding how to judge Rochester, the reader, too, is in a difficult position. Because Mr. Rochester was unaware of [Bertha Mason](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#bertha-mason)’s hereditary madness, he was essentially victimized by the Mason family. Moreover, considering Bertha’s propensity for violence, he had little choice but to confine her to the room in the attic, especially when an insane asylum during the time period would have been much more barbaric.

Still, Mr. Rochester would gladly have married Jane despite his preexisting marriage, and Jane would have been diminished to the inferior position of mistress without even realizing it. The biggest difficulty for Jane is that she still loves Mr. Rochester, but her innate sense of right and wrong demand that she cast him aside forever. As evidence of Jane’s personal despair, Bronte narrates the bad turn of events with the relentless imagery of ice: "A Christmas frost had come at midsummer; a white December storm had whirled over June; ice glazed the ripe apples…" As in other places in the novel, ice symbolizes destruction, cruelty, hopelessness, and death. In this moment of despair, Jane reaches out to God. While she does not have blind faith in Him (as evidenced by her inability to speak the prayer), God is her last salvation and her last chance (so she believes) to be loved by another.

***Critical Study:***

Jane dresses and Rochester practically drags her to the church, which is on the grounds of Thornfield. As they go inside, Jane notices two strangers pacing in the graveyard. At the point where the minister asks if anyone knows of an impediment to the marriage, a man named Briggs steps forward and states that Mr. Rochester has a wife. After offering solid evidence, Rochester admits that he has a wife who is insane and takes them to meet Bertha, who acts like a rabid animal.

Mr. Briggs tells Jane she will not be held responsible and her uncle will be glad to hear she is unharmed. Her uncle, upon learning of the upcoming nuptials, investigated Rochester. He is dying, so suggests Jane remain in England. She goes to her room and is calm as she changes dresses, but then grief overwhelms her.

Here Mr. Rochester's secret is out. The woman whom he has kept in the attic is indeed his wife. Grace is not responsible for setting Mr. Rochester's bed on fire, biting Mr. Mason or tearing Jane's veil. All of this mischief has been done by his wife. Many questions surround Mr. Rochester's decision to keep Bertha locked in the attic instead of sending her to an asylum. It is known from reading the book that Bertha was mad before he married her, but this fact was hidden from him. Also, in this time period, one could not divorce a spouse without approval from the government. This procedure was often slow and expensive and divorce was usually not granted to those married to an insane person. Ironically, it is Jane's letter to her uncle that starts the process which leads to the interruption of Jane and Mr. Rochester's marriage.

***Notes:***

Chapter 26 of Jane Eyre captures a pivotal point in the novel: Jane becomes aware of her true circumstances and loses all trust in Mr. Rochester.

Chapter 25 describes Jane's happiness and terror at the prospect of her wedding. Jane has been experiencing dreams of crying and wounded infants. In one instance, she wakes from her sleep and sees a figure tearing apart her wedding veil in the closet. She assumes the perpetrator is the unpleasant Grace Poole and cannot tell whether her veil is really being destroyed or whether she is merely still dreaming. Mr. Rochester dismisses her concerns and is eager for the wedding to move forward the following day.

### Jane Eyre Chapter 26 Summary

In the morning, Sophie dresses Jane in her wedding gown while Mr. Rochester wonders why Jane is taking so long. Jane, flustered, almost does not even check her appearance in the mirror before meeting her fiancé downstairs. Mr. Rochester is impatient and intent on his purpose; he gives her only ten minutes to eat breakfast while he ensures that they will be ready to depart almost immediately after the ceremony.

Once Jane has eaten, Mr. Rochester takes a firm hold of her arm and whisks her away to the church. He does not slow until he can see that Jane has gone pale from his hurried manner. As they wait outside the church, Jane observes two figures walking about the gravestones; she cannot recognize them but assumes they will be the among the only guests at the wedding. When she and her fiancé enter the church, her suspicions prove correct. The two men, still unrecognizable, linger near the back of the building while the ceremony proceeds.

