

*Emily Bronte's
Wuthering Heights
Abridged*



Adapted by Emma Laybourn

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A Note on the Abridgement

This version of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* aims to make the book more accessible to both the general reader and those whose first language is not English – although a good standard of English is still required.

Many people find *Wuthering Heights* a difficult book because of its complex structure and its sometimes obscure language. It is constructed of layers of narration nested inside each other, like a Russian doll. The outermost layer is narrated by Mr. Lockwood, a visitor to rural Yorkshire where the book is set. Lockwood relates the tales of Nelly Dean, the housekeeper, about the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights and their neighbours at Thrushcross Grange. Then, within Nelly Dean's narration, the innermost parts of the story are told by its protagonists – Heathcliff, Catherine, Isabella and Cathy.

Readers who come to the book expecting a straightforward love story of Catherine and Heathcliff are likely to be confounded. The book spans three generations and thirty years; and Heathcliff and Catherine's love affair forms a relatively small part of it. The story goes back and forth in time, comparing the fates of Catherine and her daughter (also called Catherine or Cathy), and the male hierarchy of Hindley, Heathcliff and Hareton. It is easy to become confused by the similar names, the alternating viewpoints and the tangled relationships of the tale.

This abridgment leaves the book's structure intact, but aims to make it easier to follow by shortening long passages, adding extra paragraph breaks, making it clear who is being referred to, and changing old-fashioned or ambiguous words.

Two characters in particular required extensive simplification: Mr. Lockwood, the educated outsider, who never uses one plain word where three fancy ones will do; and Joseph, the old servant whose dialect can be baffling even to those who (like me) were brought up in Yorkshire. Emily Bronte had a purpose in highlighting the contrast between the speech of these two, showing how different the fashionable urban culture of Lockwood was from the archaic rural life represented by Joseph. The reader of this abridgement should bear in mind that some of this contrast has been lost.

In all, the book has been shortened to around two thirds of its original length. This version should not be relied on by those making a study of *Wuthering Heights*. The full book may be read or downloaded free at Project Gutenberg and numerous other sources. If you enjoy this abridgement, then I would urge you to seek out the original and give it a try.

Emma Laybourn

Emily Bronte used numbered chapters only. I have added chapter titles below in order to aid navigation through the book.

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CHAPTER 1

1801. I have just returned from a visit to my landlord – my solitary neighbour. This is certainly a beautiful country! In all England, I do not believe that I could have found a place so completely removed from society. A perfect misanthropist's heaven: for which Mr. Heathcliff and I are equally suited. A capital fellow! He little imagined how my heart warmed towards him when I saw his black eyes withdraw so suspiciously under their brows, and his fingers shelter themselves jealously in his waistcoat, as I rode up.

'Mr. Heathcliff?' I said.

He nodded.

'Mr. Lockwood, your new tenant, sir. I called to express the hope that I have not inconvenienced you by renting Thrushcross Grange.'

'Thrushcross Grange is my own, sir,' he answered, wincing. 'I should not allow anyone to inconvenience me, if I could hinder it. Walk in!'

The 'walk in' was uttered with closed teeth, meaning, 'Go to the Devil.' However, I decided to accept the invitation: I felt interested in a man even more exaggeratedly reserved than myself.

He unchained the gate and then sullenly led me up the driveway, calling, as we entered the courtyard, 'Joseph, take Mr. Lockwood's horse; and bring up some wine.'

'Here is the whole set of servants, I suppose,' I reflected. 'No wonder the grass grows up between the flagstones.'

Joseph was an old man: very old, perhaps, though hale and sinewy. 'The Lord help us!' he muttered in a peevish undertone, taking my horse and looking at me sourly.

Wuthering Heights is the name of Mr. Heathcliff's house: 'wuthering' being a local word, describing the tumultuous weather to which the place is exposed. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there, indeed: one may guess the power of the north wind by the steep slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. Luckily, the house is strongly built, with narrow windows deeply set in the walls.

Before entering, I paused to admire the grotesque carvings over the door; where amongst crumbling griffins and shameless little boys, I detected the date '1500,' and the name 'Hareton Earnshaw.' I would have asked the surly owner about the place's history, but he seemed impatient, and I had no desire to annoy him.

We walked into the family sitting-room without any introductory lobby or passage: they call it here 'the house.' It usually includes kitchen and parlour; but at Wuthering Heights the kitchen is forced to retreat into another quarter. There were no signs of cooking around the huge fireplace; no glitter of copper saucepans on the walls. At one end, indeed, were ranks of immense pewter dishes, silver jugs and tankards, towering row after row, on a vast oak dresser, to the very roof. The roof beams were bare, except for a wooden frame laden with oatcakes and legs of beef, mutton, and ham.

Above the chimney were several villainous old guns. The floor was of smooth, white stone; the chairs were high-backed and primitive. By the dresser lay a huge pointer, surrounded by a swarm of squealing puppies; and other dogs haunted other recesses.

The house and furniture were of a type that might belong to a homely, northern farmer in knee-breeches. Such a person, seated in his arm-chair with his mug of ale, may be seen everywhere amongst these hills.

But Mr. Heathcliff forms a singular contrast to his home and style of living. He is a dark-skinned gipsy in aspect, in dress and manners as gentlemanly as many a country squire: rather slovenly, perhaps, yet despite his negligence, with an erect and handsome figure; and rather morose. Possibly, some people might suspect him of pride; I feel instinctively his reserve is nothing of the sort, but springs from an aversion to showy displays of feeling. He'll love and hate equally under cover.

No, I'm running on too fast: I bestow my own feelings on him. Mr. Heathcliff may have entirely different reasons for his reserve from mine. Let me hope my nature is unique: my dear mother used to say I should never have a comfortable home; and only last summer I proved myself unworthy of one.

While enjoying a month of fine weather at the sea-coast, I was thrown into the company of a fascinating girl: a goddess in my eyes, as long as she took no notice of me. I 'never told my love'; still, the merest idiot might have guessed from my looks that I was head over heels. She understood me, and looked a return – the sweetest of all looks. And what did I do? I confess it with shame – shrunk icily into myself, like a snail; at every glance retired colder and farther; till finally the poor innocent was led to doubt her own senses, and, overwhelmed with confusion at her supposed mistake, persuaded her mamma to leave. Through this reserve I have gained the reputation of heartlessness; how undeserved, I alone can know.

I took a seat by the hearth, and filled the silence by attempting to caress the dog, who was sneaking wolfishly to the back of my legs, her lip curled up, ready to bite. My caress provoked a long, guttural snarl.

'Let the dog alone,' growled Mr. Heathcliff, aiming a kick at her. 'She's not a pet.' Then, striding to a side door, he shouted, 'Joseph!'

Joseph mumbled in the depths of the cellar, but did not appear; so his master dived down to him, leaving me with the ruffianly bitch and a pair of grim shaggy sheep-dogs. Not anxious to feel their fangs, I sat still; but I unfortunately indulged in winking and making faces at them, and so irritated madam that she suddenly broke into a fury and leapt on my knees.

I flung her back, and quickly put the table between us. This aroused the whole hive: half-a-dozen four-footed fiends, of various sizes, ran out from hidden dens to attack my heels and coat-hems. Keeping them off as best I could with the poker, I was obliged to call for help.

Mr. Heathcliff and his man climbed the cellar steps without hurry; I don't think they moved one second faster than usual, though the hearth was an absolute tempest of worrying and yelping. Happily, an inhabitant of the kitchen made more haste: a lusty dame, with bare arms and fire-flushed cheeks, rushed in flourishing a frying-pan: and used that weapon to such purpose, that the storm subsided magically by the time her master entered on the scene.

'What the devil is the matter?' he asked.

'What the devil, indeed!' I muttered. 'You might as well leave a stranger with a brood of tigers as with those animals, sir!'

'They won't meddle with people who touch nothing,' he remarked, putting a bottle before me. 'The dogs do right to be vigilant. A glass of wine?'

'No, thank you.'

'Not bitten, are you?'

‘If I had been, I would have set my mark on the biter.’

Heathcliff’s face relaxed into a grin.

‘Come, come,’ he said, ‘take a little wine. Guests are so rare in this house that I and my dogs hardly know how to receive them. Your health, sir!’

I bowed, seeing that it would be foolish to sulk. Probably not wishing to offend a good tenant, he began to talk less curtly, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of my new house. I found him very intelligent on these topics; and before I went home, I offered to visit him tomorrow. He did not seem to wish for it. I shall go, all the same. It is astonishing how sociable I feel compared with him.

CHAPTER 2

Yesterday afternoon set in misty and cold. I had half a mind to spend it by my study fire, instead of wading through heath and mud to Wuthering Heights. After dinner, however – (I dine between twelve and one o'clock, since the housekeeper cannot comprehend my request to be served at five) – I stepped into my study to see a servant-girl on her knees surrounded by brushes and coal-scuttles, and raising an infernal dust. So I took my hat, and, after a four-miles' walk, arrived at Heathcliff's garden-gate just in time to escape the first feathery flakes of a snow-shower.

On that bleak hill-top the earth was hard with a black frost, and the air made me shiver through every limb. I jumped over the gate, and, running up the flag-stoned path, knocked vainly for admittance, till my knuckles tingled and the dogs howled.

'Wretched, unwelcoming inmates!' I thought; 'I would not keep my doors barred in the day-time. I will get in!'

I grasped the latch and shook it. Vinegar-faced Joseph put his head out from a round window of the barn.

'What do ye want?' he shouted. 'T' master's down in t' fold. Go round by t' barn, if ye want to speak to him.'

'Is there nobody inside to open the door?' I cried.

'There's nobbut t' missis; and she'll not open it for ye.'

'Why? Can't you tell her who I am, Joseph?'

'No! I'll have no hand in it,' muttered the head, vanishing.

The snow began to drive thickly. I seized the handle to try again; when a young man shouldering a pitchfork appeared in the yard. He called me to follow him, and, after marching through a wash-house, and a paved area containing a coal-shed and pump, we at length arrived in the huge, warm, cheerful room where I was formerly received.

It glowed delightfully in the radiance of an immense fire. Near the table, laid for a plentiful evening meal, I was pleased to observe the 'missis,' a person whose existence I had not suspected. I bowed and waited, thinking she would bid me take a seat. She looked at me, leaning back in her chair, and said nothing.

'Rough weather!' I remarked. 'I'm afraid, Mrs. Heathcliff, I had hard work to make your servants hear me.'

She never opened her mouth. I stared – she stared also, in a cool manner, exceedingly embarrassing and disagreeable.

'Sit down,' said the young man, gruffly. 'He'll be in soon.'

I obeyed; and called the villainous dog, Juno, who deigned, at this second meeting, to move the extreme tip of her tail in acknowledgment.

'A beautiful animal!' I said. 'Do you intend parting with the pups, madam?'

'They are not mine,' said the amiable hostess repellingly.

'Ah, your favourites are these?' I continued, turning to a cushion full of something like cats.

'A strange choice of favourites!' she said scornfully.

Unluckily, it was a heap of dead rabbits. I coughed, and drew closer to the hearth, repeating my comment on the wildness of the evening.

'You should not have come out,' she said, rising to take a canister from the chimney-piece.

Now I had a clear view of her face and figure. She was slender, and scarcely past girlhood: with an admirable form, and the most exquisite little face that I have seen; small features, very fair; golden ringlets hanging loose on her delicate neck; and eyes which would have been irresistible if their expression had been more agreeable. Fortunately for my susceptible heart, the only emotions they showed were scorn and a kind of desperation. The canister was almost out of her reach; I rose to aid her, and she turned on me.

‘I don’t want your help,’ she snapped.

‘I beg your pardon!’

‘Were you asked to tea?’ she demanded, tying an apron over her neat black frock, and standing with a spoon poised over the pot.

‘I shall be glad to have a cup,’ I answered.

‘Were you asked?’ she repeated.

‘No,’ I said, half smiling. ‘You are the proper person to ask me.’

She flung the tea back, spoon and all, and sat down again petulantly; her forehead corrugated, and her red under-lip pushed out, like a child’s ready to cry.

Meanwhile, the young man had slung on a shabby coat, and looked at me sidelong as if there were some mortal feud between us. I could not be sure whether he were a servant or not: his dress and speech were both rough, entirely unlike Mr. and Mrs. Heathcliff’s; his thick brown curls were uncombed, his cheeks unshaven, and his hands tanned like a common labourer’s. Still his attitude was almost haughty, and he showed none of a servant’s haste to attend on Mrs Heathcliff. I thought it best to ignore his curious conduct; and, five minutes afterwards, the entrance of Heathcliff relieved me.

‘You see, sir, I have come, as I promised!’ I exclaimed with pretended cheerfulness. ‘I fear I shall be weather-bound for half an hour, if you can give me shelter for that time.’

‘Half an hour?’ he said, shaking the white flakes from his clothes; ‘I wonder you should choose a snow-storm to ramble about in. You risk being lost in the marshes. Even people familiar with these moors often miss their road on such evenings; and there is no chance of a change at present.’

‘Perhaps one of your lads can guide me – could you spare one?’

‘No, I could not.’

‘Oh, indeed! Well, then, I must trust to my own judgement.’

‘Umph!’

‘Are you going to make the tea?’ demanded he of the shabby coat, shifting his ferocious gaze from me to the young lady.

‘Is *he* to have any?’ she asked, appealing to Heathcliff.

‘Get it ready, will you?’ he answered, so savagely that I was startled. I no longer felt inclined to call Heathcliff a capital fellow.

‘Now, sir, bring forward your chair,’ he said. We all drew round the table and began our meal in silence.

I thought, if I had caused the cloud, it was my duty to dispel it. They could not every day sit so grim and taciturn and scowling.

‘It is strange,’ I began, ‘how custom can mould our tastes: many could not imagine any happiness in a life of such complete exile from the world as this, Mr. Heathcliff; yet, I’ll venture to say, that, surrounded by your family, and with your amiable lady presiding over your home and heart—’

‘My amiable lady!’ he interrupted, with an almost diabolical sneer on his face. ‘Where is she?’

‘Mrs. Heathcliff, your wife, I mean.’

‘Oh, you mean that her spirit guards Wuthering Heights, even though she is dead. Is that it?’

Perceiving my blunder, I tried to correct it. I might have seen there was too great a difference in their ages to make it likely that they were man and wife. He was about forty: she did not look seventeen.

Then it flashed upon me – ‘The clown at my elbow, who is drinking his tea out of a basin, may be her husband: Heathcliff junior, of course. Here is the consequence of being buried alive: she has thrown herself away upon that boor from sheer ignorance that better people existed! A sad pity—I must beware how I cause her to regret her choice.’ The last reflection may seem conceited; it was not. My neighbour struck me as repulsive; I knew that I was tolerably attractive.

‘Mrs. Heathcliff is my daughter-in-law,’ said Heathcliff, corroborating my guess. As he spoke, he gave her a most peculiar look of hatred.

‘Ah, I see now: you are the favoured possessor of the good fairy,’ I remarked, turning to my neighbour.

This was worse than before: the youth grew crimson, and clenched his fist as if to strike me, before smothering the storm in a brutal curse.

‘An unhappy guess, sir,’ said my host; ‘we neither of us own your good fairy; her mate is dead. I said she was my daughter-in-law: therefore, she must have married my son.’

‘And this young man is—’

‘Not my son, assuredly.’ Heathcliff smiled again.

‘My name is Hareton Earnshaw,’ growled the other; ‘and I’d counsel you to respect it!’

‘I’ve shown no disrespect,’ I replied, laughing internally at his dignity.

He fixed his eye on me until I feared I might be tempted either to box his ears or to laugh aloud. I began to feel out of place in that pleasant family circle. The dismal atmosphere overcame the glowing comfort of the fire; and I resolved to be cautious about visiting a third time.

The meal eaten, without a word of conversation, I approached a window to examine the weather. A sorrowful sight I saw: dark night coming down, and sky and hills mingled in one bitter whirl of wind and suffocating snow.

‘I don’t think it’s possible for me to get home now without a guide,’ I exclaimed. ‘The roads will be buried.’

‘Hareton, drive those sheep into the barn porch. They’ll be covered if left in the fold all night,’ said Heathcliff.

‘What must I do?’ I continued, with irritation.

There was no reply; and on looking round I saw only Joseph bringing in a pail of porridge for the dogs, and Mrs. Heathcliff leaning over the fire, diverting herself with burning matches. Joseph, in cracked tones, grated out, ‘I wonder how yah can stand there i’ idleness, when all them’s gone out! But yah’re a nowt, and it’s no use talking – yah’ll never mend yer ill ways, but go right to t’ devil, like yer mother afore ye!’

I imagined, for a moment, that this speech was addressed to me; and, enraged, stepped towards the aged rascal intending to kick him out of the door. Mrs. Heathcliff, however, answered.

‘You scandalous old hypocrite!’ she replied. ‘Don’t provoke me, or I’ll ask the devil to carry you away! Look here, Joseph,’ she continued, taking a long, dark book from a shelf; ‘I’ll show you how far I’ve progressed in the Black Art. The red cow didn’t die by chance; and your rheumatism isn’t caused by bad luck either!’

‘Oh, wicked, wicked!’ gasped the old man; ‘may the Lord deliver us from evil!’

‘Be off, scoundrel, or I’ll have you modelled in wax! and I shall – I’ll not say what – but, you’ll see! Go, I’m looking at you!’

The little witch put a mock malignity into her beautiful eyes, and Joseph, trembling with horror, hurried out, praying, and crying ‘wicked’ as he went. I thought she must be prompted by a sort of dreary fun; and, now that we were alone, I tried to interest her in my distress.

