***Jane Eyre***

***Vol-3 Chapter 2***

***Chapter 28***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* Two days later, the coachman leaves Jane somewhere called Whitcross because her money has run out. Whitcross is just a crossroads, not a town, so she has at least ten miles to walk, but it’s getting dark so she can’t start now.
* Jane walks out into the heath and finds a place on the moor to sleep while she thinks about what to do and where to go.
* Jane feels like she’s being taken care of by Mother Nature; she finds a dry, warm place to sleep and even some berries to eat.
* Jane can’t sleep because she’s so worried about Mr. Rochester and has to pray for him before she can fall asleep.
* In the morning, Jane wakes up early, goes back to Whitcross, and starts walking down one of the roads pretty much at random. After several hours she hears a church bell, which leads her to a small village.
* Jane sees a little bakery in the village; she’s out of money, but she thinks maybe she can trade a silk handkerchief or gloves for food. When she goes into the shop, she’s too ashamed to try bartering, and just asks for a place to sit down.
* Jane questions the woman working at the store about job opportunities for women in the area, but there isn’t really anything available that she could do.
* Jane stays in the little town, wandering around, for over an hour, but can’t think of any reason to ask to go into any of the houses. Eventually she goes up to the door of a nice-looking house and asks if they need a servant, but they don’t. They’re nice to her, but can’t help her.
* Although she wants to slink away and rest in the forest, Jane knows she won’t be able to rest while she’s so hungry.
* Eventually Jane decides that the best thing to do would be to go to the parsonage and ask the local clergyman for help and advice. She goes back to the church, finds the parsonage beside it, and asks for the clergyman, but he’s out of town.
* Jane goes back to the bakery and offers to trade her handkerchief or gloves for a roll or even half of a little cake, but the woman won’t barter with her.
* Jane keeps walking. That evening, she passes a farmhouse, where she sees a farmer eating bread and cheese. She asks him for a piece of bread, which he gives to her without saying anything.
* Jane sleeps in the wood, but she has to keep moving so that nobody finds her, and at one point it rains. She’s soaked.
* The next day, Jane keeps wandering around and asking around for work, but can’t find any. In the evening, she gets a little more food—a bowl of old, sticky, congealed porridge that a girl was going to feed to a pig.
* Jane finally turns away from the village (she’s already on the outskirts of it anyway) and walks toward a hill. She looks for a little hollow in the side of the hill where she can curl up and sleep, but instead she sees a light shining in the distance. She’s pretty much given up hope of finding help anywhere, but she goes toward the light anyway.
* When Jane reaches the light, she discovers that it comes from a large-ish house. Through one window, Jane sees a nice, clean room with some expensive furniture and a fire burning. There’s an old woman in the room knitting, and two young ladies sitting together reading.
* As Jane watches and listens, she figures out that the two young women are actually using dictionaries to help them read and translate books that are in German. Jane learns that the old woman is a servant named Hannah and the ladies are Diana and Mary, and that the ladies are waiting for their brother St. John (pronounced "SIN-jun," fyi) to come home.
* Jane also notices that the ladies are in mourning—they’re wearing black, Hannah talks about missing someone who is "in a better place," and eventually one of them mentions that it was their father who died recently. Good thing they explained, or we and Jane wouldn’t know what was going on, right?
* Jane knocks at the door of the house and asks to speak to the ladies, but Hannah is suspicious and doesn’t want to let her talk to them, although she does offer her a piece of bread and a penny. She tells Jane to leave and bolts the door.
* Jane’s too wet and hungry and exhausted to go anywhere, so she lets herself fall down on the doorstep and waits for God to decide what will happen to her.
* As Jane is lying on the doorstep, St. John arrives home and finds her there. Hannah still doesn’t want to let Jane in, but St. John can tell that Jane isn’t an ordinary beggar and invites her into the house.
* Diana and Mary are very sympathetic to Jane’s plight; they offer her break and milk. Jane eats and drinks so fast that they have to take the food away so she doesn’t make herself sick.
* Jane’s too exhausted to tell her story, but she is quick-thinking enough to invent a pseudonym for herself—Jane Elliott.
* Even without knowing what’s happened to Jane or why she’s there, the three siblings agree to take care of her, and put her to bed in a spare room.