The priest asks all those present whether any "impediment" exists to the marriage - merely out of tradition - but one of the men at the back of the church steps forward and claims that there is, in fact, a most egregious obstacle: Mr. Rochester cannot marry Jane Eyre because he is already married. Jane is shocked by the accusation and takes careful note that Mr. Rochester, though furious, does nothing to deny the accusation. The man identifies himself as Mr. Briggs, the lawyer of Mr. Mason, who then steps forward and verifies the charge that Mr. Rochester is not a bachelor.

Finally, Mr. Rochester confesses and explains his crime: he married his wife, a once-beautiful Creole woman, fifteen years ago. Before their marriage, he found her "charming...pure, wise, modest," but he soon came to see her alcoholism and severe mental illness all too soon after their wedding. Years of loneliness and exhaustion left him desperate for companionship, and he intended to deceive Jane into thinking that their wedding was a legal one. During the exchange, the reader learns that Mr. Rochester's bride is none other than Bertha Antoinette Mason, the sister of Mr. Mason.

Mr. Rochester takes the entire party to see where Mrs. Rochester is kept: in the room hidden behind the tapestry on the third story. The reader comes to realize that Grace Poole's purpose at Thornfield is actually to care for Mrs. Rochester, who attacks her husband on sight and must be tied down to keep from violently lashing out. Jane recognizes Bertha as the person who tore at her veil the night before.

Mr. Rochester explains that his wrestle to restrain his mad wife is "the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know." As the company leaves, Jane learns that her uncle, John Eyre, is likely dead. Upon learning of her request for her inheritance, due to her upcoming marriage to Mr. Rochester, Mr. Eyre told his good friend Mr. Mason about the arrangements and Mr. Mason informed Mr. Eyre that Mr. Rochester was already married and likely attempting to illegally procure a second bride. In shock, John Eyre went to his sick bed, and Mr. Mason hurried to England to bar the wedding from taking place.

At the end of the chapter, Jane locks herself in her room and considers what all the events mean. Not only have her hopes been dashed, she has lost all trust in Mr. Rochester, whom she still loves, though now her love must go unrequited. In despair, she prays and falls asleep, uncertain as to what must become of her.

## Analysis of Jane Eyre Ch. 26

Chapter 26 of Jane Eyre contains many literary themes and questions:

* Mr. Rochester insists that his interest in Jane is sincere, but when he excuses his conduct to Mr. Mason, the lawyer, and the priest, he mentions nothing of Jane's moral courage or her intelligence - instead, he explains that he was interested in Jane's beauty and docility. If such is the case, can Jane ever really find happiness with Mr. Rochester?
* Bertha is described as "Creole;" in Bronte's time period, the term could be used to describe someone of any race who was born in the West Indies, though some literary critics argue that Bertha is of African descent and that her treatment reflects the dehumanization of Black people of the 19th century.
* Jane's hopes and dreams are dashed while in a church; literary critics wonder whether Christianity is an entity of support or suffering in Jane's life.

### When Does Jane Find Out About Bertha?

Jane has recognized strange things about Thornfield that could not be explained: laughter echoing through the halls, Grace Poole's violent behavior toward Mr. Mason and Mr. Rochester - and the endless tolerance that Mr. Rochester has for these violent events that are always blamed on Grace. Jane does not recognize the real cause of these oddities until the accusations surface from Mr. Briggs and Mr. Rochester reveals the room hidden behind the tapestry. Jane recognizes that this news means that her former hopes about her marriage to Mr. Rochester are not possible - and that her trust in him has now all but disappeared.

