***Jane Eyre***

***Vol-3 Chapter 9***

***Chapter 35***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* St. John stays at Moor House for another week. Jane feels tortured by his constant pressure, but the pressure just convinces her even more what a mistake it would be for her to actually marry him.
* The night before he leaves, Jane tries to get reconciled with him, but it just turns into the same argument: she refuses to marry him and tells him that his weird behavior is killing her. He is incredibly angry.
* Jane offers again to go with St. John as his assistant, but not his wife. He insists that’s absolutely impossible, but says that he’ll arrange for her to go as the companion of some other missionary’s wife. That way, he says, she won’t be breaking her promise.
* Jane is outraged at the suggestion that she’s made any formal agreement to go to India, especially with random strangers. She says that she won’t leave England unless it’s more useful for her to leave than stay.
* St. John asks if Jane is going to see Rochester, and she admits it. They part.
* Jane goes back inside and sees Diana. Diana admits that she’s been watching them from the window and asks what’s been going on.
* Jane explains the situation to Diana: St. John doesn’t love her, but has asked her to marry him and go with him to India. Diana is convinced that going to India would kill Jane because the climate is so harsh.
* Jane and Diana discuss St. John’s offer of marriage. Diana agrees with Jane that she could never marry a man who just thought of her as "a useful tool," although she also defends her brother.
* Jane has to see St. John at dinner, and he behaves pretty normally. After dinner, during the family Bible reading, St. John chooses a freaky passage from the book of Revelations, and Jane realizes that he thinks she’s damned.
* As St. John says good night to Jane, he tries again to convince her that marrying him and doing missionary work is God’s will. Jane is awed by his manner and starts to relent—in fact, she’s almost ready to agree to marry him!
* Suddenly, out of thin air, Jane hears Rochester’s voice calling her name. She responds, but can’t figure out where the voice is. Still, she breaks away from St. John and goes to her room to pray in her own way, eager to do something about what she’s heard in the morning.

***Synopsis:***

St. John treats Jane with an icy reserve, asking her several more times to reconsider, but she is unwilling to marry a man who does not love her. When she tells Mary of the conversations she has been having with St. John, Mary is sad that he does not love Jane and marry her and stay there. The evening before St. John leaves, he reads the book of Revelations, looking straight at Jane, implying she will go to hell if she does not marry him and become a missionary. After the reading, he gently urges her to reconsider once more, but she thinks she hears Rochester's voice and runs outside.

Tension builds as St. John continues to pressure Jane to accept his proposal. St. John doles out his punishment emotionally as he uses Jane's need for acceptance against her. At times he drives Jane to tears because of his icy silence. After an unusually trying day, Jane is almost at the point of saying yes to the man when she hears the voice of Mr. Rochester call her name. Hearing this beloved voice both breaks the spell St. John holds over Jane and also reminds her of the reality of love.

This chapter builds on the theme of love with its discussion of the relationship between St. John and Jane. St. John does not love Jane and Jane is aware of this lack of love. While St. John does not understand how a marriage with no love could kill a person, Diana understands and sympathizes with Jane. Meanwhile, the mysterious voice that keeps Jane from saying yes to St. John adds to the Gothic feel of the novel.***Short Study:***

During the following week, St. John continues to pressure Jane to marry him. She resists as kindly as she can, but her kindness only makes him insist more bitterly and unyieldingly that she accompany him to India as his wife. Diana tells Jane that she would be a fool to go to India with St. John, who considers her merely a tool to aid his great cause. After dinner, St. John prays for Jane, and she is overcome with awe at his powers of speech and his influence. She almost feels compelled to marry him, but at that moment she hears what she thinks is Rochester’s voice, calling her name as if from a great distance. Jane believes that something fateful has occurred, and St. John’s spell over her is broken.

***Analysis:***

Rather than leaving for Cambridge the next day, St. John delays his trip for a week. During that time, he subtly punishes Jane for not obeying him. Remembering that he once saved her life, Jane tries to reconcile with him, asking him to treat her as a kinswoman, rather than a stranger. She tells him she retains her resolution not to marry him, and adds that he is literally killing her with his icy chill. But her words don't help; instead, they make him hate her. St. John accuses her of breaking her promise of going to India, and Jane invokes the reader's memory, asking us to confirm that she never gave him a formal promise. Before going to India, Jane wants to be certain she couldn't be of greater use in England. St. John recognizes that she refers to Rochester, and tells her she should crush this "lawless and unconsecrated" attachment. He then leaves for a walk.