‘Mrs. Heathcliff,’ I said earnestly, ‘with that face, I’m sure you cannot help being good-hearted. Do point out some landmarks by which I may know my way home!’

‘Take the road you came,’ she answered, sitting in a chair, with a candle, and the book open before her. ‘That’s the best advice I can give.’

‘Then, if you hear of me being found dead in a pit full of snow, you won’t feel that it is your fault?’

‘How so? I cannot escort you. They wouldn’t let me go to the end of the garden.’

‘I want you to tell me my way, not to show it,’ I cried; ‘or else to persuade Mr. Heathcliff to give me a guide.’

‘Who? There is him, Earnshaw, Zillah, Joseph and I. Which would you have?’

‘Are there no boys at the farm?’

‘No.’

‘Then I am compelled to stay.’

‘That you may settle with your host,’ she said. ‘I have nothing to do with it.’

‘I hope it will be a lesson to you to make no more rash journeys on these hills,’ cried Heathcliff’s stern voice from the entrance. ‘As to staying here, I don’t keep rooms for visitors: you must share a bed with Hareton or Joseph.’

‘I can sleep on a chair in this room,’ I replied.

‘No, no! I will not permit any one the run of the place while I am asleep!’ said the unmannerly wretch.

With this insult, my patience was at an end. In disgust, I pushed past him into the yard, running into Earnshaw in my haste. It was so dark that I could not see the gate.

At first the young man appeared about to befriend me. ‘I’ll go with him to the park,’ he said.

‘You’ll go with him to hell!’ exclaimed Heathcliff. ‘And who is to look after the horses, eh?’

‘A man’s life matters more than one evening’s neglect of the horses: somebody must go,’ murmured Mrs. Heathcliff, more kindly than I expected.

‘Not at your command!’ retorted Hareton. ‘You’d better be quiet.’

‘Then I hope his ghost will haunt you; and I hope Mr. Heathcliff will never get another tenant till the Grange is a ruin,’ she answered sharply.

‘Hearken, hearken, she’s cursing ’em!’ muttered Joseph. He sat within earshot, milking the cows by the light of a lantern, which I seized. Calling out that I would send it back on the morrow, I rushed to the gate.

‘Master, master, he’s stealing t’ lantern!’ shouted Joseph. ‘Hey, Gnasher! Hey Wolf, hold him, hold him!’

Two hairy monsters flew at my throat, bearing me down, and extinguishing the light; while a mingled guffaw from Heathcliff and Hareton put the lid on my rage and

humiliation. Fortunately, the beasts seemed more bent on yawning than devouring me alive; but they would not let me up, and I was forced to lie till their masters freed me. Then, hatless and trembling with anger, I ordered the rascals to let me out – on their peril to keep me one minute longer – with incoherent threats.

My agitation brought on a copious nosebleed, and still Heathcliff laughed, and still I scolded. I don't know how it would have ended, had not Zillah, the housekeeper, come out to see what was happening. She thought that they had been laying violent hands on me; and not daring to attack her master, she turned on the younger scoundrel.

'Well, Mr. Earnshaw,' she cried, 'Are we going to murder folk on our very door-stones? Look at t' poor lad, he's fair choking! Hush; don't go on so. Come in, and I'll cure that: now hold still.'

With these words she splashed a pint of icy water down my neck, and pulled me into the kitchen. Mr. Heathcliff followed, lapsing into his habitual moroseness.

I was sick and faint; and was thus compelled to accept lodgings under his roof. He told Zillah to give me a glass of brandy, and then passed on to the inner room; while she ushered me to bed.

CHAPTER 3

While leading the way upstairs, she asked me to hide the candle, and not make a noise; for her master had an odd notion about the chamber she would put me in, and never let anybody stay there. I asked the reason. She did not know, she answered: she had only lived there a year or two; and they had many queer goings on.

I fastened my bedroom door and glanced around. The furniture consisted of a chair, a clothes-press, and a large oak case, with squares cut out resembling coach windows. Approaching this, I looked inside, and found it to be a strange sort of old-fashioned couch, designed to make a little, private closet. It enclosed a window-ledge, which served as a table. I slid back the panelled sides, got in with my light, pulled them together again, and felt secure against Heathcliff and everyone else.

I placed my candle on the window-ledge. It had a few mildewed books piled up in one corner; and it was covered with writing scratched on the paint. This writing, however, was nothing but a name repeated in all kinds of lettering, large and small: Catherine Earnshaw, here and there varied to Catherine Heathcliff, and then again to Catherine Linton.

Listlessly I leant my head against the window, and read Catherine Earnshaw – Heathcliff – Linton, till my eyes closed; but then a glare of white letters started from the dark, as vivid as spectres – the air swarmed with Catherines. I discovered my candle-wick was lying on one of the old books, and perfuming the place with an odour of burnt leather. I snuffed out the candle and, still feeling cold and sick, sat up and spread open the book on my knee. It was a Testament, smelling dreadfully musty: a fly-leaf bore the inscription: ‘Catherine Earnshaw, her book,’ and a date some quarter of a century back.

I shut it, and took up another and another, till I had examined all Catherine’s library. The books had been well used, though not for their proper purpose: she had scribbled over every morsel of blank paper in them. There was a regular diary, scrawled in an unformed, childish hand. At the top of one page I was greatly amused to behold an excellent caricature of Joseph, rudely, yet powerfully sketched. I felt an immediate interest in the unknown Catherine, and began to decipher her faded writing.

‘An awful Sunday,’ it began. ‘I wish my father were back again. Hindley is detestable. His conduct to Heathcliff is atrocious – H. and I are going to rebel. We took our first step this evening.

‘All day had been flooding with rain; we could not go to church, so Joseph had a prayer-meeting in the garret. While Hindley and his wife basked downstairs before a comfortable fire – doing anything but reading their Bibles – Heathcliff, myself, and the ploughboy had to take our prayer-books, and sit groaning and shivering, and hoping that Joseph would shiver too, so that he might give us a short sermon. A vain idea! The service lasted three hours; and yet my brother had the cheek to exclaim, when he saw us descending, “What, done already?” He will no longer let us play on Sunday evenings; now the smallest laugh gets us sent into the corner.

“You forget you have a master here,” says the tyrant. “Silence! Boy! was that you? Frances darling, pull his hair as you go by: I heard him snap his fingers.” Frances pulled his hair heartily, and then went and sat on her husband’s knee, and there they were, like two babies, kissing and talking nonsense by the hour – foolish

chatter that we should be ashamed of. We made ourselves as snug as we could under the dresser. I had just fastened our pinafores together, and hung them up for a curtain, when in comes Joseph, tears it down, boxes my ears, and croaks:

“‘T’ master only just buried, and Sabbath not over, and t’ sound o’ t’ gospel still in yer ears, and ye dare be larking! Shame on ye! Sit down, and think o’ yer souls!”

‘He made us sit and read sermon-books. I hurled my dingy volume into the dog-kennel, vowing I hated a good book. Heathcliff kicked his to the same place. Then there was a hubbub!

“‘Master Hindley!’” shouted Joseph. “‘Miss Cathy’s torn th’ back off ‘Th’ Helmet o’ Salvation,’ and Heathcliff’s ripped ‘T’ Broad Way to Destruction!’ It’s fearsome that ye let ’em go on this way!”

‘Hindley hurried up, and hurled us both into the back-kitchen. I took this book and a pot of ink from a shelf, and pushed the house-door open to give me light, and I have been writing for twenty minutes; but Heathcliff is impatient, and proposes that we should take the dairywoman’s cloak, and have a scamper on the moors under its shelter. A pleasant suggestion – we cannot be damper, or colder, out in the rain than we are here.’

I suppose Catherine fulfilled her plan, for the next sentence was tearful.

‘How little did I dream that Hindley would ever make me cry so!’ she wrote. ‘My head aches, till I cannot keep it on the pillow. Poor Heathcliff! Hindley calls him a vagabond, and won’t let him sit with us, nor eat with us any more. He says, he and I must not play together, and threatens to turn him out of the house. He has been blaming our father for treating Heathcliff too kindly; and swears he will reduce him to his right place—’

I began to nod drowsily over the dim page. My eye wandered to the print, and I saw a red ornamented title: ‘Seventy Times Seven, and the First of the Seventy-First. A Pious Discourse delivered by the Reverend Jabez Branderham.’ While I was wondering what Jabez Branderham would make of his subject, I fell asleep.

Alas, for the effects of bad tea and bad temper! What else could have made me pass such a terrible night? I don’t remember another as dreadful.

I began to dream. I thought it was morning; and I had set out on my way home, with Joseph for a guide. The snow was deep; and, as we floundered on, my companion reproached me because I had not brought a pilgrim’s staff: telling me that I could never get into the house without one, and boastfully flourishing his own heavy cudgel.

Then a new idea flashed across me. I was not going home: we were journeying to hear the famous Jabez Branderham preach on seventy times seven sins; and either Joseph or I had committed the ‘First of the Seventy-First,’ and were to be publicly exposed.

We came to the chapel. I have passed it really in my walks a few times; it lies in a hollow, between two hills: a deserted and half-ruined building. However, in my dream, Jabez had a full congregation; and he preached – good God! what a sermon; divided into four hundred and ninety parts, each discussing a separate sin.

Oh, how weary I grew. How I writhed, and yawned! How I pinched myself, and rubbed my eyes, until finally, he reached the ‘First of the Seventy-First.’ Sudden inspiration came to me; I rose to denounce Jabez Branderham.

‘Sir,’ I exclaimed, ‘I have endured the four hundred and ninety heads of your discourse. The four hundred and ninety-first is too much. Fellow-martyrs, have at him! Drag him down, and crush him!’

‘Thou art the Man!’ cried Jabez. ‘Seventy times seven times didst thou gape and yawn. Brethren, execute judgment upon him!’

With that, the whole meeting, lifting their pilgrim’s staves, rushed round me; and I, having no weapon, began to grapple with Joseph for his. Soon the whole chapel resounded with blows: every man attacked his neighbour; and Branderham tapped so loudly on the pulpit that, to my unspeakable relief, the sounds woke me.

And what had suggested the tremendous tumult? Merely the branch of a fir-tree that touched my window as the blast wailed by, and rattled its dry cones against the panes! I listened, then turned and dozed, and dreamt again: if possible, still more disagreeably than before.

This time, I remembered I was lying in the oak closet, and I heard distinctly the gusty wind, and the driving of the snow. I heard, also, the fir bough tapping: but it annoyed me so much, that I resolved to silence it. I thought I rose and tried to unfasten the casement; but the hook was stuck.

‘I must stop it, nevertheless!’ I muttered, knocking my knuckles through the glass, and stretching an arm out to seize the branch; instead of which, my fingers closed on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand!

The intense horror of nightmare came over me: I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed, ‘Let me in – let me in!’

‘Who are you?’ I asked, struggling to free myself.

‘Catherine Linton,’ it replied, shiveringly (why did I think of Linton? I had read Earnshaw twenty times for Linton). ‘I’m come home: I’d lost my way on the moor!’ As it spoke, I discerned, obscurely, a child’s face looking through the window. Terror made me cruel; and, finding I could not shake the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bedclothes. Still it wailed, ‘Let me in!’ and kept its tenacious grip, maddening me with fear.

‘How can I?’ I said at last. ‘Let me go, if you want me to let you in!’

The fingers relaxed. I snatched my hand through the hole, hurriedly piled the books up in a pyramid against it, and stopped my ears to shut out the lamentable prayer. I seemed to keep them closed above a quarter of an hour; yet, the instant I listened again, there was the doleful cry moaning on!

‘Begone!’ I shouted. ‘I’ll never let you in, not if you beg for twenty years.’

‘It is twenty years,’ mourned the voice: ‘I’ve been a waif for twenty years!’ There began a feeble scratching outside, and the pile of books moved. I tried to jump up; but could not stir a limb; and I yelled aloud, in a frenzy of fright.

Hasty footsteps approached my chamber door; somebody pushed it open, and a light glimmered through the squares at the top of the bed. I sat shuddering, and wiping the perspiration from my forehead. The intruder appeared to hesitate. At last, he said, in a half-whisper, plainly not expecting an answer, ‘Is anyone here?’

I thought it best to confess my presence; for I knew Heathcliff’s voice, so I turned and opened the panels.

Heathcliff stood near the door, in his shirt and trousers; with a candle dripping over his fingers, and his face as white as the wall behind him. The first creak of the oak panel startled him like an electric shock: the candle leaped from his hold, and his agitation was so extreme that he could hardly pick it up.

‘It is only your guest, sir,’ I called out, to spare him the humiliation of exposing his cowardice further. ‘I screamed in my sleep, owing to a frightful nightmare. I’m sorry I disturbed you.’

‘Oh, God confound you, Mr. Lockwood!’ My host set the candle on a chair, finding it impossible to hold it steady. ‘And who showed you into this room?’ he continued, grinding his teeth. ‘Who was it? I’ve a good mind to turn them out of the house!’

‘It was Zillah,’ I replied, standing and rapidly pulling on my clothes. ‘I should not care if you did, Mr. Heathcliff; she richly deserves it. I suppose that she wanted to get another proof that the place was haunted. Well, it is – swarming with ghosts and goblins! You have good reason to shut it up, I assure you!’

‘What do you mean?’ asked Heathcliff, ‘and why are you getting dressed? Lie down and sleep, since you are here; but, for heaven’s sake! don’t repeat that horrid noise. Nothing could excuse it, unless you were having your throat cut!’

‘If the little fiend had got in at the window, she probably would have strangled me!’ I returned. ‘That minx, Catherine Linton, or Earnshaw, or however she was called – she must have been a changeling. Wicked little soul! She told me she had been walking the earth these twenty years: a just punishment for her sins, no doubt!’

Scarcely were these words uttered when I recollected seeing Heathcliff’s name with Catherine’s in the book. I blushed, and hastened to add, ‘The truth is, sir, I passed the first part of the night in—’

Here I stopped again: I was about to say ‘reading those old books,’ but that would have revealed my knowledge of their contents. So I went on—‘in spelling over the name scratched on that window-ledge, an occupation to set me asleep, like counting, or—’

‘What can you mean by talking in this way to me!’ thundered Heathcliff savagely. ‘How dare you? God! he’s mad to speak so!’ And he struck his forehead with rage.

He seemed so powerfully affected that I took pity on him. I told him my dreams; affirming I had never heard the name of ‘Catherine Linton’ before, but reading it had produced an impression which had affected my sleep.

Heathcliff gradually fell back into the shelter of the bed, as I spoke; finally sitting down almost concealed behind it. I guessed, however, by his irregular breathing, that he struggled to vanquish violent emotion. Not liking to show that I had heard him, I continued to dress rather noisily, looked at my watch, and commented: ‘Not three o’clock yet! I could have sworn it was six. We must surely have retired to rest at eight!’

‘At nine in winter, and rise at four,’ said my host, suppressing a groan: and, as I fancied, dashing a tear from his eyes. ‘Mr. Lockwood,’ he added, ‘you may go into my room: you’ll only be in the way, coming down-stairs so early: and your outcry has sent sleep to the devil for me.’

‘For me, too,’ I replied. ‘I’ll walk in the yard till daylight, and then I’ll be off; and you need not dread my return.’

‘Take the candle, and go where you please,’ he said. ‘I shall join you directly. Keep out of the yard, though, the dogs are unchained; and Juno guards the house. You can only ramble about the steps and passages. But, away with you! I’ll come in two minutes!’

I obeyed, quitting the chamber; then, not knowing which way to go, I stood still, and saw a piece of superstition on the part of my landlord which belied, oddly, his

apparent sense. He got on to the bed, and wrenched open the window, bursting, as he pulled at it, into an uncontrollable passion of tears.

‘Come in! come in!’ he sobbed. ‘Cathy, do come. Oh, do – once more! Oh! my heart’s darling! hear me this time, Catherine, at last!’ The spectre gave no sign of being; but the snow and wind whirled wildly through, blowing out the light.

There was such anguish in his grief and raving, that I was moved to compassion; half angry to have listened, and vexed at having related my ridiculous nightmare, since it produced that baffling agony. I went cautiously downstairs, and landed in the back-kitchen, where a gleam of fire enabled me to relight my candle. Nothing was stirring except a grey cat, which crept from the ashes with a querulous mew.

Two benches nearly enclosed the hearth; on one of these I stretched myself, and the cat mounted the other. We were both of us nodding, when Joseph came shuffling down a wooden ladder that vanished in the roof, through a trapdoor: the way to his garret, I suppose. He cast a sinister look at the fire, swept the cat from its bed, and sitting down in its place, began to stuff a pipe with tobacco. My presence was evidently a piece of impudence too shameful for remark: he smoked silently, arms folded; then heaved a deep sigh and left as solemnly as he came.

A stronger footstep entered next; and now I opened my mouth for a ‘good-morning,’ but closed it again: for Hareton Earnshaw was cursing every object he touched, while he rummaged for a spade to dig through the snowdrifts. He glanced at me without any greeting.

Leaving my hard couch, I moved to follow him. He thrust at an inner door with the end of his spade, meaning that there was the place where I must go.

It opened into the main room, where the females were already astir. Zillah was urging flames up the chimney with a colossal bellows; and Mrs. Heathcliff, kneeling on the hearth, was reading a book by the aid of the blaze. She held her hand between the furnace-heat and her eyes, and seemed absorbed in it; stopping only to chide the servant for covering her with sparks, or to push away a dog that snoozled its nose into her face.