***Synopsis:***

Riding in a coach, Jane quickly exhausts her meager money supply and is forced to sleep outdoors. She spends much of the night in prayer, and the following day she begs for food or a job in the nearby town. No one helps her, except for one farmer who is willing to give her a slice of bread. After another day, Jane sees a light shining from across the moors. Following it, she comes to a house. Through the window, Jane sees two young women studying German while their servant knits. From their conversation Jane learns that the servant is named Hannah and that the graceful young women are Diana and Mary. The three women are waiting for someone named St. John (pronounced “Sinjin”). Jane knocks on the door, but Hannah refuses to let her in. Collapsing on the doorstep in anguish and weakness, Jane cries, “I can but die, and I believe in God. Let me try to wait His will in silence.” A voice answers, “All men must die, but all are not condemned to meet a lingering and premature doom, such as yours would be if you perished here of want.” The voice belongs to “St. John,” who brings Jane into the house. He is the brother of Diana and Mary, and the three siblings give Jane food and shelter. They ask her some questions, and she gives them a false name: “Jane Elliott.”

Jane endures her most difficult trials in this section of the book: she resolves to leave Rochester although it pains her deeply, and she is forced to sleep outdoors and go hungry on the moors in her flight from Thornfield. However, this section is also where Jane proves to herself her endurance, her strength of principle, and her ability to forge new friendships. As she tells herself before leaving Thornfield, “I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself.” Ultimately this self-interest will make her relationships with others, including her eventual marriage, all the more meaningful and rewarding.

Jane’s departure from Thornfield is perhaps the most important decision she makes in the novel. In Rochester she found the love for which she had always yearned, and Thornfield was the first real home she ever knew. In fleeing them, Jane leaves a part of herself behind. But living with Rochester as his mistress would require a self-compromise that Jane is not willing to make. Even before she learns of Bertha’s existence, Jane senses that in marrying Rochester she risks cementing herself into a position of inequality. She fears that Rochester would objectify her and that by “marrying above her station” she would come to the relationship already “in debt” to him. Now Jane sees more clearly than ever that a relationship with Rochester would mean the loss of her self-respect, and of her control over her life. Jane cannot bring herself to do what is morally wrong, simply out of weakness of will and emotional neediness. Despite the happiness and the sense of acceptance that Thornfield and Rochester’s love offer, Jane knows that staying would be a type of self-imprisonment. Jane must choose between emotional exile and spiritual and intellectual imprisonment. She knows she must flee while she can.

Throughout the narrative of Jane’s trials, the reader not only gains insight into Jane’s personal constitution and character, but also into the society in which she lives. When Jane experiences the plight of the poor, the novel presents us with a bleak glimpse of a society in which the needy are shunned out of tightfistedness and distrust.

***Analysis:***

Jane remains on the coach for as long as her small supply of money will allow her; she is ultimately forced to get off at the desolate crossroads of Whitcross, ten miles from the nearest town. Finding nature to be her only ally, she heads deep into the heath and seeks protection under a crag. Filled with longing for Mr. Rochester, Jane is unable to sleep. Eventually, she finds comfort in prayer and sees God’s presence in the majesty of nature. The next day, Jane sets out on the road in order to find a village. She looks for work, but there is none available, and she is reduced to begging for food.