Recognizing that St. John and Jane have quarreled, Diana discusses the situation with Jane. Diana doesn't think Jane would live three months in India, and urges her to reject St. John's proposal. Like Jane, Diana feels it would be crazy for Jane to chain herself to a man who sees her as nothing but a useful tool. Following dinner that evening, St. John prays for Jane and she feels veneration for his talent and oratorical powers. At this moment, Jane is tempted to yield to his influences and marry him. All the house is quiet, except for St. John and Jane. Suddenly, she feels an electric shock pass through her body, and the words, "Jane! Jane! Jane!" repeated in Rochester's voice. For Jane, this is not superstition, but nature, saving her from a grave error. Now she is able to resist St. John's power.

Notice that the imagery in this chapter continues to develop St. John's inhumanity: he is "no longer flesh, but marble"; his eye is "a cold, bright, blue gem"; and his heart seems made of "stone or metal." For Jane, his coldness is more terrible that Rochester's raging; she asks if her readers know the "terror those cold people can put into the ice of their questions? how much of the fall of the avalanche is in their anger? of the breaking up of the frozen sea in their displeasure?" St. John is associated with falling avalanches and the breaking up of frozen seas, natural events that are unpredictable and uncontrollable. Despite St. John's obvious flaws, Diana and Jane continually remind the reader that he is a "good man." This goodness isn't obvious in Jane's depiction of him. For a twenty-first-century reader, even his missionary zeal is morally suspect, because it shows his participation in the colonialist project, which resulted in violence and the violation of native peoples. The goal of this project was to represent native peoples as "savages," in need of British guidance and enlightenment. St. John's coldheartedness suggests the brutality and self-serving function of colonialism. Jane claims St. John "forgets, pitilessly, the feelings and claims of little people, in pursuing his own large views": imagine the damage he will inflict on any native people who resist him; like Jane, they will be "blighted" by his merciless egotism.

Yet Jane is drawn to this merciless man, as if she wants to lose herself. By the end of the chapter, she is tempted to stop struggling with him, and "rush down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence, and there lose my own." She is saved, not by her own powers, but by the supernatural. A major change in Jane's life is once again signaled by a psychic event. As she is about to accept St. John's wishes, Jane experiences a sensation as "sharp, as strange, as shocking" as an electric shock. Then she hears Rochester's voice calling her name. So powerful is this voice that Jane cries, "I am coming," and runs out the door into the garden, but she discovers no sign of Rochester. She rejects the notion that this is the devilish voice of witchcraft, but feels it comes from benevolent nature, not a miracle, but nature's best effort to help her — the "universal mother" nurtures Jane again. As during her dark night on the heath, Jane feels the solace of a comforting nature helping and guiding her. She gathers enough force and energy to finally assert her independence from St. John: It is her time to "assume ascendancy." Following this experience, Jane returns to her room to pray in her own way, a way that's different from St. John's, but effective. Jane has already rejected St. John's approach to love, and now she also rejects his way of spirituality. While St. John maintains distance from God, who is always his superior, Jane penetrates "very near a Mighty Spirit; and my soul rushed out in gratitude at His feel" — this spirit, not necessarily the Christian God, provides her with the comfort and peace that St. John never feels.

***Critical Study:***

St. John plans to leave in a week to see friends in Cambridge, and during that time he treats Jane politely but with a certain coldness and distance. She's deeply saddened that he seems so angry with her. The evening before his departure, Jane approaches him in the garden and attempts to patch up their friendship. He questions her refusal of his proposal. Again she offers to go with him as his assistant but not as his wife, an offer St. John rejects "bitterly." Jane realizes that before she can leave England she must know what has become of Rochester.

After dinner Jane and St. John speak again. Jane is on the verge of agreeing to marry him, after receiving encouragement from Diana earlier, almost hypnotized by his religious "sublime moment." Then something extraordinary happens. As the room is bathed in moonlight, she hears the voice of Rochester, calling "Jane! Jane! Jane!" She runs outside shouting, "I am coming! ... Wait for me!" She can't find the source of the sound and concludes that it must have been some quirk of nature. Jane tells St. John she needs to be alone, and in her room she prays and offers thanks.

St. John is strict and exacting and holds Jane, as he holds himself, to high standards. Jane begins to feel restricted as St. John exerts more and more influence over her. She wants to please him but knows that if she marries him she will have to give up all of her freedom, much more than she would have had to give up with Rochester. She begins to waver, though, because she thinks perhaps dedicating herself to missionary work will help to fill the void in her life. The proposal scene is also a moving contrast to the one with Rochester: the earlier one was full of talk of love and passion, and the scene with St. John reflects duty and morality.

Jane's experience of Rochester's voice introduces a mystery. Was it a miracle? Jane rejects the notion instantly: "'Down superstition!' I commented, as that spectre rose up black by the black yew at the gate. 'This is not thy deception, nor thy witchcraft: it is the work of nature. She was roused, and did—no miracle—but her best.'" What does a reader believe? Was it indeed a miracle? Was it Jane's subconscious reminding her of the need to be certain of Rochester's fate?