I was surprised to see Heathcliff there also. He stood by the fire, his back towards me, just finishing a stormy scene with poor Zillah.

‘And you, you worthless ___’ he broke out, turning to his daughter-in-law, and using a term generally represented by a dash _____. ‘There you are, at your idle tricks again! The rest of them earn their bread – you live on my charity! Put your trash away, and find something to do. You shall pay me for the plague of having you eternally in my sight – do you hear, damnable jade?’

‘I’ll put my trash away,’ answered the young lady, throwing her book on a chair. ‘But I’ll not do anything except what I please!’

Heathcliff lifted his hand, and she sprang away. Having no desire to be entertained by a fight, I stepped forward briskly, as if eager to warm myself at the fire. Heathcliff placed his fists in his pockets; Mrs. Heathcliff curled her lip, and walked to a seat far off, where she played the part of a statue during the rest of my stay.

That was not long. I declined breakfast, and, at the first gleam of dawn, escaped into the free air, now clear, and still, and cold as ice.

Before I reached the end of the garden, my landlord called to me to stop, and offered to accompany me across the moor. It was well he did, for the whole hill was one billowy, white ocean; the swells and falls gave no sign of the rises and depressions in the ground. Many pits were filled level; and entire ranges of mounds, the refuse of the quarries, were blotted from the scene of my walk yesterday. I had

noticed a line of upright stones along the road, daubed with whitewash to serve as guides in the dark or in the snow: but almost all traces of them had vanished. My companion had to warn me frequently to steer to right or left, when I imagined I was following the road.

We talked little, and he left me at the entrance of Thrushcross Park; then I pushed forward alone. The distance from the gate to the grange is two miles. I believe I managed to make it four, what with losing myself among the trees, and sinking up to the neck in snow. The clock chimed twelve as I entered the house; so I had taken exactly an hour for every mile of the way from Wuthering Heights.

My housekeeper and servants rushed to welcome me, exclaiming that they thought that I had perished last night. I bid them be quiet, and numbly dragged upstairs. After putting on dry clothes, and pacing to and fro for thirty minutes to restore warmth to my limbs, I retired to my study, feeble as a kitten: almost too weak to enjoy the cheerful fire and steaming coffee which the servant had prepared for me.

CHAPTER 4

What vain weathercocks we are! I, who had determined to keep away from all society, and thanked my stars that I had found solitude – I, weak wretch, after struggling with low spirits all day, was finally compelled to yield. When Mrs. Dean, the housekeeper, brought in supper, I asked her to sit down while I ate it; hoping she would prove a gossip, and either enliven me or lull me to sleep by her talk.

‘You have lived here a considerable time,’ I began; ‘did you not say sixteen years?’

‘Eighteen, sir: I came when the mistress was married, and after she died, the master kept me on as his housekeeper.’

‘Indeed.’

There followed a pause. She was not a gossip, I feared. However, having meditated for a while, she said, ‘Ah, times are greatly changed since then!’

‘You’ve seen a good many changes, I suppose?’

‘I have: and troubles too,’ she said.

‘I’ll turn the talk on my landlord’s family!’ I thought to myself. ‘And that pretty girl-widow; I should like to know her history.’ So I asked Mrs. Dean why Heathcliff let Thrushcross Grange, and preferred living in such an inferior house as Wuthering Heights.

‘Is he not rich enough to keep the estate in good order?’ I inquired.

‘Rich, sir!’ she returned. ‘Nobody knows how much money he has. He’s rich enough: but he’s very close-handed. It’s strange people should be so greedy, when they are alone in the world!’

‘He had a son?’

‘Yes – he is dead.’

‘And that young lady, Mrs. Heathcliff, is the son’s widow?’

‘Yes.’

‘Where did she come from originally?’ I asked.

‘Why, sir, she is my late master’s daughter: Catherine Linton was her maiden name. I nursed her, poor thing! I did wish Mr. Heathcliff would move here, and then we might have been together again.’

‘What! Catherine Linton?’ I exclaimed, astonished. But a minute’s reflection convinced me it was not my ghostly Catherine. ‘Then,’ I continued, ‘my predecessor’s name was Linton?’

‘It was.’

‘And who is that Hareton Earnshaw, who lives with Mr. Heathcliff? Are they relations?’

‘No; he is the late Mrs. Linton’s nephew.’

‘The young lady’s cousin, then?’

‘Yes; and her husband was her cousin also: one on the mother’s, the other on the father’s side: Heathcliff married Mr. Linton’s sister.’

‘I see the house at Wuthering Heights has “Earnshaw” carved over the front door. Are they an old family?’

‘Very old, sir; and Hareton is the last of them, as our Miss Cathy is of the Lintons. Have you been to Wuthering Heights? I beg pardon for asking; but I should like to hear how she is!’

‘Mrs. Heathcliff?’ I said. ‘She looked very well, and very handsome; yet, I think, not very happy.’

‘Oh dear, I don’t wonder! And how did you like the master?’

‘A rough fellow, Mrs. Dean, is he not?’

‘Rough as a saw-edge, and hard as whinstone! The less you meddle with him the better.’

‘He must have had some ups and downs in life to make him so. Do you know his history?’

‘It’s a cuckoo’s, sir,’ she said; ‘I know all about it: except where he was born, and who were his parents, and how he got his money. And Hareton has been cast out like an unfledged sparrow! The unfortunate lad is the only one in all this parish that does not guess how he has been cheated.’

‘Will you tell me something of them? Be good enough to sit and chat an hour.’

‘Oh, certainly, sir! I’ll just fetch my sewing, and then I’ll sit as long as you please. But you’ve caught cold, and must have some gruel to drive it out.’

The worthy woman bustled off, and I crouched nearer the fire. My head felt hot, and the rest of me chilly: moreover, I was excited through my nerves and brain, and fearful of serious effects from the incidents of to-day and yesterday. She returned with a steaming basin and a work-basket; and, having placed the former on the hob, she sat down and began her tale.

Before I came to live here, she began, I was almost always at Wuthering Heights; because my mother had nursed Mr. Hindley Earnshaw, Hareton’s father, and I got used to playing with the children. I ran errands, and helped to make hay, and did work about the farm.

One fine summer morning, Mr. Earnshaw, the old master, came downstairs dressed for a journey. He turned to Hindley, and Cathy, and me – for I ate my porridge with them – and he said to his son, ‘Now, my bonny man, I’m going to Liverpool today. What shall I bring you? You may choose what you like: only let it be small, for I shall walk there and back: sixty miles each way!’

Hindley named a fiddle, and then he asked Miss Cathy. She was hardly six years old, but she could ride any horse in the stable, and she chose a whip. He did not forget me; for he had a kind heart, though he was rather severe sometimes. He promised to bring me a pocketful of apples and pears, and then he kissed his children, said good-bye, and set off.

His absence seemed long to us, and often did little Cathy ask when he would be home. Mrs. Earnshaw expected him by supper-time on the third evening; there were no signs of him, however, and at last the children got tired of running down to the gate to look. Then it grew dark; but they begged to be allowed to stay up; and, just about eleven o’clock, the door-latch was raised, and in stepped the master. He threw himself into a chair, laughing and groaning, saying he would not have such another walk for three kingdoms.

Then he opened his great-coat, saying, ‘See here, wife! I was never so tired out with anything in my life; but you must take it as a gift of God; though it’s as dark almost as if it came from the devil.’

We crowded round, and over Miss Cathy’s head I had a peep at a dirty, ragged, black-haired child; big enough to walk and talk. Indeed, it looked older than Catherine; yet when it was set on its feet, it only stared round, and repeated some gibberish that nobody could understand. I was frightened, and Mrs. Earnshaw was

ready to throw it out: asking how he could bring that gipsy brat into the house, when they had their own children to feed? Was he mad?

The master tried to explain; but he was half dead with fatigue, and all that I could make out was a tale of his seeing it starving and homeless in the streets of Liverpool, where he picked it up and inquired for its owner. Not a soul knew to whom it belonged, he said; and he thought it better to take it home with him, rather than leave it as he found it. Well, the conclusion was, that my mistress grumbled herself calm; and Mr. Earnshaw told me to wash it, and give it clean things, and let it sleep with the children.

Hindley and Cathy looked on meanwhile: then both began searching their father's pockets for their presents. Hindley was a boy of fourteen, but when he drew out what had been a fiddle, crushed to pieces in the great-coat, he blubbered aloud; and Cathy, when she learned the master had lost her whip in attending on the stranger, spat at the stupid little thing; earning a blow from her father, to teach her cleaner manners.

They refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room; so I put it on the landing, hoping it might be gone on the morrow. It crept to Mr. Earnshaw's door, and there he found it. I was obliged to confess, and for my inhumanity was sent out of the house.

On coming back a few days afterwards (for I did not consider my banishment perpetual), I found they had christened the child 'Heathcliff'. It was the name of a son who had died in childhood, and it served him both for Christian and surname. Miss Cathy and he were now very close; but Hindley hated him: and to say the truth I did too. We plagued him shamefully, and the mistress never put in a word on his behalf.

He seemed a sullen, patient child; hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment: he would stand Hindley's blows without shedding a tear, and my pinches only made him draw in a breath and open his eyes, as if he had hurt himself by accident. Old Earnshaw was furious when he discovered his son persecuting the fatherless child. He took to Heathcliff strangely, believing all he said (for that matter, he said precious little, and generally the truth), and favouring him above Cathy, who was mischievous and wayward.

So, from the very beginning, he bred bad feeling in the house. By the time of Mrs. Earnshaw's death, two years after, Hindley had learned to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections; and he grew bitter with brooding over these injuries. I sympathised; but when the children fell ill with the measles, and I had to tend them, I changed my idea.

Heathcliff was dangerously sick; and would have me constantly by his pillow. However, I will say this, he was the quietest child that ever nurse watched over. Cathy and her brother harassed me terribly: he was as uncomplaining as a lamb; though hardness, not gentleness, made him so.

He got through it, and the doctor praised me for my care. I was vain of his praise, and softened towards the being by whom I earned it. Still I couldn't dote on Heathcliff, and I wondered what my master saw to admire in the sullen boy, who never gave him any sign of gratitude. He was not insolent, he was simply unfeeling, though knowing perfectly the hold he had on Mr Earnshaw's heart. He had only to speak and all the house would be obliged to bend to his wishes.

For instance, I remember Mr. Earnshaw once bought a couple of colts, and gave the lads each one. Heathcliff took the handsomest, but it fell lame, and he said to Hindley:

‘You must exchange horses with me: I don’t like mine. If you won’t I shall tell your father of the three thrashings you’ve given me this week, and show him my bruised arm.’

Hindley put out his tongue, and cuffed his ears. ‘Off, dog!’ he cried, threatening him with an iron weight.

‘Throw it,’ Heathcliff replied, ‘and then I’ll tell how you boasted that you would turn me out of doors as soon as he died.’

Hindley threw it, hitting him on the breast, and down he fell, but staggered up immediately, breathless and white; and, had not I prevented it, he would have gone like that to the master, and got full revenge.

‘Take my colt, Gipsy, then!’ said young Earnshaw. ‘And I pray that he may break your neck: take him, and be damned, you beggarly imp of Satan. I hope he’ll kick out your brains!’

Heathcliff had gone to loose the beast, when Hindley finished his speech by knocking him under its feet, and then ran away as fast as he could. I was surprised to see how coolly the child gathered himself up, and went on exchanging saddles, before sitting down on a bundle of hay to recover from the violent blow. I persuaded him to blame his bruises on the horse: he didn’t mind what tale was told, since he had what he wanted. He complained so seldom, indeed, that I really thought him not vindictive: I was deceived completely, as you will hear.

CHAPTER 5

Over time Mr. Earnshaw began to fail. He had been active and healthy, yet his strength left him suddenly; and he grew irritable. Any suspected slights of his authority nearly threw him into fits. This happened especially if any one attempted to impose upon his favourite: he seemed to think that, because he liked Heathcliff, we all hated him. It was a disadvantage to the lad; for the kinder among us humoured the master, nourishing the child's pride and black tempers. But twice or thrice, Hindley's scorn roused the old man to a fury: he seized his stick to strike him, and shook with rage because he could not do it.

At last, our curate advised that Hindley should be sent to college; and Mr. Earnshaw agreed, though with a heavy spirit, for he said 'Hindley was nought, and would never thrive.'

I hoped we should have peace now. I fancied the master's discontent arose from his family disagreements; but really, you know, sir, it was his age and sinking frame. Still, we might have got on well enough, but for two people – Miss Cathy, and Joseph, the servant. He was the most wearisome self-righteous Pharisee that ever ransacked a Bible to take the promises to himself and fling the curses to his neighbours. His sermonising made a great impression on Mr. Earnshaw; and the more feeble the master became, the more influence Joseph gained. He worried him relentlessly about his soul, and about ruling his children. He encouraged him to regard Hindley as a sinner; and, night after night, he grumbled out a long string of tales against Heathcliff and Catherine: always remembering to heap the heaviest blame on the latter.

Certainly she put us past our patience fifty times a day. From day-break to bed-time, she was in mischief. Her spirits were always high, her tongue always going – singing, laughing, and plaguing everybody. A wild, wicked slip she was – but she had the bonniest eye, the sweetest smile, and lightest foot in the parish: and, after all, I believe she meant no harm; for when she made you cry, she would cry too, and ask you to comfort her.

She was much too fond of Heathcliff. The greatest punishment we could invent was to keep her separate from him: yet she got chided more than any of us on his account. In play, she liked to command, but I would not bear her slapping and ordering me; and so I let her know.

Now, Mr. Earnshaw had always been strict and grave with his children; and Catherine had no idea why her father should be crosser and less patient than he used to be. His peevish reproofs wakened in her a naughty delight to provoke him: she was never so happy as when we were all scolding her, and she defying us with her bold, saucy look, ridiculing Joseph's religious curses, and showing how she had more power over Heathcliff than her father had. The boy would do her bidding in anything. After behaving badly all day, she sometimes came fondling to make it up with her father at night.

'Nay, Cathy,' the old man would say, 'I cannot love thee, thou'rt worse than thy brother. Go, say thy prayers, child, and ask God's pardon!' That made her cry, at first; but then being continually repulsed hardened her, and she laughed if I told her to say she was sorry.

But the hour came, at last, that ended Mr. Earnshaw's troubles on earth. He died quietly in his chair one October evening, seated by the fire-side. A high wind

blustered round the house, and roared in the chimney. We were all together – I busy at my knitting, and Joseph reading his Bible.

Miss Cathy had been sick, and that made her still; she leant against her father's knee, and Heathcliff was lying on the floor with his head in her lap. I remember the master stroking her bonny hair and saying, 'Why canst thou not always be a good lass, Cathy?' And she turned her face up to his, and laughed, and answered, 'Why cannot you always be a good man, father?'

But when she saw him vexed again, she kissed his hand, and said she would sing him to sleep. She began singing very low, till his fingers dropped from hers, and his head sank on his breast. Then I told her to hush, and not stir, for fear she should wake him.

We all kept as mute as mice a full half-hour; then Joseph got up and said that he must rouse the master for prayers and bed. He called him by name, and touched his shoulder; but he would not move: so he took the candle and looked at him. I thought there was something wrong as he set down the light; and seizing the children, he whispered to them to 'go upstairs, and make little din – they might pray alone that evening – he had something to do.'

'I shall bid father good-night first,' said Catherine, putting her arms round his neck. At once she screamed out, 'Oh, he's dead, Heathcliff! he's dead!' And they both set up a heart-breaking cry.

I joined my wail to theirs, but Joseph told me to run to Gimmerton for the doctor and the parson. I could not guess what use either would be. However, I went, through wind and rain, and brought the doctor back with me; the parson said he would come in the morning.

When I went to the children's room, I saw they had never lain down, though it was past midnight; but they were calmer, and did not need me to console them. The little souls were comforting each other with better thoughts than I could have hit on. No parson in the world ever pictured heaven so beautifully as they did, in their innocent talk; and, while I sobbed and listened, I could not help wishing we were all there safe together.

CHAPTER 6

Mr. Hindley came home to the funeral; and to our amazement, brought a wife with him. What she was, and where she was born, he never informed us: probably, she had neither money nor name to recommend her, or he would scarcely have kept the marriage secret from his father.

I thought she was half silly: when the mourners came before the burial, she ran into her room, sat there shivering and clasping her hands, and asked repeatedly, 'Are they gone yet?' Then she trembled, and fell a-weeping. When I asked what was the matter, she answered, she didn't know; but she felt so afraid of dying!

I imagined her as little likely to die as myself. She was rather thin, but young, and pink-cheeked, and her eyes sparkled as bright as diamonds. I did remark, to be sure, that mounting the stairs made her breathe very quick, and that she coughed troublesomely sometimes: but I knew nothing of what these symptoms meant.

Young Earnshaw was altered in the three years of his absence. He spoke and dressed quite differently; and, on the day of his return, he told Joseph and me that we must keep ourselves in the back-kitchen, and leave the main room for him. He would have carpeted a small spare room as a parlour for his wife; but she expressed such pleasure at the white floor and huge glowing fireplace, the pewter dishes and wide space, that he dropped the intention.

She expressed pleasure, too, at finding a sister among her new family, and she prattled to Catherine, and kissed her, and gave her many presents, at the beginning. Her affection tired very soon, however, and when she grew peevish, Hindley became tyrannical. A few words from her, expressing a dislike of Heathcliff, roused Hindley's old hatred of the boy. He drove Heathcliff from their company to the servants, deprived him of the curate's lessons, and insisted that he should labour out of doors instead.