As night falls, Jane walks toward a lit house in the distance among the marshes. She looks through the windows and sees two young ladies, Diana and Mary, and their elderly servant, Hannah. She listens in on their conversation, and discovers that they are awaiting someone named St. John, and that the ladies' father has recently died. Jane knocks on the door and begs Hannah to let her stay for the night, but Hannah fears that Jane will bring others with her. St. John arrives at the same time and rescues her, bringing her into the house. After being revived with some bread and milk, Jane gives them a false name (“Jane Elliott) but is too exhausted to give any additional details, and says she puts herself in their hands. The members of the household privately discuss the matter, and then put Jane to bed.

After seeking autonomy throughout the novel, Jane finally receives it when she leaves Thornfield. However, she soon learns that truly independent living means sleeping outdoors, scavenging for food, and giving up all dignity. She relies more heavily on God in this chapter than in any others, and, indeed, it is a religious man, St. John, who proves to be her salvation. At the chapter's end, Jane relinquishes whatever independence she had previously claimed: "'I will trust you. If I were a masterless and stray dog, I know that you would not turn me from your hearth tonight: as it is, I really have no fear. Do with me and for me as you like." She willfully succumbs to the identity of a stray dog, putting her faith in others rather than in herself.

***Short study:***

Jane finally calms down a bit and decides she will leave. She opens her door and finds Rochester sitting outside the door. He apologizes, although Jane has already forgiven him. She knows he loves her and she does not want to leave him. He discusses options—he wants to send Adèle to a school and then travel with Jane. He says he could have put Bertha in a mental home, but it would have meant an early death, and he did not feel it was right for him to do. Rochester explains that Bertha was an arranged marriage and he did not learn of the insanity in her family until later. His father knew of it beforehand, but only wanted the large dowry that came with Bertha. She became more and more insane and Rochester could not divorce her because she had been diagnosed as insane and according to the laws, one could not divorce an insane spouse.

He moves Bertha to Thornfield and hires Grace to care for her. He then decides he will find a second wife. He describes his search up until the point that he met Jane, whom he observed at great length. Jane stops him at this point and says she must leave Thornfield and she wants to hear no more of the past. She wakes in the middle of the night to a voice telling her to leave, and she does.

In this chapter Mr. Rochester attempts to explain himself and his plan to Jane. The tone and mood of the chapter are one of quiet resolution. Although Mr. Rochester begs her to run away with him, Jane knows she must leave him. Jane forgives Mr. Rochester for his crime and feels he is truly remorseful for what he has done to her. Despite his unhappiness and the lack of fulfillment he finds with Bertha, he is too kind to put her in a living situation that will be harmful to her, a characteristic that is in his favor. Further, Mr. Rochester commanded his employees not to tell Jane about his wife in the attic. This may perhaps explain the servants' and especially Mrs. Fairfax's unusual behavior when Mr. Rochester and Jane's plan for marriage is announced. Again Jane's true nature and her respect for herself shines through as she chooses to accept her pain and leave, despite her desire to stay with the one she loves.

***Notes:***

This lesson provides an overview of Chapter 28 of Charlotte Bronte's ''Jane Eyre,'' during which Jane is alone, hungry, and miserable. Will she find some help and comfort in the end?

Wandering Alone

After two days, Jane is left at a lonely crossroads. The coachman she paid to drive her away from Thornfield tells her the fare she has paid will take her no farther. After alighting, Jane realizes she has left her small parcel of possessions in the carriage, which has already left. As she watches all her worldly possessions get farther away from her, Jane observes, 'now, I am absolutely destitute.'

The place where she is left is not a town, but rather a point where two roads meet. The sign there declares the nearest town is ten miles away. 'Not a tie holds me to human society at this moment,' Jane tells us as she feels the extent of her isolation. Exhausted, having no friend and no place to go, Jane seeks shelter in the bushes. She eats a crust of bread which remains in her pocket and a handful of berries she picks, then she lays herself down to sleep on the ground--alone and unsheltered.

Jane Is Brought Low

After her homeless slumber, Jane rises the next morning, has nothing to eat, and begins her ten mile journey to the nearest town. The average walking speed of a human is about three miles per hour, which means Jane has over three hours of walking to do. The reader will also remember that in the course of the last three days, Jane has had no more than a piece of bread and a few berries to eat. She is doubtless famished and very weak.