***Significance:***

Over the several days, St. John continues to insist that Jane marry him and travel to India as his wife. Although she is upset by his coldness to her, Jane still will not accept his proposal, and St. John rejects the possibility of taking her along as his unmarried assistant. Diana supports Jane’s decision, arguing that St. John will only ever treat her as a tool that he can use to achieve his calling to God. Later, St. John is his usual polite and aloof self to Jane while reading from “Revelations,” though he insinuates that Jane will end up in Hell for her refusal to marry him. The next morning, he leaves for Cambridge, and in a sincere moment, again tells Jane she should reconsider her decision while he is gone. She is so moved by his warmth and power of speaking that she is tempted to yield to his desires. Just when she is about to accept him, she has a mystical vision and hears Mr. Rochester's voice from a great distance, calling: "Jane! Jane! Jane!" St. John’s influence over her is broken, and Jane announces that she is going to seek out Mr. Rochester. In her room alone, she prays and feels rejuvenated.

The debate between Jane's need for autonomy and her desire to succumb to St. John's powers continue, but the outcome is rarely in doubt. Instead, Jane's love for Mr. Rochester deepens, and she now has the tools needed for a liberated marriage: self-esteem, the love of others (including relatives), financial independence, and an identity that she has carved out on her own. While St. John would oppress these traits as he led Jane through his missionary work in India, a marriage to Rochester would no longer squelch these qualities.

With such assurance, Jane can now also turn to religion in a positive, healthy manner, one different from all other models she has observed: "I...prayed in my way - a different way to St. John's, but effective in its own fashion. I seemed to penetrate near a Might Spirit; and my soul rushed out in gratitude at His feet." Jane's spirituality has neither the hypocritical postures of Brocklehurst's evangelism, the meekness of Helen Burns's forgiveness, nor the detachment of St. John's proselytizing, but attains a transcendence of love and connection lacking in the philosophies of those three.

***Notes:***

This lesson provides an overview of chapter 35 of ''Jane Eyre.'' In this chapter, Jane endures tension and disdain from St. John after her refusal of his marriage proposal.

## St. John's ''Forgiveness''

In the previous chapter, St. John proposed marriage to Jane as if he were proposing to buy a dairy cow. He thought she would make a useful missionary companion, and therefore he thought they should be married at once and she should accompany him to India. He does not love her and he does not pretend to. Jane, sensibly, refused this proposal but offered to go with him simply as his helper. This was unacceptable to St. John. He thought it wildly scandalous. Indeed, in the 19th century, it would have been strange for a single woman and a single man to travel alone together. He told Jane that he harbors no ill will against her for her refusal, but in chapter 35, his actions suggest otherwise.

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| A Dairy Cow |
| Is Jane a Cow for Sale? |

He is not unkind to Jane in any way, but Jane tells us, ''without one overt act of hostility, one upbraiding word, he contrived to impress me momently with the conviction that I was put beyond the pale of his favor.'' Just to accentuate this, St. John displays an added measure of warmth and affection to Diana and Mary while simultaneously being colder and more aloof to Jane.

## Attempted Reconciliation

Despite his poor treatment of her, Jane still has considerable affection for St. John and she wants very much to be reconciled before he leaves for a fortnight, or two weeks, to visit friends in advance of the commencement of his mission in India. She still refuses to marry him, however, and so he will not be reconciled. It seems for St. John, reconciliation can only come if he gets exactly what he wants.

## St. John Tries Again

Even after Jane reaffirms her resolve to not marry him, St. John revives his effort to convince her otherwise. He tries insinuating that she had promised to go to India with him already (which she did not do) and so to refuse now would be a breach of promise (even though she still affirms she would go with him if she didn't have to marry him). After trying to make her feel guilty on those grounds, he moves on to condemning her eternal soul. He regards her as a wayward lamb and says, 'It remains for me, then, to remember you in my prayers; and to entreat God for you, in all earnestness, that you may not indeed become a castaway.'

## Some Solace from Diana

When Jane returns to the house after this conversation with St. John, she finds that Diana has been watching. Diana apologizes for being nosy, but asks Jane what is going on. Initially, Diana thinks it would be lovely for Jane to marry St. John, and she thinks maybe then he would give up his ideas of going to India as a missionary. When she learns instead that St. John would like to use Jane, rather, as one would use a rented mule, and that he intends to take her with him to India, she is quite on Jane's side. ''Would it not be strange,'' Jane asks, ''to be chained for life to a man who regarded one but as a useful tool?'' ''Insupportable!'' Diana sputters, ''unnatural--out of the question!''

