***Jane Eyre***

***Vol-3 Chapter 10***

***Chapter 36***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* St. John slips a note under Jane’s door in the morning; he can tell she was ready to sacrifice everything and become his wife and fellow missionary, and he’ll ask her again when he comes back in two weeks.
* After St. John leaves, Jane thinks about the supernatural voice and wonders where it came from. She decides she must know what’s going on with Rochester, wherever he is.
* Jane arranges a journey back to Thornfield; after thirty-six hours, she arrives at an inn called the Rochester Arms. She can’t bring herself to ask anyone there about him, so she just starts walking to Thornfield.
* Jane comes up toward Thornfield walking along the wall of the orchard. She peeks out from around a corner of the wall... and sees a complete ruin.
* It’s burned down, blackened and collapsed. She compares it to a man sneaking up to peek at the face of his sleeping beloved and finding her dead.
* Shocked, Jane goes back to the inn and asks the host what happened. From him she learns the whole story of what happened: Bertha burned down the house in the middle of the night by setting fire to what used to be Jane’s own bed.
* Rochester saved the servants and then climbed up to a high wall where Bertha was standing to try to rescue her, but she jumped off and committed suicide. Rochester was blinded and lost a hand when the wall collapsed.
* Jane asks where Rochester is now, and the innkeeper tells her that he’s at his other home, Ferndean. Jane arranges to go there in a chaise right away.

***Synopsis:***

Jane contemplates her supernatural experience of the previous night, wondering whether it was really Rochester’s voice that she heard calling to her and whether Rochester might actually be in trouble. She finds a note from St. John urging her to resist temptation, but nevertheless she boards a coach to Thornfield. She travels to the manor, anxious to see Rochester and reflecting on the ways in which her life has changed in the single year since she left. Once hopeless, alone, and impoverished, Jane now has friends, family, and a fortune. She hurries to the house after her coach arrives and is shocked to find Thornfield a charred ruin. She goes to an inn called the Rochester Arms to learn what has happened. Here, she learns that Bertha Mason set the house ablaze several months earlier. Rochester saved his servants and tried to save his wife, but she flung herself from the roof as the fire raged around her. In the fire, Rochester lost a hand and went blind. He has taken up residence in a house called Ferndean, located deep in the forest, with John and Mary, two elderly servants.***Short Study:***

St. John leaves Jane a message hoping she will recognize God's will for her to be his wife and a missionary. Jane leaves a message with good wishes. Jane tells the two sisters she is going to be taking a journey and leaving the next day. She catches a coach to Thornfield, recognizing the area as they draw close. Jane gets off in town and walks to Thornfield, deciding she wants to approach the home from the front. She is shocked to see the place burned to the ground. Jane returns to the Inn and learns Rochester is still alive. The blaze was started by Bertha. Mr. Rochester got all the servants out, but when he went for Bertha, she jumped to her death. Rochester was blinded in the fire and lost his left hand. He is living at Ferndean, thirty miles hence.

This chapter is one of tense anticipation as Jane searches for news of Mr. Rochester. Jane at first fears Mr. Rochester has left England on another trip, but after she sees the ruin at Thornfield, fears he is dead. Note the chilling illustration of the dead lover which Bronte includes to make her readers understand what a shock it was for Jane to find Thornfield burned and uninhabited. Jane's view of the ruins of Thornfield brings to mind a dream she had several days before her intended wedding to Mr. Rochester. In this dream she tries to climb the ruined wall of Thornfield while carrying a small child.

In this chapter Bronte also explores the theme of love. It is out of Bertha's deep hatred for her husband that she sets fire to Thornfield. Since the bed in Jane's old bedroom is also set on fire by Bertha, we know she was also communicating her rage toward Jane for winning the heart of Mr. Rochester. However, as the house burns and Bertha stands on the roof of the house, Mr. Rochester could have just let her die there. Her death would have given him the freedom to marry Jane. Instead, Mr. Rochester attempts to coax Bertha down from the roof and to safety.