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| --- |
| bread |

Remarkably, Jane makes it through those ten miles and finds herself at last in the town. She can't bring herself at first to beg for food, so she tries asking for work instead. There is none to be found. At every turn, Jane is met with suspicion instead of sympathy. Eventually, she tries bartering her gloves or her handkerchief for a piece of bread. The baker refuses, however, and practically accuses her of being a thief. Finally, in desperation, Jane sees a farmer sitting down to his dinner. She approaches him and asks for a piece of bread, which he gives her. With this sustenance, Jane beds down for another night on the ground.

Another Day of Misery

After a cold, wet night of little sleep, Jane spends another day wandering, looking for food. She succeeds in procuring some cold porridge from a child who was about to feed it to her pigs, and this is all the nourishment she gets during the day. Jane appeals to the church, but the pastor has been called away by his father's death. The church's housekeeper offers Jane no assistance so she continues on alone.

Through all this wandering, hunger, and loneliness, Jane remains miserable and brokenhearted over leaving Mr. Rochester. She pines for him, worries about him, and more than once wishes death would relieve her of her burdens and sorrow.

A Light in the Distance

As night closes for the third time on Jane, she sees a light in the distance. As she has tried all available options in town, she elects to walk toward the light. This she does with some difficulty as she is beyond exhausted and completely famished at this point. It is also rainy, cold, and windy.

|  |
| --- |
| lighted window |

Finally, Jane reaches her goal. The light comes from a small home wherein two ladies sit reading German to one another. An old housekeeper sits nearby. The three of them together lament the recent death of the ladies' father. Jane watches them from without, longing not just for comfort but for company.

Hope Follows Despair

Jane eventually steels herself to knock on the cottage door to petition for help. Sadly, the servant--whose name is Hannah--answers the door with as much suspicion as Jane received in town. She will not let Jane in, but she gives her a penny. 'A penny cannot feed me, and I have no strength to go farther,' Jane says in utter despair, 'Don't shut the door--oh, don't, for God's sake!' But Hannah does shut the door, and Jane is again left alone, hungry, cold, and wet.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) soon runs out of money. The carriage drops her off at a crossroads, and she realizes moments later that she left her belongings in the departed coach. With nowhere to turn, she spends the night outdoors contemplating the stars and God.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Stripped of everything and at a crossroads in her life, Jane begins a spiritual trial. She finds comfort in nature, which represents God's presence.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) walks into a nearby village to ask for work, which is scarce. She tries to exchange her gloves and handkerchief for [food](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/symbols/food), but she is refused. Burning with shame but desperately hungry, Jane begs at a farm for some leftover porridge fed to the hogs.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Jane's quest for independence reaches a low point. Though on her own, she is dependent on strangers for charity. Her plight reflects the hardships of England's poor.

***Summary Part 3:***

Weak from hunger and despair, [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) wanders into the wilderness expecting to die. She follows the light of a distant candle and finds a country house (Moor House) with two young women—the sisters [Mary](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) and [Diana Rivers](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters)—inside studying German. Jane knocks, but the servant, Hannah, turns her away as a suspicious beggar.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Like the crossroads, the wilderness represents Jane's lack of direction in her time of trial. The candlelight is a beacon of hope that brings her to Moor House and to God.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) collapses outside, believing death is imminent and vowing to wait for God's will. Just then, the women's brother, St. John (pronounced "Sinjin") arrives home. He brings Jane into the house, where the River sisters give Jane food and a dry bed. Jane does not want to be discovered, so she identifies herself by a the false name of "Jane Elliott."

***Analysis Part 4:***

Jane gives herself up to God's will, as opposed to focusing on her own feelings, and is saved. Nonetheless, like Rochester, she and is not truthful with those who saved her.