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| A Rented Muel |
| St. John Sees Jane as Useful Beast of Burden |

## St. John Still Not Giving Up

Later that evening, St. John is STILL not vanquished, and he tries once more to persuade Jane to marry him. After reading some verses from the Bible calculated to convince Jane she is disobeying God in refusing to marry him, St. John tells her that she should think over his proposal again. He follows this request with the injunction, ''repent--resolve; while there is yet time.'' It's as if he's saying, ''No pressure, but you'll be consigned to a burning pit in hell if you don't marry me.'' What a guy.

## Jane Falters

Poor Jane is feeling worn down by this time, and she tells us ''I was tempted to cease struggling with him,'' but she knows this would be to surrender herself and her identity. Wanting honestly to know what is right, Jane offers a prayer for guidance. Bronte brings in elements of the supernatural here as, in answer to this prayer, Jane hears a voice--but not the voice of God.

## A Prayer Answered

After her prayer, Jane hears a voice cry out, ''Jane! Jane! Jane!'' She tells us ''it was the voice of a human being--a known, loved, well-remembered voice--that of Edward Fairfax Rochester.'' Of course this couldn't possibly happen in real life, but readers in the Victorian era were quite willing to suspend reality in this way. Jane commands St. John to go away and leave her alone, which he actually does for a change and she ascends to her bedroom in solitude. At the end of the chapter, Jane resolves to some course of action before lying down to sleep. She doesn't tell us exactly what she plans to do, but any reader could speculate that it will have more to do with Mr. Rochester than it will to do with St. John!

## Lesson Summary

Jane spends most of this chapter asserting that she would NOT like to marry St. John. St. John, in turn, spends most of the chapter trying to change Jane's mind. St. John is overbearing and exacting and Jane knows that to marry him would be to consign her soul to captivity. After being subjected to coldness, guilt, and coercion, Jane begins to falter in her resolve to stand up for herself. She offers a prayer for guidance, and in response she hears Mr. Rochester calling out her name. At the end of the chapter she sends St. John away and resolves excitedly on some future action. What does she plan to do? Will she go off to find Mr. Rochester?

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[St. John](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/st-john-rivers) continues to try to convince [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) to marry him. Jane knows that working in India would be a tremendous sacrifice: the heat and heavy labor would soon take her life. She reflects that death doesn't scare her, but that she wants to feel real love in life. [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) agrees that Jane shouldn't go, saying that St. John wants Jane merely to be a tool in his great missionary cause.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Living an independent life, experiencing new feelings, and finding love are all important to Jane. She shows respect for God by trying to find a path that is true to all of her needs.

***Summary Part 2:***

One evening after dinner, [St. John](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/st-john-rivers) reads prayers aloud with such fervor and command that [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) feels compelled to accept his marriage proposal.

***Analysis Part 2:***

The strength of St. John's mission and faith almost overwhelms Jane.

***Summary Part 3:***

Yet just as she's about to give in, [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) hears [Rochester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/edward-fairfax-rochester)'s voice calling for help as if from a great distance: "Jane! Jane! Jane!" She rushes outside and cries out a promise to come to him.

***Analysis Part 3:***

While Jane's heart is "mute" to St. John, it speaks directly to Rochester. Jane's spiritual connection to Rochester restores her independence.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

I am glad you are no relation of mine. I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. I will never come to visit you when I am grown up; and if any one asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty. . . . You think I have no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness; but I cannot live so: and you have no pity. I shall remember how you thrust me back . . . into the red-room. . . . And that punishment you made me suffer because your wicked boy struck me—knocked me down for nothing. I will tell anybody who asks me questions this exact tale. ’Ere I had finished this reply, my soul began to expand, to exult, with the strangest sense of freedom, of triumph, I ever felt. It seemed as if an invisible bond had burst, and that I had struggled out into unhoped-for liberty. . . .

***Explanation 1:***

This quotation, part of Jane’s outburst to her aunt just prior to her departure from Gateshead for Lowood School, appears in Chapter 4. In the passage, Jane solidifies her own orphanhood, severing her ties to the little semblance of family that remained to her (“I will never call you aunt again as long as I live,” she tells Mrs. Reed). Jane asserts her fiery spirit in her tirade, and she displays a keen sense of justice and a recognition of her need for love. Along with familial liberation, the passage marks Jane’s emotional liberation. Jane’s imprisonment in the red-room has its psychological counterpart in her emotional suppression, and it is not until she speaks these words to Mrs. Reed that she feels her “soul begin to expand.” Lastly, the passage highlights the importance of storytelling as revenge and also as a means of empowerment. Jane declares that she will “tell anybody who asks me questions this exact tale”—via authorship, Jane asserts her authority over and against her tyrannical aunt.