***Analysis:***

The next day, after getting a note from St. John containing a request for her "clear decision," Jane travels to Whitcross and by coach to the vicinity of Thornfield. A day and a half later, she finds that Thornfield Hall is no longer the stately mansion she remembers; it is a "blackened ruin." Jane returns to the Rochester Arms (the inn where the coach stopped) and learns that Thornfield burned down in the autumn, two months after she had fled. Rochester, despondent, had been living "like a hermit" at Thornfield. He'd sent Adèle off to school, and Mrs. Fairfax had gone to live with friends. Late one night Bertha escaped from her room and set fire to Thornfield. Rochester attempted to save her, but she jumped from the roof to her death. Rochester helped the servants get out of the building, but the main staircase collapsed as he came down it. He lost his eyesight ("one eye was knocked out" and the other became sightless) and his left hand as a result. Jane learns that Rochester is now living at Ferndean, his remote manor house. She immediately arranges for a chaise to go there.

Whatever has become of Rochester, [Bertha Mason](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Jane-Eyre/character-analysis/#Bertha_Mason)'s death is significant to Jane: it provides hope for her dreams. Bertha's death removes the huge obstacle to her marriage to Rochester—as her uncle's bequest had made her more likely to be comfortable with such a match because it guaranteed her independence.

Rochester's behavior after Jane's departure and his heroism during the fire attest to the depth and sincerity of his feelings and his strength of character. [Fire](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Jane-Eyre/symbols/#Fire) has played a destructive role here, causing Rochester to lose not only Thornfield but also his sight and his hand. This can be seen as punishment for Rochester's transgressions. Will Rochester now find the redemption he'd been seeking? Will he sink further into despair? Or will he erupt into anger?

***Critical Study:***

The next morning, Jane wonders if she really heard Mr. Rochester’s voice calling to her or if she was merely imagining it. She finds a note from St. John requesting her final decision when he returns from Cambridge, but Jane’s mind is on Rochester, and she leaves that afternoon for Thornfield. Although only a year has passed, Jane feels as if she has a new identity and anxiously awaits the sight of Mr. Rochester at the Manor. After two days on the couch, Jane arrives, only to find Thornfield in ruins, destroyed by a fire. At a nearby inn, Jane learns what happened: one night [Bertha Mason](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#bertha-mason) escaped from Grace's watch and set fire to the governess's old bed. Mr. Rochester was able to get all of the servants out of the burning house, and tried to save his wife, but he was too late: Bertha jumped to her death from the roof. Mr. Rochester lost his eyesight and a hand during the fire and has since been relegated to Ferndean, a nearby manor house, staffed by the elderly [John and Mary](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#john-and-mary).

While the fire at Thornfield destroyed both Mr. Rochester's estate and his eyesight, fire continues to be a positive force even in its destruction. Bertha Mason was the one remaining obstacle to a marriage between Mr. Rochester and Jane. With her death, Mr. Rochester is finally a free man and has the ability to marry Jane without forcing her to sacrifice her morality. The fire also equalizes the relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester. While she has recently gained her own fortune, he has lost much of his. Moreover, Mr. Rochester’s blindness and lost hand place him in a position of vulnerability in which the social expectations of male domination in marriage no longer exist.

***Notes:***

This lesson provides an overview of chapter 36 of Jane Eyre. In this chapter, St. John is still intent on marrying Jane, but Jane has other plans--she must find Mr. Rochester!

## Jane's Preparations

In the previous chapter of Jane Eyre, we saw Jane firmly resolved to some course of action after mysteriously hearing Mr. Rochester's voice calling her name. Chapter 36 opens without revealing Jane's precise plans. We see Jane arranging her things for departure, and she informs Diana and Mary that she plans to be away for several days. They ask if she will be alone for her journey and seem concerned, but Jane keeps her plans private.

## St. John's Last Effort

St. John also departs for a journey in this chapter - he finally leaves for his trip to see friends in Cambridge. Before he does, however, he stuffs a note under Jane's door. Rather than the plaintive supplications of a lover, St. John's note is characteristically overbearing and laced with guilt-inducing insinuations.