Heathcliff bore this pretty well at first, because Cathy taught him what she learnt, and worked or played with him in the fields. They were both growing up as rude as savages; the young master not caring what they did so long as they kept clear of him. He would not even have made them go to church, only Joseph and the curate reprimanded him when they were absent; then he ordered Heathcliff to be flogged, and Catherine to have no dinner.

But it was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day, and they laughed at punishments. Joseph might thrash Heathcliff till his arm ached; they forgot everything the minute they were together again: or at least the minute they had thought of some naughty plan of revenge. I saw them growing more reckless daily, but did not dare to speak a word, for fear of losing the small power I still had over them.

One Sunday evening, Cathy and Heathcliff were banished from the sitting-room, for making a noise; and when I went to call them to supper, I could find them nowhere. We searched the house, and the yard and stables; they were invisible. At last, Hindley in fury told us to bolt the doors, and swore nobody should let them in that night.

The household went to bed. I opened my window and put my head out to listen, though it rained, determined to let them in if they returned. In a while, I heard steps coming up the road, and the light of a lantern glimmered through the gate. I threw a

shawl over my head and ran to prevent them from waking Mr. Earnshaw by knocking. There was Heathcliff, by himself: it gave me a start to see him alone.

‘Where is Miss Catherine?’ I cried.

‘At Thrushcross Grange,’ he answered; ‘and I would have been there too, but they had not the manners to ask me to stay.’

‘Well, you will catch it!’ I said: “What in the world made you wander to Thrushcross Grange?”

‘Let me get off my wet clothes, and I’ll tell you all about it, Nelly,’ he replied. While he undressed, he continued: ‘Cathy and I escaped for a ramble, and getting a glimpse of the Grange lights, we thought we would just go and see if the Lintons passed their Sunday evenings standing shivering in corners, while their father and mother sat eating and drinking, and singing and laughing. Do you think they do?’

‘Probably not,’ I responded. ‘They are good children, no doubt, and don’t deserve the treatment you get for your bad conduct.’

‘Nonsense, Nelly!’ he said. ‘We ran from the top of the Heights without stopping – Catherine completely beaten in the race, because she was barefoot. You’ll have to seek for her shoes in the bog tomorrow. We crept through a broken hedge, groped our way up the path, and planted ourselves under the drawing-room window. The curtains were only half closed, and we could look in by clinging to the ledge.

‘Ah! it was beautiful – a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold. Old Mr. and Mrs. Linton were not there; Edgar and his sister had it to themselves. Shouldn’t they have been happy? We should have thought ourselves in heaven!

‘And now, guess what your good children were doing? Isabella – I believe she is eleven, a year younger than Cathy – lay screaming at the far end of the room, shrieking as if witches were running red-hot needles into her. Edgar stood on the hearth weeping, and in the middle of the table sat a little dog, shaking its paw and yelping; which they had nearly pulled in two between them. The idiots! We laughed outright; we did despise them! When would you find us yelling, and sobbing, and rolling on the ground? I’d not exchange my condition here, for Edgar Linton’s – not if I might paint the house-front with Hindley’s blood!’

‘Hush, hush!’ I interrupted. ‘Still you have not told me, Heathcliff, how Catherine is left behind?’

‘The Lintons heard us laughing, and they howled out, “Oh, mamma, papa! Oh, come here. Oh, papa, oh!” We made frightful noises to terrify them, and then we dropped off the ledge, because somebody was opening the door, and we felt we had better flee. I was urging Cathy on, when she fell.

“Run, Heathcliff, run!” she whispered. “The bull-dog holds me!” The devil had seized her ankle, Nelly. She did not yell out – no! But I cursed it, and I got a stone and thrust it between his jaws, and tried with all my might to cram it down his throat. A servant came up with a lantern shouting, “Hold fast, Skulker!” He changed his note, however, when he saw the dog half throttled; his huge, purple tongue hanging out of his mouth, and slavering.

‘The man took Cathy up; she was sick from pain. He carried her in; I followed, grumbling vengeance.

“What prey, Robert?” called Linton.

“Skulker has caught a little girl, sir,” he replied; “and there’s a lad here who looks a rogue! Very likely robbers were going to put them through the window to

open the doors after all were asleep. Hold your tongue, you foul-mouthed thief, you! Mr. Linton, sir, don't lay aside your gun."

"No, Robert," said the old fool. "To rob a magistrate in his home, and on the Sabbath, too! Where will their insolence stop? Oh, my dear Mary, look here! Don't be afraid, it is only a boy – yet the villain scowls; would it not be a kindness to the country to hang him at once?"

He pulled me under the chandelier, and Mrs. Linton raised her hands in horror. The cowardly children crept nearer also, Isabella lisping – "Frightful thing! Put him in the cellar, papa. He's like the son of the fortune-teller that stole my tame pheasant. Isn't he, Edgar?"

Cathy heard her, and laughed. Edgar Linton then recognised her from church.

"That's Miss Earnshaw!" he whispered to his mother, "and look how Skulker has bitten her – how she bleeds!"

"Miss Earnshaw? Nonsense!" cried she; "Miss Earnshaw scouring the country with a gipsy! And yet the child is in mourning – surely it is her – and she may be lamed for life!"

"What carelessness in her brother!" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "The curate says he lets her grow up in absolute heathenism. But where did she pick up this companion? Oho! He is that strange acquisition my late neighbour made, in his journey to Liverpool—a little Lascar, or a Spanish castaway."

"A wicked boy, at all events," remarked the old lady, "and quite unfit for a decent house! Did you hear his language?"

'I began cursing again – don't be angry, Nelly – and Robert was ordered to take me off. He dragged me into the garden, and, bidding me march, locked the door. But I spied on them; because, if Catherine wished to leave, I intended shattering their great glass panes to a million fragments, unless they let her out.

'She sat on the sofa quietly. Mrs. Linton took off her cloak. The woman-servant brought a basin of warm water, and washed her feet; and Mr. Linton mixed wine and lemon for her, and Isabella emptied a plateful of cakes into her lap, and Edgar stood gaping. They dried and combed her beautiful hair, and gave her a pair of enormous slippers, and wheeled her to the fire, where she was as merry as she could be, dividing her food between the little dog and Skulker, and kindling a spark of spirit in the vacant blue eyes of the Lintons – a dim reflection from her own enchanting face. They were full of stupid admiration; she is so superior to them – to everybody on earth, is she not, Nelly?'

'More will come of this,' I answered. 'You are incurable, Heathcliff; and Mr. Hindley will punish you.' My words came true: the adventure made Earnshaw furious. And then Mr. Linton paid us a visit the next day, and read Hindley a lecture on how he guided his family.

Heathcliff was not flogged, but he was told that the first word he spoke to Miss Catherine should ensure his dismissal. Mrs. Earnshaw tried to keep Catherine restrained when she returned home; using art, not force: with force she would have found it impossible.

CHAPTER 7

Cathy stayed at Thrushcross Grange five weeks: till Christmas. By that time her ankle was cured, and her manners much improved. Mrs. Earnshaw visited her often, and began her plan of reform by offering her fine clothes and flattery, which she took readily.

So, instead of a wild, hatless little savage jumping into the house, and rushing to squeeze us all breathless, there alighted from a handsome black pony a very dignified person, with brown ringlets and a long riding-habit, which she was obliged to hold up with both hands so that she might sail in.

Hindley exclaimed delightedly, 'Why, Cathy, you are quite a beauty! You look like a lady now. Isabella Linton is not to be compared with her, is she, Frances?'

'Isabella has not her beauty,' replied his wife; 'but she must mind not to grow wild again here. Ellen, help Miss Catherine off with her things.'

I removed the riding-habit, and there shone forth a grand silk frock and polished shoes. While her eyes sparkled joyfully when the dogs came bounding up, she dared hardly touch them lest they should paw her splendid garments. She kissed me gently: I was all flour making the Christmas cake, and she could not give me a hug; and then she looked round for Heathcliff. Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw watched anxiously.

Heathcliff was hard to find. If he were careless, and uncared for, before Catherine's absence, he had been ten times more so since. Nobody but I even did him the kindness to call him a dirty boy, and bid him wash himself once a week. His clothes held three months' dust, his hair was uncombed, and his face and hands were dismally begrimed. He might well skulk behind the settle, on beholding such a bright, graceful girl enter the house.

'Is Heathcliff not here?' she demanded, pulling off her gloves, and displaying fingers wonderfully whitened with doing nothing and staying indoors.

'Heathcliff, come forward,' cried Mr. Hindley, enjoying his discomfiture. 'Come and wish Miss Catherine welcome, like the other servants.'

Cathy flew to embrace him; she bestowed seven or eight kisses on his cheek before she stopped, and burst into a laugh, exclaiming, 'Why, how very black and cross you look! and how funny and grim! But that's because I'm used to Edgar and Isabella Linton. Well, Heathcliff, have you forgotten me?'

Shame and pride kept him silent.

'Shake hands, Heathcliff,' said Mr. Earnshaw, condescendingly; 'once in a way that is permitted.'

'I shall not,' replied the boy, finding his tongue at last; 'I shall not stand to be laughed at!' And he would have left, but Miss Cathy seized him again.

'I did not mean to laugh at you,' she said. 'Shake hands at least! Why are you sulky? It was only that you looked so dirty!'

She gazed concernedly at the dusky fingers she held in her own, and also at her dress; which she feared had been soiled.

'You needn't have touched me!' he answered, snatching away his hand. 'I shall be as dirty as I please: and I like to be dirty, and I will be dirty.'

With that he dashed out of the room, amid the merriment of the master and mistress, and to the serious disturbance of Catherine; who could not understand how her remarks should have produced such bad temper.

After playing lady's-maid to the newcomer, and putting my cakes in the oven, and making the house and kitchen cheerful with great fires, befitting Christmas-eve, I sat down to amuse myself by singing carols. Joseph, grumbling, retired to pray, while Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw showed Catherine some gay trifles bought for her to present to the little Lintons. They had invited them to spend the next day at Wuthering Heights, and the invitation had been accepted, on one condition: Mrs. Linton begged that her darlings might be kept carefully apart from that 'naughty swearing boy.'

I smelt the rich scent of the spices; and admired the shining kitchen utensils, the clock decked in holly, the silver mugs ranged on a tray ready to be filled with mulled ale for supper; and above all, the purity of my scoured and well-swept floor. I inwardly applauded it all, and then I remembered how old Earnshaw used to give me a shilling at Christmas. From that I went on to think of his fondness for Heathcliff, and his dread lest he should be neglected; and that led me to consider the poor lad's situation now, and made me change from singing to crying.

However, it made more sense to try to repair some of his wrongs than shed tears over them: so I got up and went to seek him. I found him feeding the ponies in the stable.

'Make haste, Heathcliff!' I said, 'the kitchen is so comfortable; and Joseph is upstairs: let me dress you smartly before Miss Cathy comes, and then you can sit together, with the whole hearth to yourselves, and have a long chatter till bedtime.'

He never turned his head towards me.

'Are you coming?' I continued. 'There's a little cake for you.'

I waited, but getting no answer left him. Catherine supped with her brother and sister-in-law: Joseph and I had an unsociable meal, but Heathcliff's cake and cheese remained on the table all night for the fairies. He worked till nine o'clock, and then marched to his chamber. Cathy came into the kitchen once to speak to him; but he was already gone.

In the morning he rose early; and carried his ill-humour on to the moors till the family had gone to church. Then he came in and exclaimed abruptly, 'Nelly, make me decent. I'm going to be good.'

'High time, Heathcliff,' I said; 'you have grieved Catherine: she's sorry she ever came home, I daresay! It looks as if you envied her.'

The notion of envying Catherine was incomprehensible to him, but the notion of grieving her he understood.

'Did she say she was grieved?' he asked, looking very serious.

'She cried when I told her you were out this morning.'

'Well, I cried last night,' he returned, 'and I had more reason to cry than she.'

'Yes: you had the reason of going to bed with a proud heart and an empty stomach,' said I. 'Proud people breed sorrows for themselves. You must ask pardon when she comes in. Go up and offer to kiss her; only do it heartily, and not as if you thought her a stranger. Edgar Linton shall look quite a doll beside you. You are younger, and yet you are taller and twice as broad across the shoulders; you could knock him down in a twinkling.'

Heathcliff's face brightened a moment; then it was overcast afresh, and he sighed.

'But, Nelly, if I knocked him down twenty times, that wouldn't make him less handsome or me more so. I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was well-dressed, and had a chance of being rich!'

'And cried for mamma at every turn,' I added, 'and trembled if a country lad shook his fist, and sat at home all day for a shower of rain. Oh, Heathcliff, you are

showing a poor spirit! Come to the mirror. Do you see those two lines between your eyes; and those thick brows, that sink over your eyes, making them lurk glinting under their lids like devil's spies? Learn to smooth away the surly wrinkles, to raise your lids frankly, making your eyes confident and innocent. Don't get the expression of a vicious dog that expects only kicks.'

'In other words, I must wish for Edgar Linton's great blue eyes,' he replied. 'I do – and that won't help me to them.'

'A good heart will help you to a bonny face, my lad,' I continued, 'and a bad one will turn the bonniest face ugly. And now that we've done washing, and combing, don't you think yourself rather handsome? Like a prince in disguise. Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England!'

So I chattered on; and Heathcliff gradually lost his frown and began to look quite pleasant, when our conversation was interrupted by a rumbling sound in the courtyard. I ran to the door, just as the two Lintons descended from their carriage, smothered in cloaks and furs, and the Earnshaws dismounted from their horses: they often rode to church in winter. Catherine took a hand of each of the children, brought them into the house and set them before the fire.

I urged my companion to hasten now and show his good humour, and he willingly obeyed; but by ill luck, as he opened the door, he met Hindley. The master, irritated at seeing him clean and cheerful, shoved him back, and angrily bade Joseph, 'Keep the fellow out of the room – send him into the garret till dinner is over. He'll be cramming his fingers in the tarts, if left alone with them a minute.'

'No, sir,' I answered, 'he'll touch nothing: and he should have his share.'

'He shall have his share of my hand, if I catch him downstairs,' cried Hindley. 'Begone, you vagabond! What! you are attempting the coxcomb, are you? Wait till I get hold of those elegant locks – see if I won't pull them a bit longer!'

'They are long enough already,' observed Master Linton, peeping from the doorway; 'It's like a colt's mane over his eyes!'

He ventured this remark without meaning to insult; but Heathcliff was not prepared to take any impertinence from him. He seized a tureen of hot apple sauce and dashed it in the speaker's face. Mr. Earnshaw snatched up the culprit and dragged him to his chamber; where, doubtless, he administered a rough remedy.

I got the dishcloth, and rather spitefully scrubbed Edgar's face, saying it served him right for meddling. His sister began weeping, and Cathy stood by confounded.

'You should not have spoken to him!' she reproved Master Linton. 'He was in a bad temper, and now he'll be flogged: I hate him to be flogged! I can't eat my dinner. Why did you speak to him, Edgar?'

'I didn't,' sobbed the youth. 'I promised mamma that I wouldn't say one word to him, and I didn't.'

'Well, don't cry,' replied Catherine, contemptuously; 'you're not killed. My brother is coming: be quiet! Hush, Isabella! Has anybody hurt *you*?'

'To your seats, children!' cried Hindley, bustling in. 'That brute of a lad has warmed me nicely. Next time, Master Edgar, take the law into your own fists – it will give you an appetite!'

The little party recovered at sight of the feast. They were hungry, and easily consoled. Mr. Earnshaw carved generous platefuls, and the mistress made them merry with lively talk. I was pained to see Catherine, with dry eyes and an indifferent air, cutting up her goose.

‘An unfeeling child,’ I thought; ‘I could not have imagined her to be so selfish.’ She lifted a mouthful to her lips: then she set it down: her cheeks flushed, and the tears fell. She slipped her fork to the floor, and hastily dived under the cloth to conceal her emotion. I did not call her unfeeling for long: for I saw that all day she was in purgatory, looking for a chance of paying a visit to Heathcliff, who had been locked up by the master.

In the evening we had a dance. Cathy begged that Heathcliff might be freed, as Isabella Linton had no partner: her entreaties were vain, and I was made to fill in instead. We got rid of all gloom in the excitement, and our pleasure was increased by the arrival of the Gimmerton band: a trumpet, a trombone, clarionets, bassoons, French horns, and a bass viol, besides singers. After the carols, we set them to songs and glees. Mrs. Earnshaw loved the music.

Catherine loved it too: but she said it sounded sweetest at the top of the steps, and she went up in the dark. I followed; they never noted our absence. Catherine mounted to the garret where Heathcliff was confined, and called him. He would not answer; but she persevered, and finally persuaded him to talk with her through the door. I let the poor things alone, till the songs were about to end; then I clambered up the ladder to warn her.

Instead of finding her outside, I heard her voice within. The little monkey had crept out by the skylight of one garret, along the roof, and into the skylight of the other, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I could coax her out again. When she came, Heathcliff came with her, and she insisted that I should take him into the kitchen, since Joseph had gone to a neighbour’s to get away from the sound of our ‘devil’s music.’

As Heathcliff had not eaten since yesterday’s dinner, I let him go down: I set him on a stool by the fire, and offered him good things: but he was sick and could eat little. He leant his chin on his hands in meditation. On my inquiring the subject of his thoughts, he answered gravely:

‘I’m trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don’t care how long I wait, if I can only do it at last. I hope he will not die first!’