## Jane Eyre Chapter 26 Quotes

* "I was hurried along by a stride I could hardly follow; and to look at Mr. Rochester's face was to feel that not a second of delay would be tolerated for any purpose." Jane describes the hurried and impatient tone of Mr. Rochester on their wedding day.
* "I am in a condition to prove my allegation: an insuperable impediment to this marriage exists." Mr. Briggs, Mr. Mason's lawyer, explains that the wedding cannot move forward.
* "You shall see what sort of being I was cheated into espousing, and judge whether or not I had a right to break the compact, and seek sympathy with something at least human." Mr. Rochester works to defend his attempt at bigamy.
* "Oh, never more could it turn to him; for faith was blighted - confidence destroyed!" Jane explains that her trust in Mr. Rochester has been completely annihilated.

## Lesson Summary

Jane Eyre chapter 26 observes Jane on the morning of her wedding. Mr. Rochester is impatient and intent on his purpose that morning. The ceremony is interrupted by two men who arrive and insist that the marriage is illegal. Mr. Mason and his lawyer, Mr. Briggs, reveal that Mr. Rochester cannot marry Jane because of an impediment, or insurmountable problem. He is already married to Bertha Antoinette Mason, Mr. Mason's sister. Shocked, Jane follows Mr. Rochester as he shows the group where his wife is kept: in the room hidden behind the tapestry on the third story. Jane learns that Grace Poole's true purpose at Thornfield is to care for Mrs. Rochester, who is insane. Jane is crushed and returns to her room, realizing that she cannot marry - and can no longer trust - Mr. Rochester, despite her affection for him.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

On the morning of the wedding, as [Rochester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/edward-fairfax-rochester) hurries [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) to the church, Jane notices two strangers in the churchyard. The strangers also attend the ceremony. When the priest asks if anyone has any objections to the marriage about to take place, one of the strangers stands up and announces that there is an "impediment" to the marriage. Rochester insists that the ceremony proceed, but the clergyman refuses.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Rochester thought he was above the civil laws represented by the lawyer, and the religious laws represented by the church. He refused to repent his actions or reveals his secrets. Now, with the unraveling of his marriage, he must pay the price for his arrogant self-centeredness.

***Summary Part 2:***

The stranger identifies himself as [Mr. Briggs](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters), a London lawyer, and reveals that [Rochester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/edward-fairfax-rochester) is already married. 15 years ago in Jamaica, Rochester married a Creole woman, [Bertha Mason](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/bertha-mason), who still lives in Thornfield. The other stranger turns out to be her brother, [Mr. Mason](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters), who timidly comes forward to confirm the story.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Like Bertha, Mr. Mason is characterized negatively—as scheming, timid, and strange-looking—because of prevailing class prejudices against his West Indies origins and mixed-race background.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Rochester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/edward-fairfax-rochester) is furious. He concedes that the story is true, but stresses that neither Jane nor anyone else knew of Bertha. His wife is insane, he says, and is kept locked away on the third floor of Thornfield. He brings everyone back to Thornfield and they go up to the third floor. Behind a secret door stands [Grace Poole](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) and a disheveled "lunatic" pacing in the shadows. This is [Bertha](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/bertha-mason), who seems half-human, half-animal to [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre). Bertha attacks Rochester and he wrestles her into a chair. He goes on to explain that her family hid her insanity until after their marriage.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Bertha is made out to be a violent and insane monster, but there is method in her madness: all of her violence is directed against the people who took away her freedom, love, and identity. Her rage is unchecked. She is all feeling, no judgment. Ironically, Rochester, who has kept Bertha secretly locked up, claims to be a victim of families hiding their secrets.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Mr. Mason](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) then reveals to Jane that he learned about her wedding plans with Rochester from a business acquaintance—Jane's uncle. After receiving [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre)'s letter, [John Eyre](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) sent Mason to save her from the sham marriage. John Eyre could not make the trip, as he is dying of consumption (tuberculosis).

***Analysis Part 4:***

Even though the fault would be Rochester's, Jane's reputation and future prospects would be ruined by this marriage.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) locks herself into her room. Feeling that all her hopes have been destroyed, she succumbs to a flood of sorrow over the troubles and betrayals that she has endured. She turns to God, and prays.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Jane is tested when she loses her entire family at Thornfield. Alone again, she calls upon the faith that Helen taught her.