He writes, 'I shall expect your clear decision when I return this day fortnight.' He writes further, 'the spirit, I trust, is willing, but the flesh, I see, is weak.' With this, St. John implies that Jane is succumbing to carnal sins in refusing to marry him. He ends his note saying that he will be praying for her hourly, thus insinuating that her eternal soul is in need of some urgent spiritual triage.

## Jane's Destination

While the reader may have suspected Jane's plans for some time, she doesn't actually reveal them until she arrives in Whitcross - the very same place where she was left some months before, hungry, alone, and penniless. She is reflective as she prepares to retrace her journey exactly, heading back to find Thornfield Hall and Mr. Rochester.

Upon entering the coach, Jane is grateful to 'not now be obliged to part with my whole fortune as the price of its accommodation.' She will be traveling in more comfort this time, for sure.

## Uncertain Return

After thirty six hours of traveling via horse-drawn coach, Jane walks the last two miles to Thornfield. She is tortured by suspense and uncertainty--how would she find Mr. Rochester? Would he have left for Europe? Would he have dissipated himself in riotous living? What would his feelings be for her? She contemplates asking about Mr. Rochester at the inn, but decides that 'to prolong doubt was to prolong hope,' and she walks on instead, not knowing.

## Rediscovering Thornfield

Whatever Jane expected, she is surprised by what she finds. She 'looked with timorous joy towards a stately house,' but what she sees instead was 'a blackened ruin.' Thornfield Hall is destroyed by fire. The place is deserted. Not a soul is present to satisfy her now burning desire to know if Mr. Rochester is well. In search of information, she retraces her two mile walk to the inn.

## What Happened to Mr. Rochester?

After returning to the inn and requesting some refreshment, Jane invites the inn keeper to join her so she can ask him questions. She nearly dies when the inn keeper speaks first of 'the late Mr. Rochester,' but is relieved to find that he speaks of Mr. Edward Rochester's father, and that Edward Rochester is, indeed, still living. Having this information out of the way makes it easier for her to listen to the rest of the tale.

From the inn keeper, Jane learns that after she left, Mr. Rochester was stricken with grief. He sent away most of his servants--including Mrs. Fairfax, on whom he settled a healthy inheritance. Adele was sent away to school, and Mr. Rochester closed himself up in Thornfield Hall, shut off almost entirely to society. He did not go to Europe. He did not turn to riotous living. He just stayed inside and mourned.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

As [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) prepares to leave to go to Thornfield, St. John slips a note under her door urging her to resist temptation. Though unsure herself, Jane feels that what's she's doing is right and that the voice and the "wondrous shock of feeling" she felt were real.

***Analysis Part 1:***

St. John thinks that all feeling is wrong. He does not value passion or human love. But Jane, while herself unsure, still believes in it.

***Summary Part 2:***

On the journey to Thornfield, [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) thinks about the differences the year away has made in her. Formerly poor and alone, she now has a family and a fortune.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Jane used to be dependent on Rochester for family and money. Now she returns to him for love, and is independent.

***Summary Part 3:***

At Thornfield, though, Jane is astonished to find the house burned down and in ruins.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Jane's dreams in Chapter 25 foreshadowed this destruction.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) learns what happened from the proprietor of a local inn. [Bertha](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/bertha-mason) escaped and set Jane's old bedroom on [fire](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/symbols/fire-and-ice). As the inferno spread, [Rochester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/edward-fairfax-rochester) helped all the servants get out safely. But he could not save Bertha, who stood on the roof laughing maniacally and then jumped to her death. In the collapsing building, Rochester was badly injured: he lost a hand and lost his [sight](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/symbols/eyes). He lives nearby in a modest house called Ferndean.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Bertha uses fire to destroy the room where Jane, who stole Bertha's husband's love, lived. Fire symbolizes Bertha's unrestrained passions and madness. The inferno represents the fatal consequences of Rochester's secrets. He loses his eyes, symbols of his pride and power, as punishment from God.