‘For shame, Heathcliff!’ said I. ‘It is for God to punish wicked people; we should learn to forgive.’

‘No, God won’t have the satisfaction that I shall,’ he returned. ‘I only wish I knew the best way! Let me alone, and I’ll plan it: while I’m thinking of that I don’t feel pain.’

‘But, Mr. Lockwood,’ (said Mrs. Dean) ‘I forget these tales cannot divert you. How I chatter on, when your gruel is cold, and you are nodding for bed! I could have told Heathcliff’s history in half a dozen words.’

Thus interrupting herself, the housekeeper rose; but I felt very far from sleeping.

‘Do sit another half-hour,’ I cried. ‘I like to hear the story told leisurely: I am interested in every character.’

‘It is eleven o’clock, sir.’

‘No matter – I shall lie in till ten tomorrow. Mrs. Dean, go on.’

‘Well, sir, you must allow me to leap over some three years. During that space Mrs. Earnshaw—’

‘No, no, I’ll allow nothing of the sort! Continue in detail. I see that people in these lonely regions live more in earnest, more in themselves, and less in frivolous external

things, than in the town. I could fancy a love of life here almost possible; it is like a simple, honest meal compared to a banquet laid out by French chefs.'

'Oh! here we are the same as anywhere else, when you get to know us,' observed Mrs. Dean, somewhat puzzled.

'Excuse me,' I responded; 'you, my good friend, are evidence against that assertion. I am sure you have thought a great deal more than most servants think.'

Mrs. Dean laughed.

'I certainly judge myself a steady, reasonable kind of body,' she said; 'not exactly from living among the hills; but I have undergone sharp discipline, which has taught me wisdom; and I have read more than you would fancy, Mr. Lockwood. You could not open a book in this library that I have not looked into. However, I had better go on; and instead of leaping three years, I will pass to the next summer – that of 1778, nearly twenty-three years ago.'

CHAPTER 8

On the morning of a fine June day my first bonny little nursling, and the last of the ancient Earnshaw stock, was born. We were busy with the hay, when a girl came running across the meadow, calling me as she ran.

‘Oh, such a grand baby!’ she panted out. ‘The finest lad that ever breathed! But the doctor says missis has been in a consumption these many months. I heard him tell Mr. Hindley: and now she has nothing to keep her, and she’ll be dead before winter. You must come home directly. You’re to nurse it, Nelly: to feed it with sugar and milk. I wish I were you, because it will be all yours when there is no missis!’

‘But is she very ill?’ I asked, flinging down my rake and tying my bonnet.

‘I guess she is,’ replied the girl, ‘yet she talks as if she thought of living to see it grow a man. She’s out of her head for joy, it’s such a beauty! If I were her I should get better at the bare sight of it, in spite of Doctor Kenneth. I was fairly mad at him. Master’s face just began to light up at the sight of the babe, when he says—
“Earnshaw, it’s a blessing your wife has been spared to leave you this son. The winter will probably finish her. You should have known better than to choose such a slip of a lass!”’

I hurried eagerly home to admire the child; though I was very sad for Hindley’s sake. He doted on his wife, and I couldn’t conceive how he would bear the loss.

When I reached Wuthering Heights, I asked him, ‘How is the baby?’

‘Nearly ready to run about, Nell!’ he replied, putting on a cheerful smile.

‘And the mistress?’ I inquired; ‘the doctor says—’

‘Damn the doctor!’ he interrupted, reddening. ‘Frances will be perfectly well by next week. But she must be quiet.’

Going to his wife, I delivered this message. Mrs. Earnshaw replied merrily, ‘I hardly spoke a word, Ellen, and he has gone out twice, crying. Well, I won’t speak: but I will laugh!’

Poor soul! That gay heart never failed her; and her husband persisted doggedly in affirming her health improved every day. When Dr. Kenneth warned him that he could do no more for her, he retorted, ‘She does not want any more attendance from you! She never was in a consumption. It was a fever; and it is gone.’

He told his wife the same story, and she seemed to believe him; but one night, while leaning on his shoulder, a fit of coughing took her. He raised her in his arms; she put her hands about his neck, her face changed, and she was dead.

With that, the child Hareton fell wholly into my hands, for Mr Earnshaw grew desperate. He neither wept nor prayed, but cursed God and man, and gave himself up to reckless dissipation.

The servants could not bear his evil conduct long: Joseph and I were the only two that would stay. I had not the heart to leave Hareton; and besides, you know, I had been Hindley’s foster-sister, and excused his behaviour more readily than a stranger would.

The master’s bad ways formed a pretty example for Catherine and Heathcliff. His treatment of the latter was enough to make a fiend of a saint. And, truly, the lad seemed possessed of something diabolical at that time. He delighted to see Hindley degrading himself; and became daily more sullen and savage.

I could not tell what an infernal house we had. The curate stopped calling, and nobody decent came near us, apart from Edgar Linton’s visits to Miss Cathy. At

fifteen she was the queen of the country-side; and a haughty, headstrong creature! I did not like her then; and I vexed her by trying to bring down her arrogance: she never hated me, though. She had a wondrous constancy to old attachments: even Heathcliff kept his hold on her affections; and young Linton, with all his superiority, found it difficult to make an equally deep impression. Edgar Linton was my late master: that is his portrait over the fireplace.

Mrs. Dean raised the candle, and I saw a soft-featured face, resembling the young lady at the Heights, but more pensive and amiable in expression. The long light hair curled slightly on the temples; the eyes were large and serious; the figure graceful.

‘He looked better when he was animated,’ said Mrs. Dean. ‘He lacked spirit in general.’

Catherine had kept up her acquaintance with the Lintons (she continued); and as she had no wish to show her rough side in their company, she was polite to the old lady and gentleman, and gained the admiration of Isabella, and the heart and soul of her brother. She adopted a double character without exactly intending to deceive any one. At the Lintons’ she took care not to act like Heathcliff; but at home she did not bother to restrain her unruly nature.

Mr. Edgar seldom mustered courage to visit Wuthering Heights. He had a terror of Earnshaw; and yet he was always received with civility. Hindley avoided offending him, knowing why he came, and kept out of the way. I rather think Edgar’s visits were distasteful to Catherine; she never played the coquette, and objected to her two friends meeting; for when Heathcliff expressed contempt of Linton in his presence, she could not agree; and when Linton showed disgust at Heathcliff, she dared not seem indifferent. I’ve had many a laugh at her perplexities. That sounds ill-natured: but she was so proud it was impossible to pity her. She did bring herself, finally, to confide in me.

Mr. Hindley had gone out home one afternoon, and Heathcliff gave himself a holiday. He had reached the age of sixteen then, I think, and without being either ugly or stupid, he managed to give an impression of inward and outward repulsiveness that there is no trace of today.

He had lost the benefit of his early education: continual hard work had extinguished any curiosity he once possessed about books or learning. He struggled long to keep up with Catherine in her studies, and yielded with regret: but he yielded completely; he would not take a step upward. He acquired a slouching gait, and his natural reserve became moroseness; he took a grim pleasure in making people fear and dislike him.

Catherine and he were constant companions still, when he was not working; but he had ceased to speak of his fondness for her, and recoiled with angry suspicion from her girlish caresses. On the occasion I just mentioned, he came into the house while I was assisting Miss Cathy with her dress. She had imagined she would have the place to herself, and had informed Mr. Edgar of her brother’s absence; she was preparing to receive him.

‘Why have you that silk frock on?’ said Heathcliff. ‘Nobody coming here, I hope?’

‘Not that I know of,’ stammered Miss: ‘but you should be in the field now, Heathcliff. It is an hour past dinnertime: I thought you were gone.’

‘Hindley does not often free us from his accursed presence,’ he said. ‘I’ll not work any more to-day: I’ll stay with you.’

‘Oh, but Joseph will tell. You’d better go!’

‘Joseph is on the far side of Penistone Crag; he’ll never know.’ So, saying, he lounged to the fire, and sat down.

Catherine reflected, with knitted brows. ‘Isabella and Edgar Linton talked of calling this afternoon,’ she said, after a minute’s silence. ‘If they do come, you run the risk of being scolded.’

‘Order Ellen to say you are engaged, Cathy,’ he persisted; ‘don’t turn me out for those pitiful, silly friends of yours! I’m on the point, sometimes, of complaining that they—’

‘That they what?’ cried Catherine, looking troubled. ‘Oh, Nelly!’ she added petulantly, ‘you’ve combed my hair out of curl! Let me alone. What are you complaining about, Heathcliff?’

‘Nothing – only look at the almanack on that wall. The crosses are for the evenings you have spent with the Lintons, the dots for those spent with me. I’ve marked every day.’

‘Yes – very foolish: as if I took notice!’ replied Catherine peevishly. ‘Where is the sense of that?’

‘To show that I do take notice,’ said Heathcliff.

‘And should I always be sitting with you?’ she demanded, growing irritated. ‘What good do I get? You might be dumb, or a baby, for anything you say or do to amuse me!’

‘You never told me before that I talked too little, or that you disliked my company, Cathy!’ he exclaimed in agitation.

‘It’s no company at all, when people know nothing and say nothing,’ she muttered.

Her companion rose; but just then a horse’s feet were heard on the flagstones, and young Linton entered, his face brilliant with delight at the unexpected summons. Doubtless Catherine marked the difference between her friends, as one came in and the other went out. It was like exchanging a bleak, hilly, coal country for a beautiful fertile valley; and Edgar’s voice was as opposite as his appearance. He had a sweet, low manner of speaking, softer than we talk here.

‘I’m not come too soon, am I?’ he said, looking at me. I began to tidy the dresser.

‘No,’ answered Catherine. ‘What are you doing there, Nelly?’

‘My work, Miss,’ I replied. Mr. Hindley had told me to stay during any private visits Linton paid.

She stepped behind me and whispered crossly, ‘Take yourself off! When company are in the house, servants don’t start cleaning!’

I went on with my occupation. Thinking Edgar could not see her, she snatched my cloth, and pinched me spitefully on the arm. I’ve said I did not love her, and besides, she hurt me extremely; so I started up, and screamed out, ‘Oh, Miss, that’s a nasty trick! You have no right to nip me.’

‘I didn’t touch you, you lying creature!’ cried she, her fingers tingling to repeat the act, and her ears red with rage. She never could conceal her passion; it always set her whole complexion in a blaze.

‘What’s that, then?’ I retorted, showing a purple mark.

She stamped her foot, and then slapped me on the cheek: a stinging blow that filled my eyes with water.

‘Catherine, love!’ interposed Linton, greatly shocked.

Little Hareton was sitting near me on the floor. At seeing my tears he began crying himself, and sobbed ‘wicked aunt Cathy,’ which drew her fury on to his

unlucky head: she seized his shoulders, and shook him till the poor child went white. Edgar thoughtlessly tried to free him. In an instant the astonished young man felt her hand applied to his own ear in a way that could not be mistaken for jest.

He drew back in consternation. I lifted Hareton, and walked off to the kitchen with him, leaving the door open, for I was curious to see how they would settle their disagreement. The visitor moved to take up his hat, pale and with a quivering lip.

‘That’s right!’ I said to myself. ‘Take warning and begone! Now you see her genuine disposition.’

‘Where are you going?’ demanded Catherine, blocking the door. ‘You must not go! You shall not leave me in that temper. I should be miserable all night, and I won’t be miserable for you!’

‘Can I stay after you have struck me?’ asked Linton. ‘You’ve made me afraid and ashamed of you. I’ll not come here again!’

Her eyes began to glisten.

‘And you told a deliberate untruth!’ he said.

‘I didn’t!’ she cried; ‘I did nothing deliberately. Well, go, if you please! And now I’ll cry myself sick!’

She dropped on her knees, and set to weeping. Edgar went out as far as the courtyard; there he lingered. I resolved to encourage him.

‘Miss is dreadfully wayward, sir,’ I called out. ‘As bad as any spoiled child: you’d better ride home, or else she will be sick just to grieve us.’

The soft thing looked through the window: he had no power to depart. Ah, I thought, he’s doomed, and flies to his fate! And so it was: he turned, entered the house again, and shut the door behind him. When I went in a while after to inform them that Earnshaw had come home rabid drunk, ready to pull the whole place about our ears, I saw the quarrel had merely brought them closer together. It had broken through their youthful timidity, and enabled them to confess themselves lovers.

The news of Mr. Hindley’s arrival drove Linton speedily to his horse, and Catherine to her room. I went to hide little Hareton, and to take the shot out of the master’s shotgun, which he was fond of playing with in his insane excitement.

CHAPTER 9

Hindley entered, swearing oaths dreadful to hear; and caught me in the act of stowing his son away in the kitchen cupboard. Hareton had a wholesome terror of both his father's wild fondness and his madman's rage; for in one he ran a chance of being squeezed to death, and in the other of being flung into the fire, or dashed against the wall; and the poor thing remained perfectly quiet wherever I put him.

'There, I've found it out at last!' cried Hindley, pulling me back. 'By heaven and hell, you've sworn to murder that child! Now I know why he is always out of my way. I shall make you swallow the carving-knife, Nelly! You needn't laugh.'

'But I don't like the carving-knife, Mr. Hindley,' I answered; 'it has been cutting red herrings. I'd rather be shot, if you please.'

'You'd rather be damned!' he said; 'and so you shall. Open your mouth!' He pushed the point of the knife between my teeth: but I was never much afraid of him. I spat it out, and said I would not take it on any account.

'Oh!' said he, releasing me, 'I see that hideous little villain is not Hareton: I beg your pardon, Nell. If it is, he deserves flaying alive for not running to welcome me, and for screaming as if I were a goblin. Unnatural cub, come here! I'll teach you to impose on a good-hearted father. Now, don't you think the lad would be handsomer cropped? Get me some scissors – it's a devilish conceit, to cherish our ears – we're asses enough without them. Hush, child, hush! Dry thy eyes – kiss me. What! it won't? Kiss me, Hareton! Damn thee, kiss me! By God, what a monster! I'll break the brat's neck.'

Poor Hareton was squalling and kicking in his father's arms, and redoubled his yells when Hindley carried him upstairs and lifted him over the banister. I cried out, and ran up to rescue him. Hindley leant forward on the rails to listen to a footstep below; almost forgetting what he had in his hands.

'Who is that?' he asked. Just then Hareton gave a sudden spring, freed himself from his father's careless grasp, and fell.

There was scarcely time for a thrill of horror before we saw that he was safe. The footsteps below were Heathcliff's: arriving just at the critical moment, by instinct he caught Hareton, and setting him on his feet, looked up to discover the cause of the accident.

A miser who has parted with a lucky lottery ticket for five shillings, and finds next day he has lost five thousand pounds, could not show a blanker face than he did on seeing Mr. Earnshaw above. It expressed intense anguish at having thwarted his own revenge. Had it been dark, I daresay he would have tried to remedy the mistake by smashing Hareton's skull on the steps; but we were watching. I pressed my precious charge to my heart. Hindley descended, sobered and abashed.

'It is your fault, Ellen,' he said; 'you should have kept him out of my sight! Is he injured?'

'Injured!' I cried angrily; 'I wonder his mother does not rise from her grave. You're worse than a heathen – treating your own child in that manner!' He attempted to touch the child, who shrieked louder than ever and struggled.

'You shall not meddle with him!' I continued. 'He hates you – they all hate you! A happy family you have; and a pretty state you're come to!'

‘I shall come to a prettier, yet, Nelly,’ laughed Hindley, recovering his hardness. ‘Take him away. Heathcliff, you leave me too. I won’t murder you tonight; unless, perhaps, I set the house on fire.’

Saying this, he took a bottle of brandy from the dresser, and poured some into a tumbler. He drank, and ordered us, with many oaths, to go.

‘It’s a pity he cannot kill himself with drink,’ observed Heathcliff, when the door was shut. ‘He’s doing his best; but he’s too strong. Dr. Kenneth says he’ll outlive any man on this side of Gimmerton.’

I went into the kitchen, and sat down to lull my little lamb to sleep. Heathcliff, as I thought, walked through to the barn. It turned out afterwards that he only got as far as the other side of the settle, then flung himself on a bench by the wall and remained silent.

I was rocking Hareton on my knee, and singing, when Miss Cathy, who had listened to the hubbub from her room, put her head in, and whispered, ‘Are you alone, Nelly?’

‘Yes, Miss,’ I replied.

She entered, seeming anxious and disturbed. ‘Where’s Heathcliff?’ she said.

‘In the stable,’ was my answer.

He did not contradict me; perhaps he had fallen into a doze. There followed another long pause, during which I perceived tears trickle down Catherine’s cheek.

‘Oh, dear!’ she cried at last. ‘I’m very unhappy!’

‘You’re hard to please,’ I observed; ‘so many friends and so few cares, and can’t make yourself content!’

‘Nelly, will you keep a secret?’ She knelt down by me, lifting her lovely eyes to my face with an appealing look.

‘Is it worth keeping?’

‘Yes, and it worries me, and I must let it out! I want to know what I should do. Today, Edgar Linton asked me to marry him, and I’ve given him an answer. Now, before I tell you whether it was yes or no, you tell me which it ought to have been.’

‘Really, Miss Catherine, how can I know?’ I replied. ‘I might say it would be wise to refuse him: since he asked you after that exhibition this afternoon, he must be a fool.’

‘If you talk so, I won’t tell you any more,’ she returned, peevishly rising to her feet. ‘I accepted him, Nelly. Was I wrong?’

‘You accepted him! Then what good is it discussing the matter?’

‘But should I should have done so?’ she exclaimed, frowning.

‘Do you love Mr. Edgar?’

‘Who can help it? Of course I do,’ she answered.

‘Why?’

‘I do – that’s sufficient.’

‘You must say why.’

‘Well, because he is handsome, and pleasant to be with.’

‘Bad!’ I commented.

‘And because he is young and cheerful.’

‘Bad, still.’

‘And because he loves me.’

‘Indifferent.’

‘And he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband.’

‘Worst of all. And now, say how you love him?’

‘As everybody loves— You’re silly, Nelly.’

‘Answer.’

‘I love the ground under his feet, and the air over his head, and everything he touches, and every word he says. I love all his looks, and all his actions, and him entirely and altogether. There now!’

‘You love Mr. Edgar because he is handsome, and young, and cheerful, and rich, and loves you,’ I answered. ‘The last, however, goes for nothing: you wouldn’t love him unless he possessed the first four attractions.’

‘No: I should pity him – hate him, perhaps.’

‘But there are other handsome, rich young men in the world.’

‘I don’t know them. I’ve seen none like Edgar.’

‘You may see some; and he won’t always be handsome, and young, and may not always be rich.’

‘He is now; and I have only to do with the present.’

‘Well, that settles it: if you have only to do with the present, marry Mr. Linton.’

‘I don’t want your permission,’ she said. ‘I shall marry him: and yet you have not told me whether I’m right.’

‘Perfectly right; if people be right to marry only for the present. And now, let us hear what you are unhappy about. Your brother will be pleased; Edgar’s parents will not object; you will escape from a disorderly home into a wealthy, respectable one; and you love Edgar, and Edgar loves you. All seems smooth and easy: where is the obstacle?’

‘Here! and here!’ replied Catherine, striking one hand on her forehead, and the other on her breast. ‘In my soul and in my heart, I’m convinced I’m wrong!’

‘That’s very strange!’

‘If you will not mock me, I’ll try to explain it.’ Her face grew sadder and graver, and her clasped hands trembled.

‘Nelly, do you ever dream queer dreams?’ she said, after some minutes. ‘I’ve had dreams that have stayed with me ever after, and changed my ideas: they’ve gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind. And this is one: I’m going to tell it – but take care not to smile.’

‘Oh! don’t, Miss Catherine!’ I cried. ‘We’re dismal enough without conjuring up ghosts and visions. I won’t hear it!’ I was superstitious about dreams.

Catherine was vexed, but she did not go on. Instead she said,

‘If I were in heaven, Nelly, I should be miserable.’

‘Because you are not fit to go there,’ I answered. ‘All sinners would be miserable in heaven.’

‘That’s not why. I dreamt once that I was there.’

‘I tell you I won’t listen to your dreams, Miss Catherine! I’ll go to bed,’ I interrupted.

‘I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret. I’ve no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if Hindley had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn’t have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him: not because he’s handsome, Nelly, but because he’s more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his

and mine are the same; and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire.'

Before this speech ended I became aware of Heathcliff's presence. Noticing a movement, I turned my head, and saw him steal out noiselessly. He had listened till he heard Catherine say it would degrade her to marry him, and then he stayed to hear no further. She did not notice his departure; but I bade her hush!

'Why?' she asked.

'Joseph is here,' I answered, opportunely hearing his cartwheels up the road; 'and Heathcliff will come in with him. I'm not sure whether he were not at the door just now.'

'Oh, he couldn't overhear me at the door!' said she. 'Heathcliff has no notion of these things, has he? He does not know what being in love is!'

'I see no reason that he should not know, as well as you,' I returned; 'and if you are his choice, he'll be the most unfortunate creature that ever was born! If you become Mrs. Linton, he loses friend, and love, and all! Have you considered how you'll bear the separation, and how he'll bear to be deserted?'

'We separated!' she exclaimed, indignantly. 'Who is to separate us, pray? Not as long as I live, Ellen! I shouldn't be Mrs. Linton were such a price demanded! Heathcliff will be as much to me as ever. Edgar must and will tolerate him. Nelly, I see you think me a selfish wretch; but if Heathcliff and I married, we should be beggars – whereas, if I marry Linton I can help Heathcliff to rise.'

'With your husband's money, Miss Catherine?' I asked. 'That's the worst motive you've given yet for marrying young Linton.'

'It is not,' retorted she; 'it is the best and least selfish! It is for the sake of one who embodies all my feelings. I cannot express it; but what were the use of my creation, if I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries: my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger: I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being. So don't talk of our separation again.'

She hid her face in the folds of my gown; but I jerked it away, out of patience with her folly.

'If I can make any sense of your nonsense, Miss,' I said, 'it only convinces me that you are ignorant of the duties you undertake in marrying; or else that you are a wicked girl. But tell me no more secrets: I'll not promise to keep them.'

Joseph's entrance finished our conversation. I made the supper, and quarrelled with Joseph about who should carry some to Mr. Hindley. We agreed that we would let him ask, if he wanted any; for we feared to go into his presence.

'And why isn't that nowt come in from th' field, by this time? What is he about? great idle thing!' demanded the old man, looking round for Heathcliff.

'I'll call him,' I replied. 'He's in the barn, no doubt.'

I went and called, but got no answer. On returning, I whispered to Catherine that he had heard much of what she said, I was sure; and told how I saw him leave the kitchen just as she complained of her brother's conduct. She jumped up in a fright, and ran to seek for Heathcliff herself.

She was absent such a while that Joseph proposed we should wait no longer for supper. He was saying an endless grace before eating when his young mistress broke in upon him with a hurried command that he must run down the road, find Heathcliff, and make him return directly!

‘I must speak to him,’ she said. ‘And the gate is open.’

Joseph walked out, grumbling. Meantime, Catherine paced up and down, exclaiming, ‘I wonder where he is! What did I say, Nelly? I’ve forgotten. Was he vexed at my bad humour? I do wish he’d come. I do wish he would!’

‘What a noise for nothing!’ I cried, though rather uneasy myself. ‘It’s surely no great cause of alarm that Heathcliff should take a moonlight saunter on the moors, or even hide in the hay-loft. I’ll ferret him out!’

I departed, but my search resulted in disappointment, and Joseph’s quest ended the same way.

‘Yon lad gets worse and worse!’ he said. ‘He’s left t’ gate swinging, and Miss’s pony has trodden down t’ corn. The master’ll play t’ devil tomorrow!’

‘Have you found Heathcliff?’ demanded Catherine. ‘Have you been looking for him?’

‘I can look for nobody on a night like this,’ he replied, ‘as black as t’ chimney!’

It was a very dark evening: and appeared inclined to thunder. I said the approaching rain would be certain to bring him home.

However, Catherine would not be persuaded. She kept wandering to the door, in a state of agitation; and at length stood near the road: where, heedless of the growling thunder, and the great drops of rain, she remained, calling, and then listening, and then crying passionately.

About midnight, the storm came rattling over the Heights in full fury. There was a violent wind: a huge bough fell across the roof, and knocked down part of the east chimney-stack, sending a clatter of stones and soot into the kitchen-fire. We thought a lightning-bolt had fallen on us; and Joseph fell on to his knees, beseeching the Lord to spare the righteous. I felt as if it must be a judgment on us. The Jonah, in my mind, was Mr. Earnshaw; and I shook the handle of his room to see if he were yet living. He replied with curses.

But the uproar passed away, leaving us all unharmed; excepting Cathy, who got thoroughly drenched by standing shawl-less. She came in and lay down on the settle, all soaked as she was, and turned her face away.

‘Well, Miss!’ I exclaimed, touching her shoulder. ‘Do you know what o’clock it is? Half-past twelve. Come to bed! there’s no use waiting any longer on that foolish boy: he’ll be gone to Gimmerton.’

After vainly begging the wilful girl to rise and remove her wet things, I left her shivering, and took myself to bed with little Hareton.

Coming down later than usual, I saw Miss Catherine still seated near the fireplace. The door was ajar; Hindley stood on the kitchen hearth, haggard and drowsy.

‘What ails you, Cathy?’ he was saying when I entered: ‘you look as dismal as a drowned whelp. Why are you so damp and pale, child?’

‘I’ve been wet,’ she answered reluctantly, ‘and I’m cold, that’s all.’

‘Oh, she is naughty!’ I cried, perceiving the master to be tolerably sober. ‘She got soaked yesterday evening, and there she has sat the night through.’

Mr. Earnshaw stared in surprise. ‘What kept her up? not the thunder, surely?’

Neither of us wished to mention Heathcliff’s absence; so I replied, I didn’t know; and she said nothing.

The morning was fresh and cool. I threw open the window, and the room filled with sweet scents from the garden; but Catherine called peevishly, 'Ellen, shut the window. I'm freezing!' And her teeth chattered as she shrank closer to the fire.

'She's ill,' said Hindley; 'Damn it! I don't want more sickness here. What took you into the rain?'

'Running after t' lads, as usual!' croaked Joseph. 'Whenever you're out, yon Linton comes sneaking here; and Miss Nelly, she's a fine lass! she sits watching for ye; and as you're in at one door, he's out at t'other. And our grand lady's lurking among t' fields, after midnight, wi' that foul devil of a gipsy, Heathcliff! They think I'm blind; but I'm not!'

'Silence, eavesdropper!' cried Catherine. 'Edgar Linton came yesterday by chance, Hindley; and it was I who told him to be off.'

'You lie, Cathy, no doubt,' answered her brother, 'and you are a simpleton! But never mind Linton: tell me, were you not with Heathcliff last night? Speak the truth, now.'

'I never saw Heathcliff last night,' answered Catherine, beginning to sob bitterly: 'perhaps he's gone.' She burst into uncontrollable grief.

Hindley abused her scornfully, bidding her get to her room, or she shouldn't cry for nothing! I made her obey; and I shall never forget what a scene she acted in her chamber: it terrified me. I thought she was going mad, and I begged Joseph to run for the doctor.

It proved the start of delirium. Dr. Kenneth, as soon as he saw her, pronounced her dangerously ill with fever. He bled her, and told me to take care she did not throw herself downstairs or out of the window; and then he left.

Though I cannot say I made a gentle nurse, and though our patient was as wearisome and headstrong as a patient could be, she weathered it through. Old Mrs. Linton paid us several visits, and scolded and ordered us all; and when Catherine was convalescent, she insisted on taking her to Thrushcross Grange: for which we were very grateful. But the poor dame had cause to repent of her kindness: both she and her husband took the fever, and died within a few days of each other.

Our young lady returned to us saucier, more passionate, and haughtier than ever. Heathcliff had never been heard of since the evening of the thunder-storm; and, one day, when she had provoked me exceedingly, I blamed his disappearance on her.

From that period, for several months, she stopped talking to me, except as to a mere servant. She allowed no-one to contradict her. From her brother she kept aloof; and he allowed her whatever she pleased, and avoided aggravating her fiery temper. He indulged her too much, for he wished to see her bring honour to the family by a marriage with the Lintons. Edgar Linton was infatuated: and believed himself the happiest man alive on the day he led her to Gimmerton Chapel, three years after his father's death.

I was persuaded to leave Wuthering Heights and accompany her here. Little Hareton was nearly five years old, and I had just begun to teach him his letters. At first I refused to go, but Edgar offered me good wages; and Hindley ordered me to pack up. He wanted no women in the house, he said; and as to Hareton, the curate should take him in hand.

And so I had to do as I was ordered. I kissed Hareton and said good-bye; and since then he has been a stranger. I've no doubt he has completely forgotten all about Ellen Dean, and that he was ever more than all the world to her and she to him!

At this point of the housekeeper's story she chanced to glance towards the clock; and was amazed to see that it was half past one. She would not stay a second longer. Now that she is gone to rest, I shall go also, in spite of aching laziness of head and limbs.

CHAPTER 10

A charming introduction to a hermit's life! Four weeks' torture and sickness! Oh, these bleak winds and bitter northern skies, and impassable roads, and slow country surgeons! And oh, this lack of human faces! Worse than all, the doctor tells me that I must not expect to be out of doors till spring!

Mr. Heathcliff honoured me with a call. About seven days ago he sent me a brace of grouse. Scoundrel! He is to blame for my illness; as I had a great mind to tell him. But how could I offend a man who was charitable enough to sit at my bedside a good hour, and talk on some other subject than pills and leeches?

Being too weak to read, I rang Mrs. Dean and asked her to finish her tale. I remembered her hero had run off, and never been heard of for three years; and the heroine was married.

'Take your seat,' I said. 'Draw your knitting out of your pocket – now continue the history of Mr. Heathcliff. Did he go to the Continent, and come back an educated gentleman? or did he escape to America, and fight against the English? or make his fortune on the highways?'

'He may have done all those, Mr. Lockwood; but I couldn't say. I don't know how he gained his money; nor how he raised his mind from its savage ignorance: but I'll proceed, if you think it will not weary you.'

I took Miss Catherine to Thrushcross Grange (said Mrs. Dean); and she behaved much better than I expected. She seemed almost over-fond of Mr. Linton; and even to his sister she showed affection. They were both very attentive to her comfort, certainly. It was not the thorn bending to the honeysuckles, but the honeysuckles embracing the thorn. She stood erect, and the others yielded.

I observed that Mr. Edgar had a deep-rooted fear of angering her. If ever he heard me answer her sharply, he would frown, and spoke sternly to me about my pertness. Since he was a kind master, I learned to be less touchy; and, for half a year, the gunpowder lay as harmless as sand, because no fire came near to explode it.

Catherine had seasons of gloom now and then: they were respected by her husband, who thought they were produced by her previous illness. The return of sunshine was welcomed by answering sunshine from him. I believe that they were really in possession of deep and growing happiness.

It ended. Events happened to make each feel that they were not first in the other's thoughts.

One mellow evening in September, I was coming from the garden with a basket of apples. It was dusk, and the moon looked over the high wall of the court, causing shadows to lurk in the corners. I set my burden by the kitchen-door, and lingered to rest, drawing in the soft, sweet air, when I heard a voice behind me say, 'Nelly, is that you?'

It was a deep voice, and foreign in tone; yet something in its manner sounded familiar. I turned around fearfully, for I had seen nobody. Something stirred in the porch; and I distinguished a tall man dressed in dark clothes, with dark face and hair.

'Who can it be?' I thought.

'I have waited here an hour,' he resumed; 'and the place has been as still as death. I dared not enter. You do not know me? I'm not a stranger!'

A ray fell on his features; the cheeks were sallow, and half covered with black whiskers; the brows lowering, the eyes deep-set and singular. I remembered the eyes.

‘What!’ I cried in amazement. ‘Is it really you?’

‘Yes; Heathcliff,’ he replied, glancing up to the windows, which reflected a score of glittering moons, but showed no lights within. ‘Are they at home? Is she here? I want to have one word with her. Go and say some person from Gimmerton desires to see her.’

‘The surprise will put her out of her head!’ I exclaimed. ‘Heathcliff! Have you been for a soldier?’

‘Go and carry my message,’ he said impatiently. ‘I’m in hell till you do!’

I entered; and found Mr. and Mrs. Linton in the parlour. They sat together in a window which displayed the wild green park and the valley of Gimmerton, with a long line of mist winding nearly to its top. Wuthering Heights rose above this silvery vapour. All looked wondrously peaceful. I shrank from performing my errand; but I muttered, ‘A person from Gimmerton wishes to see you, ma’am.’

‘Well, close the curtains, Nelly,’ she said; ‘I’ll be back directly.’

She left the apartment; Mr. Edgar inquired, carelessly, who it was.

‘Some one mistress does not expect,’ I replied. ‘That Heathcliff who used to live at Mr. Earnshaw’s.’

‘What! the gipsy?’ he cried.

‘Hush! you must not call him that, master,’ I said. ‘She’d be sadly grieved to hear you. She was nearly heartbroken when he ran off. I guess his return will be a joy to her.’

Catherine flew upstairs, breathless and wild; too excited to show gladness: indeed, by her face, you would rather have guessed an awful calamity had happened.

‘Oh, Edgar, Edgar!’ she panted, flinging her arms round his neck. ‘Oh, Edgar darling! Heathcliff’s come back!’

‘Well, well,’ cried her husband, crossly, ‘don’t strangle me for that! He never struck me as such a marvellous treasure.’

‘I know you didn’t like him,’ she answered. ‘Yet, for my sake, you must be friends now. Shall I tell him to come up?’

‘Here,’ he said, ‘into the parlour?’

‘Where else?’

He looked vexed, and suggested the kitchen as a more suitable place.

‘No,’ said Mrs. Linton, half angry, half laughing; ‘Set two tables here, Ellen: one for your master and Miss Isabella, being gentry; the other for Heathcliff and myself, being of the lower orders. Will that please you, dear? Or must I have a fire lit elsewhere? I’ll run down to my guest. I’m afraid the joy is too great to be real!’

She was about to dart off again; but Edgar stopped her.

‘Bid him step up,’ he said to me; ‘and, Catherine, try to be glad, without being absurd. The whole household need not witness the sight of your welcoming a runaway servant as a brother.’

I descended, and found Heathcliff waiting under the porch. He followed me into the presence of the master and mistress, whose flushed cheeks betrayed signs of an argument. But when her friend appeared at the door, she sprang forward, and led him to Linton; and then she seized Linton’s reluctant fingers and crushed them into his.

Now, fully revealed by the candlelight, I was amazed to behold the transformation of Heathcliff. He had grown a tall, athletic, well-formed man; beside whom my master seemed quite slender and youth-like. His upright carriage suggested the idea of

his having been in the army. His face looked older and more decisive than Mr. Linton's; and intelligent, with no sign of its former degradation. A half-civilised ferocity lurked yet in the eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was dignified: quite without roughness.

My master's surprise equalled mine: he remained for a minute at a loss how to address the ploughboy, as he had called him. Heathcliff dropped his slight hand, and stood looking at him coolly till he chose to speak.

'Sit down, sir,' he said, at length. 'Mrs. Linton, recalling old times, wishes me to receive you cordially; and, of course, I am gratified when anything occurs to please her.'

'I also,' answered Heathcliff, 'especially if it be anything in which I have a part. I shall stay an hour or two willingly.'

He took a seat opposite Catherine, who kept her eyes fixed on him as if she feared he would vanish. He did not raise his gaze to her often: a quick glance now and then sufficed; but it flashed back, each time more confidently, the undisguised delight he drank from her look. They were too much absorbed in their mutual joy to suffer embarrassment.

Not so Mr. Edgar: he grew pale with annoyance: a feeling that reached its climax when his lady rose, and, stepping across the rug, seized Heathcliff's hands again, and laughed like one beside herself.

'I shall think it a dream tomorrow!' she cried. 'I shall not be able to believe that I have seen, and touched, and spoken to you once more. And yet, cruel Heathcliff! you don't deserve this welcome. To be absent and silent for three years, and never to think of me!'

'A little more than you have thought of me,' he murmured. 'I heard of your marriage, Cathy; and I decided to have one glimpse of your face; and afterwards to settle my score with Hindley; and then prevent the law by doing execution on myself. Your welcome has put these ideas out of my mind. You'll not drive me off again. You were really sorry for me, were you? Well, there was cause. I've fought through a bitter life since I last heard your voice; and I struggled only for you!'

'Catherine, please come to the table,' interrupted Linton, striving to keep his ordinary tone, and a measure of politeness. 'Mr. Heathcliff will have a long walk, wherever he may lodge to-night; and I'm thirsty.'

Miss Isabella came; then, with the tea poured, I left the room. The meal hardly lasted ten minutes. Catherine could neither eat nor drink. Edgar scarcely swallowed a mouthful. Their guest did not stay more than an hour. I asked him, as he left, if he went to Gimmerton?

'No, to Wuthering Heights,' he answered: 'Mr. Earnshaw invited me, when I called this morning.'

Hindley invited him! I pondered this sentence painfully, after he was gone. Was he coming into the country to work mischief under a cloak? I felt that he had better have stayed away.

About the middle of the night, I was wakened by Mrs. Linton gliding into my chamber.

'I cannot rest, Ellen,' she said. 'Edgar is sulky, because I'm glad of a thing that does not interest him: he is pettish, and said I was cruel and selfish for wishing to talk when he was sick and sleepy. He always contrives to be sick at the least thing! I said a few sentences in praise of Heathcliff, and he began to cry: so I got up and left him.'

‘What use is it praising Heathcliff to him?’ I answered. ‘As lads they did not like each other, and Heathcliff would hate to hear *him* praised.’

‘But does it not show great weakness?’ said she. ‘I’m never envious of Isabella’s fair hair or her dainty elegance. In a dispute, I yield and call her a darling. It pleases her brother to see us friends, and that pleases me. But they are very much alike: they are spoiled children, and fancy the world was made for them; and though I humour both, I think a smart chastisement might improve them.’

‘You’re mistaken, Mrs. Linton,’ said I. ‘*They* humour *you*. They make it their business to foresee all your desires. If you fall out, however, they can be as obstinate as you can.’

She laughed. ‘I have such faith in Linton’s love, that I believe I might kill him, and he wouldn’t retaliate. But he needn’t resort to whining. Instead of melting into tears because I said that Heathcliff was now worthy of anyone’s regard, he ought to have said it himself. He must get used to him. I’m sure Heathcliff behaved excellently!’

‘What do you think of his going to Wuthering Heights?’ I inquired.

‘He said he called there to gather information about me; and Hindley asked him what he had been doing, and desired him to walk in. There were some persons sitting at cards; Heathcliff joined them; my brother lost some money to him, and, finding him plentifully supplied, he asked him to come again in the evening. Hindley is reckless; he doesn’t reflect that perhaps he should mistrust one whom he has injured. But Heathcliff says he has an attachment to the house where we lived together. He means to pay well to lodge at the Heights; and doubtless my brother’s greed will lead him to accept.’

‘Have you no fear of the consequences, Mrs. Linton?’

‘None for Heathcliff,’ she replied: ‘a little for Hindley: but I stand between him and harm. The event of this evening has reconciled me to God and humanity! Oh, I’ve endured very bitter misery, Nelly! If Edgar knew how bitter, he would not be so petulant. It was kindness for him which made me bear it. However, now I can bear anything! As a proof, I’ll go make my peace with Edgar instantly. Good-night! I’m an angel!’

In this self-complacent conviction she departed; and her success was obvious the next day. Mr. Linton not only ceased his peevishness (though he seemed still subdued), but he let her take Isabella with her to Wuthering Heights; and Catherine rewarded him with such a summer of sweetness and affection as made the house a paradise for several days.

Heathcliff – Mr. Heathcliff I should say in future – used the liberty of visiting Thrushcross Grange cautiously, at first. Catherine wisely moderated her pleasure in receiving him; and he retained a great deal of his boyhood reserve. My master’s uneasiness was lulled, and other matters distracted him for a while.

His new source of trouble sprang from Isabella Linton, who felt a sudden and irresistible attraction towards Heathcliff. She was at that time a charming young lady of eighteen; infantile in manners, though with keen wit, and a keen temper, too.

Her brother, who loved her tenderly, was appalled at her preference. Leaving aside the degradation of an alliance with a nameless man, he understood Heathcliff’s character. He knew that, though Heathcliff’s exterior was altered, his mind was unchanged. And that mind revolted him: he shrank from the idea of giving Isabella to its keeping. He would have recoiled still more had he known that Heathcliff cared nothing for her.

We had all noticed for a while that Miss Linton fretted and pined over something. She grew cross and wearisome. We excused her on the plea of ill-health: she was fading before our eyes. But one day, when she had been peculiarly wayward, rejecting her breakfast, complaining that the servants did not obey her, that she had caught a cold and that we let the parlour fire go out on purpose, and a hundred more frivolous accusations, Mrs. Linton insisted that she should get to bed; and threatened to send for the doctor. Isabella exclaimed that her health was perfect, and that it was only Catherine's harshness which made her unhappy.

'When have I been harsh?' cried the mistress, amazed.

'Yesterday,' sobbed Isabella.

'Yesterday! When?'

'In our walk along the moor: you told me to ramble where I pleased, while you walked on with Mr. Heathcliff!'

'And that's your notion of harshness?' said Catherine, laughing. 'I merely thought Heathcliff's talk would not have entertained you.'

'Oh, no,' wept the young lady; 'you wished me away, because you knew I liked to be there! I wanted to be with—'

'Well?' said Catherine.

'With him: and I won't be always sent off! You are a dog in the manger, Cathy, and want no one to be loved but yourself!'

'You are an impertinent little monkey!' exclaimed Mrs. Linton. 'But I'll not believe this idiocy! You cannot consider Heathcliff agreeable! I hope I have misunderstood you, Isabella?'

'No, you have not,' said the infatuated girl. 'I love him more than ever you loved Edgar, and he might love me, if you would let him!'

'I wouldn't be you for a kingdom, then!' Catherine declared. 'Nelly, help me to convince her of her madness. Tell her what Heathcliff is: a creature without refinement; a wilderness of furze and stone. I'd as soon put that little canary outside on a winter's day, as recommend you to give your heart to him! Don't imagine that he conceals kindness beneath a stern exterior! He's not a rough diamond – a pearl-containing oyster: he's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man. He'd crush you like a sparrow's egg, Isabella, if he found you troublesome. Yet he'd be quite capable of marrying your fortune: avarice is becoming his besetting sin.'

'I don't believe you!' said Miss Linton indignantly.

'Ah! You think I speak from wicked selfishness?'

'I'm certain you do,' retorted Isabella.

'Good!' cried the other. 'Try for yourself: I have done.'

'All is against me!' sobbed Isabella, as Mrs. Linton left the room. 'But she lied, didn't she? Mr. Heathcliff is not a fiend: he has a true soul, or how could he remember her?'

'Banish him from your thoughts, Miss,' I said. 'He's a bird of bad omen: no mate for you. How has he got rich? Why is he staying at Wuthering Heights, with a man whom he hates? They say Mr. Earnshaw is worse and worse since he came. They sit up all night together, and Hindley does nothing but gamble and drink, pouring his gold into Heathcliff's pocket!'

'I'll not listen to your slanders, Ellen!' she replied.

The next day, my master was out, and Mr. Heathcliff called in his absence. Catherine and Isabella were sitting in the library, on hostile terms. As Heathcliff passed the window, I noticed a mischievous smile on Catherine's face.

‘Come in!’ she exclaimed gaily. ‘We need someone to thaw the ice between us; and you are the very person. Heathcliff, I’m proud to show you, at last, somebody that dotes on you more than myself. Nay, it’s not Nelly; don’t look at her! My poor little sister-in-law is breaking her heart over you. It lies in your power to be Edgar’s brother! No, no, Isabella, you shan’t run off,’ she continued, grasping her. ‘We were quarrelling like cats about you, Heathcliff; and I was informed that if I would only stand aside, my rival would shoot an arrow into your soul that would fix you for ever!’

‘Catherine!’ said Isabella, with dignity, ‘I’d thank you to keep to the truth and not slander me, even in joke! Mr. Heathcliff, what amuses her is painful to me.’

As the guest answered nothing, but looked thoroughly indifferent, she whispered to Catherine to let her go.

‘By no means!’ cried Mrs. Linton. ‘You shall stay! Heathcliff, why aren’t you pleased? Isabella swears that the love Edgar has for me is nothing to that she has for you.’

Heathcliff stared hard at Isabella, as one might do at a strange repulsive animal. The poor thing couldn’t bear that; she grew white and then red, and, while tears beaded her lashes, bent the strength of her small fingers to loosen Catherine’s clutch. When she could not remove the hand, she began to use her sharp nails.

‘There’s a tigress!’ exclaimed Mrs. Linton, setting her free. ‘Begone, for God’s sake, and hide your vixen face! How foolish to reveal those talons to him!’

‘I’d wrench them off her fingers, if they ever menaced me,’ he answered brutally, when the door had closed after her. ‘But you were not speaking the truth, were you?’

‘I assure you I was,’ returned Catherine. ‘She has been raving about you, and abusing me, because I described your failings. I wished to punish her sauciness, that’s all. I like her too well, my dear Heathcliff, to let you seize and devour her.’

‘And I like her too ill to attempt it,’ said he. ‘You’d hear of odd things if I lived with that mawkish, waxen face: I’d be painting it the colours of the rainbow, and turning the blue eyes black: they detestably resemble Linton’s.’

‘Delectably!’ observed Catherine. ‘They are dove’s eyes – angel’s!’

‘She’s her brother’s heir, is she not?’

‘I should be sorry to think so,’ she returned. ‘Half a dozen nephews shall erase her title, I hope! Keep your mind off the subject: you are too prone to covet your neighbour’s goods; remember this neighbour’s goods are mine.’

They ceased to discuss the matter; but Heathcliff, I felt certain, recalled it often in the course of the evening. I saw him smile ominously to himself whenever Mrs. Linton was absent from the room.

I determined to watch his movements. I felt for my master, for he was kind and honourable – more honourable than Catherine. Heathcliff’s visits were a continual nightmare to me; and, I suspected, to my master also.

And as for Wuthering Heights – I felt that God had forsaken the stray sheep there to its wicked wanderings, and an evil beast prowled between it and the fold, waiting his time to spring and destroy.

CHAPTER 11

I decided that it was my duty to warn Hindley how people talked regarding his bad habits; but I flinched from re-entering his dismal house.

One bright, frosty afternoon I passed it on the way to Gimmerton. When I came to a stone sign-post showing the path to the Heights, a gush of child's sensations flowed into my heart. It had been a favourite spot for Hindley and I twenty years before. I gazed at the weather-worn block; and seemed to behold my early playmate seated on the withered turf: his dark, square head bent forward, and his little hand digging.

'Poor Hindley!' I exclaimed, involuntarily. The child lifted its face and stared straight into mine! It vanished in a twinkling; but immediately I felt a yearning to be at the Heights. Superstition urged me to go: supposing it were a sign of death!

As I got nearer to the house I trembled in every limb, for the apparition stood there again, looking through the gate, an elf-haired, brown-eyed boy pressing his face against the bars. Then I realised it was Hareton, my Hareton, not altered greatly since I left him, ten months since.

'God bless thee, darling!' I cried. 'Hareton, it's Nelly, thy nurse.'

He retreated, and picked up a large stone.

'I am come to see thy father, Hareton,' I added, guessing that he did not remember me.

He hurled his missile. It struck my bonnet; and then from the stammering lips of the little fellow came a string of curses, which grieved more than angered me. I took an orange from my pocket, and offered it to him.

'Who has taught you those fine words, my child?' I inquired. 'The curate?'

'Damn the curate, and thee! Gie me that,' he replied.

'Tell us where you got your lessons, and you shall have it,' said I. 'Who's your master?'

'Devil daddy,' was his answer.

'And what do you learn from daddy?' I continued.

He jumped at the fruit; I raised it higher. 'What does he teach you?' I asked.

'Naught,' said he, 'but to keep out of his way. Daddy cannot bide me, because I swear at him.'

'Ah! and the devil teaches you to swear at daddy?' I observed.

'Ay – nay,' he drawled.

'Who, then?'

'Heathcliff.'

I asked if he liked Mr. Heathcliff.

'Ay!' he answered. 'He curses daddy for cursing me. He says I can do as I will.'

'And the curate does not teach you to read and write, then?'

'No, Heathcliff said the curate should have his ___ teeth dashed down his ___ throat, if he came here!'

I put the orange in his hand, and bade him tell his father that Nelly Dean was waiting to speak with him. He entered the house; but, instead of Hindley, Heathcliff appeared at the door; and I turned and ran down the road as hard as I could, not stopping till I reached the guide-post.

The next time Heathcliff came to the Grange, Isabella was feeding pigeons in the courtyard. On seeing her, he surveyed the house-front. I was standing by the kitchen-window, but I drew out of sight.

He then stepped across the pavement to her, and said something: she seemed embarrassed, and wanted to get away, but he laid his hand on her arm. She averted her face: he put some question; and then, after another rapid glance at the house, and supposing himself unseen, the scoundrel had the impudence to embrace her.

‘Judas! Deceiver!’ I cried.

‘Who, Nelly?’ said Catherine at my elbow.

‘Your worthless friend!’ I answered. ‘Ah, he has seen us – he is coming in! I wonder if he will try to find an excuse for making love to Miss, after he told you he hated her?’

We saw Isabella tear herself free, and run into the garden. A minute later, Heathcliff opened the door. I began to express my indignation; but Catherine angrily threatened to send me out of the kitchen, if I did not hold my tongue.

‘One might think you were the mistress!’ she cried. ‘Heathcliff, what are you about? Let Isabella alone! – unless you wish Linton to lock the door against you!’

‘God forbid that he should try!’ answered the black villain. I detested him just then. ‘Every day I grow madder wanting to send him to heaven!’

‘Hush!’ said Catherine, shutting the door. ‘Don’t vex me. Why did you do it?’

‘What is it to you?’ he growled. ‘I have a right to kiss her, if she chooses; and you have no right to object. I am not your husband: you needn’t be jealous of me!’

‘I’m not jealous of you,’ replied the mistress; ‘I’m jealous *for* you. Don’t scowl at me! If you like Isabella, you shall marry her. But do you like her? Tell the truth, Heathcliff! I’m certain you don’t.’

‘You have treated me infernally – infernally!’ said Heathcliff. ‘Do you hear? And if you think I don’t know it, you are a fool; and if you think I can be consoled by sweet words, you are an idiot: and if you fancy I’ll suffer unrevenged, I’ll convince you of the contrary! Meantime, thank you for telling me Isabella’s secret: I’ll make the most of it. And stand you aside!’

‘What this?’ exclaimed Mrs. Linton, in amazement. ‘I’ve treated you infernally – how? And how will you take revenge, ungrateful brute?’

‘I seek no revenge on you,’ replied Heathcliff. ‘That’s not the plan. The tyrant grinds down his slaves, but they in turn crush those beneath them. You are welcome to torture me to death for your amusement, only allow me to amuse myself a little in the same style. If I imagined you really wished me to marry Isabella, I’d cut my throat!’

‘Oh, the evil is that I am not jealous, is it?’ cried Catherine. ‘Because you see Edgar and I at peace, secure and tranquil, you are resolved to start a quarrel. Quarrel with Edgar, if you please, Heathcliff, and deceive his sister: you’ll hit on exactly the most efficient method of revenging yourself on me.’

Mrs. Linton sat down by the fire, flushed and gloomy. Heathcliff stood on the hearth with folded arms, brooding on his evil thoughts. I left them and went to the master, who was wondering what kept Catherine downstairs so long.

‘Ellen,’ said he, ‘have you seen your mistress?’

‘Yes; she’s in the kitchen, sir,’ I answered. ‘She’s sadly put out by Mr. Heathcliff’s behaviour: and, indeed, I think it’s time to stop his visits.’ And I related the scene in the courtyard. Edgar Linton had difficulty in hearing me to the end.

‘This is insufferable!’ he exclaimed. ‘It is disgraceful that she should have him for a friend, and force his company on me! Call me two servants out of the hall, Ellen. I have humoured Catherine enough.’

He went to the kitchen. Mrs. Linton was scolding Heathcliff with renewed vigour; he had moved to the window, and hung his head. He saw the master first, and made a hasty motion that she should be silent; which she obeyed, abruptly.

‘How is this?’ said Linton, addressing her; ‘how can you remain here, after the language which that blackguard has used? I suppose you are accustomed to his baseness!’

‘Have you been listening at the door, Edgar?’ asked the mistress, in a tone of carelessness and contempt. Heathcliff gave a sneering laugh; but Edgar remained calm.

‘I’ve been forbearing with you, sir,’ he said quietly; ‘because I felt you were only partly responsible for your degraded character; and since Catherine wished to keep up your acquaintance, I agreed – foolishly. Your presence is a moral poison; and I deny you admission into this house, and request your instant departure.’

Heathcliff surveyed him with derision.

‘Cathy, this lamb of yours threatens like a bull!’ he said. ‘It is in danger of splitting its skull against my knuckles. By God! Mr. Linton, I’m sorry that you are not worth knocking down!’

My master signed me to fetch the servants. Mrs. Linton, however, pulled me back, slammed the door, and locked it.

‘Fair means!’ she said, in answer to her husband’s look of angry surprise. ‘If you have not courage to attack him, apologise, or allow yourself to be beaten. No, I’ll swallow the key before you shall get it! I have indulged your weak nature, and Heathcliff’s bad one, and I earn for thanks blind, stupid ingratitude! Edgar, I was defending you and yours; and I wish Heathcliff may flog you sick, for daring to think an evil thought of me!’

Mr. Edgar tried to wrest the key from her grasp. She flung it into the fire; whereupon he was taken with a nervous trembling, and grew deadly pale. Anguish and humiliation overcame him completely. He leant on a chair, and covered his face.

‘Oh, heavens! We are vanquished!’ exclaimed Mrs. Linton. ‘Heathcliff would as soon lift a finger at you as the king would march his army against a colony of mice. Cheer up! you shan’t be hurt!’

‘I wish you joy of the milk-blooded coward, Cathy!’ said Heathcliff. ‘That is the shivering thing you preferred to me! I’d like to kick him. Is he weeping, or is he going to faint with fear?’

He gave Linton’s chair a push. He had better have kept his distance: my master quickly sprang up, and struck him full on the throat a blow that would have levelled a slighter man. It took Heathcliff’s breath away, and while he choked, Mr. Linton walked out by the back door.

‘Get away now,’ cried Catherine. ‘He’ll return with a brace of pistols and half-a-dozen men. You’ve done me an ill turn, Heathcliff! But make haste! I’d rather see Edgar at bay than you.’

‘Do you suppose I’m going with that blow burning in my gullet?’ he thundered. ‘By hell, no! I’ll crush his ribs like a rotten hazel-nut! If I don’t floor him now, I shall murder him some time; so let me get at him!’

‘He is not coming,’ I interposed, although I was telling a lie. ‘There’s the coachman and the two gardeners, each with a bludgeon; and master will be watching from the parlour-windows to see them throw you out.’

The gardeners and coachman were there, but Linton was with them. Heathcliff, on second thoughts, resolved to avoid a struggle: he seized the poker, smashed the lock from the inner door, and made his escape as they tramped in.

Mrs. Linton excitedly bade me come with her upstairs. She did not know what I had told her husband, and I was anxious to keep her in ignorance.

‘I’m nearly distracted, Nelly!’ she exclaimed. ‘A thousand hammers are beating in my head! Tell Isabella to shun me; this uproar is owing to her. And, Nelly, say to Edgar that I’m in danger of being seriously ill. I wish it may prove true. He has distressed me shockingly! I want to frighten him. Will you do so, my good Nelly? I am no way to blame in this matter. If Edgar had not listened to our conversation, he would never have been the worse for it. Really, when he used that unreasonable tone after I had scolded Heathcliff for him, I did not care what they did to each other! Well, if I cannot have Heathcliff for a friend – if Edgar will be mean and jealous, I’ll break their hearts by breaking my own. That will show them! You must remind Edgar of my passionate temper. I wish you could look more anxious about me.’

The stolidity with which I received these instructions was, no doubt, rather exasperating: for she was perfectly sincere; but I believed a person who could plan her fits of passion might manage to control herself, and I did not wish to frighten her husband just to serve her selfishness. Therefore I said nothing when the master came to speak to her.

‘Remain where you are, Catherine,’ he said; without anger, but with much sorrow. ‘I shall not stay. I wish only to learn whether, after this evening’s events, you intend to continue your intimacy with—’

‘Oh, for mercy’s sake,’ interrupted the mistress, stamping her foot, ‘let us hear no more of it now! Your veins are full of ice-water; but mine are boiling, and the sight of your chillness makes them dance.’

‘Answer my question,’ persevered Mr. Linton. ‘Will you give up Heathcliff, or me? It is impossible for you to be my friend and his; and I require to know which you choose.’

‘I require to be let alone!’ exclaimed Catherine, furiously. ‘I demand it! Don’t you see I can scarcely stand? Leave me!’

She rang the bell till it broke with a twang; I entered leisurely. It was enough to try a saint, such senseless, wicked rages! She lay dashing her head against the arm of the sofa, and grinding her teeth, as if she would crash them to splinters!

Mr. Linton stood looking at her in sudden fear. He told me to fetch some water. I brought a glass full; and as she would not drink, I sprinkled it on her face. She stretched herself out stiff, and turned up her eyes like one dead. Linton looked terrified.

‘There is nothing the matter,’ I whispered.

‘She has blood on her lips!’ he said, shuddering.

‘Never mind!’ I answered, tartly. And I told him how she had resolved on exhibiting a fit of frenzy. She heard me; she started up with her eyes flashing, glared about her, and then rushed from the room. The master told me to follow; but she locked her chamber-door against me.

As she never came down to breakfast next morning, I went to ask whether she would have some carried up.

‘No!’ she replied. The same question was repeated at dinner and tea; and again on the day after, and received the same answer.

Mr. Linton spent his time in the library, and did not inquire about his wife. He spoke to Isabella about Heathcliff's advances: but he could make nothing of her evasive replies, and was obliged to give her a solemn warning, that if she were so insane as to encourage that worthless suitor, he would disown her.

CHAPTER 12

Miss Isabella moped about the park and garden, silent and in tears; and her brother shut himself up among books that he never opened – expecting that Catherine would repent and come to ask his pardon. Meanwhile, she fasted, thinking that at every meal Edgar regretted her absence, and that pride alone stopped him from throwing himself at her feet.

I went about my household duties, convinced that I was the only sensible soul in the place. I wasted no pity on any of them, but determined they should recover as they pleased; and though it was tiresomely slow, at last I saw some progress.

Mrs. Linton, on the third day, unbarred her door, and asked for water and a basin of gruel, for she believed she was dying. I believed no such thing, so I kept it to myself and brought her some tea and dry toast. She ate and drank eagerly, and sank back on her pillow, groaning.

‘Oh, I will die,’ she exclaimed, ‘since no one cares about me.’ Then she murmured, ‘No, I’ll not die – he’d be glad – he would never miss me!’

‘Did you want anything, ma’am?’ I inquired, still keeping my composure, in spite of her ghastly looks and strange manner.

‘What is that apathetic being doing?’ she demanded, pushing the tangled hair from her wasted face.

‘If you mean Mr. Linton, he’s tolerably well, I think. He is continually among his books, since he has no other company.’

I should not have spoken so if I had known her true condition, but I believed that she was acting ill.

‘Among his books!’ she cried. ‘And I dying! My God! does he know how I’m altered? Cannot you inform him that it is frightful earnest? Nelly, are you speaking the truth about him? Is he actually so utterly indifferent for my life?’

‘Why, ma’am,’ I answered, ‘of course the master does not fear that you will let yourself die of hunger.’

‘You think not? Persuade him!’ she returned. ‘Say you are certain I will!’

‘No, you forget, Mrs. Linton,’ I suggested, ‘that you have eaten some food this evening, and tomorrow you will perceive its good effects.’

‘If I were only sure it would kill him,’ she interrupted, ‘I’d kill myself directly! These three awful nights I’ve never closed my eyes – and oh, I’ve been tormented! I’ve been haunted, Nelly! But I begin to think you don’t like me. How strange! I thought, though everybody hated and despised each other, they could not avoid loving me. And they have all turned to enemies. How dreary to meet death, surrounded by their cold faces! Isabella, afraid to enter the room, dreading to watch Catherine go. And Edgar standing solemnly by to see it over; then offering thanks to God for restoring peace to his house, and going back to his books! What has he to do with books, when I am dying?’

She could not bear the idea of Mr. Linton’s philosophical resignation. Tossing about feverishly, she tore the pillow with her teeth; then raising herself up all burning, desired that I would open the window. We were in the middle of winter, and I objected. But her face and her changing moods began to alarm me terribly.

One minute she was violent; the next, she was pulling the feathers from the rents she had just made in the pillow, and arranging them on the sheet according to their species.

‘That’s a turkey’s,’ she murmured to herself; ‘and this is a wild duck’s; and this is a pigeon’s. Ah, they put pigeons’ feathers in the pillows – no wonder I couldn’t die! Let me take care to throw it on the floor when I lie down. And here is a moor-cock’s; and this – I should know it among a thousand – it’s a lapwing’s. Bonny bird; wheeling over our heads in the middle of the moor. We saw its nest in the winter, full of little skeletons. Heathcliff set a trap over it, and the old ones dared not come. I made him promise he’d never shoot a lapwing after that, and he didn’t. Yes, here are more! Did he shoot my lapwings, Nelly? Are they red, any of them? Let me look.’

‘Give over with that baby-work!’ I interrupted, dragging the pillow away, for she was removing its contents by handfuls. ‘Lie down and shut your eyes: you’re wandering. There’s a mess! The down is flying about like snow.’ I began to gather it up.

‘I see in you, Nelly,’ she continued dreamily, ‘an aged woman, with grey hair and bent shoulders. This bed is the fairy cave under Penistone crags, and you are gathering elf-bolts to hurt our cattle; pretending that they are only locks of wool. That’s what you’ll come to fifty years hence: I know you are not so now. I’m not wandering: I know it’s night, and there are two candles on the table making the black press shine like jet.’

‘The black press? where is that?’ I asked. ‘You are talking in your sleep!’

‘It’s against the wall, as it always is,’ she replied. ‘It does appear odd – I see a face in it!’

‘There’s no press in the room, and never was,’ said I.

‘Don’t you see that face?’ she inquired, gazing earnestly at the mirror.

Say what I could, I could not make her comprehend it was her own; so I covered it with a shawl.

‘It’s behind there still!’ she said anxiously. ‘Who is it? I hope it will not come out when you are gone! Oh! Nelly, the room is haunted! I’m afraid of being alone!’

I took her hand, and bid her be still; for she shuddered, and kept straining her gaze towards the glass.

‘There’s nobody here!’ I insisted. ‘It was yourself, Mrs. Linton.’

‘Myself!’ she gasped, ‘and the clock is striking twelve! It’s true, then! that’s dreadful!’

She pulled the bed-clothes over her eyes. I attempted to steal to the door to call her husband; but I was summoned back by a piercing shriek – the shawl had dropped from the mirror.

‘Why, what is the matter?’ cried I. ‘Wake up! That is the mirror, Mrs. Linton; and you see yourself in it, and there am I too by your side.’

She was trembling and bewildered; but the horror gradually passed from her face and gave way to a glow of shame.

‘Oh, dear! I thought I was back at Wuthering Heights,’ she sighed. ‘Because I’m weak, my brain got confused. Stay with me. I dread sleeping: my dreams appal me.’

‘A sound sleep would do you good, ma’am,’ I answered: ‘and I hope you will not try starving again.’

‘Oh, if I were but in my own bed in the old house!’ she went on bitterly, wringing her hands. ‘And that wind sounding in the firs. Do let me feel it – it comes straight down the moor – do let me have one breath!’

To pacify her I held the window open a few seconds. A cold blast rushed through; I closed it, and returned to my post. She lay still now, her face bathed in tears.

Exhaustion had entirely subdued her: our fiery Catherine was no better than a wailing child.

‘How long is it since I shut myself in here?’ she asked.

‘Three days,’ I replied.

‘What! Only that brief time?’

‘Long enough to live on nothing but cold water and ill-temper,’ observed I.

‘Well, it seems a weary number of hours,’ she muttered doubtfully: ‘it must be more. I remember running into this room desperate after they quarrelled. Then utter blackness overwhelmed me, and I fell on the floor. I felt sure of having a fit, or going raging mad. Before I recovered, it began to be dawn, and, Nelly, I’ll tell you what I thought, and what has kept recurring till I feared for my reason.

‘I thought as I lay there, with my head against that table leg, and my eyes dimly seeing the grey square of the window, that I was enclosed in the oak-panelled bed at home; and my heart ached with some great grief which I could not recollect. I pondered, and worried myself to discover what it could be, and, most strangely, the whole last seven years of my life grew a blank! I did not recall them at all. I was a child; my father was just buried, and I was separated from Heathcliff for the first time. Rousing from a dismal doze after a night of weeping, I lifted my hand: it struck the table-top, and then memory burst in, in a paroxysm of despair.

‘I cannot say why I felt so wildly wretched – but, supposing at twelve years old I had been wrenched from the Heights, and from Heathcliff, and been converted at a stroke into Mrs. Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange, the wife of a stranger. You may imagine the abyss where I grovelled! You should have spoken to Edgar, indeed you should! Oh, I’m burning! I wish I were out of doors! I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free! Why am I so changed? I’m sure I should be myself were I among the heather on those hills. Open the window again! Quick, why don’t you move?’

‘Because I won’t give you your death of cold,’ I answered.

‘You won’t give me a chance of life, you mean,’ she said, sullenly. ‘I’ll open it myself.’

And before I could stop her, she crossed the room, walking very uncertainly, threw open the window and bent out, careless of the frosty air that cut about her shoulders as keen as a knife. I tried to make her retire; but her delirious strength surpassed mine.

There was no moon, and everything lay in misty darkness: not a light gleamed from any house, far or near; and those at Wuthering Heights were never visible – still she asserted she caught their shining.

‘Look!’ she cried eagerly, ‘that’s my room with the candle, and the trees swaying before it; and the other candle is in Joseph’s garret. Joseph sits up late, doesn’t he? He’s waiting till I come home so that he may lock the gate. Well, he’ll wait a while yet. We must pass by Gimmerton Kirk to go that rough journey! We’ve braved its ghosts often together, and dared each other to stand among the graves. But, Heathcliff, if I dare you now, will you venture? If you do, I’ll keep you. I’ll not lie there by myself: they may bury me twelve feet deep, but I won’t rest till you are with me!’

She paused, and resumed with a strange smile. ‘He’s considering – he’d rather I’d come to him! Find a way, then! not through that churchyard. You are slow! Be content, you always followed me!’

Perceiving it vain to argue against her insanity, I was planning how to wrap something around her, without letting go of her (for I could not trust her alone by the gaping window), when, to my consternation, Mr. Linton entered. He had just come from the library, and had heard our talking.

‘Oh, sir!’ I cried, ‘My poor mistress is ill, and I cannot manage her at all; pray, persuade her to go to bed.’

‘Catherine ill?’ he said, hastening over to us. ‘Shut the window, Ellen! Catherine!’

Mrs. Linton’s haggard appearance smote him speechless, and he could only glance from her to me in horrified astonishment.

‘She’s been fretting here,’ I continued, ‘and eating scarcely anything, and never complaining: she would let no-one in till this evening, and so we couldn’t inform you of her state, as we were not aware of it ourselves; but it is nothing.’

‘It is nothing, is it, Ellen Dean?’ he said sternly. ‘You shall account for keeping me ignorant of this!’ He took his wife in his arms, and looked at her with anguish.

At first she gave him no glance of recognition: but by degrees she shifted her attention from the outer darkness and centred it on him.

‘Ah! you are come, are you, Edgar Linton?’ she said angrily. ‘You are always found when least wanted, and when you are wanted, never! I suppose we shall have plenty of lamentations now – but they can’t keep me from my narrow home out yonder: my resting-place, where I’m bound before spring is over! Not among the Lintons, mind, under the chapel-roof, but in the open air, with a head-stone; and you may please yourself whether you go to them or come to me!’

‘Catherine, what have you done?’ began the master. ‘Am I nothing to you any more? Do you love that wretch Heath—’

‘Hush!’ cried Mrs. Linton. ‘Hush, this moment! You mention that name and I will leap from the window! My soul will be on that hill-top before you lay hands on me again. I don’t want you, Edgar: I’m past wanting you. Return to your books.’

‘Her mind wanders, sir,’ I said. ‘She has been talking nonsense the whole evening; but let her have quiet, and she’ll rally. We must be cautious not to vex her.’

‘I desire no further advice from you,’ answered Mr. Linton. ‘You knew your mistress’s nature, and you encouraged me to harass her. And not to give me one hint of how she has been these three days! It was heartless! Months of sickness could not cause such a change!’

I began to defend myself, thinking it too bad to be blamed for another’s wicked waywardness. ‘I knew Mrs. Linton to be headstrong,’ cried I: ‘but I didn’t know that you wished to foster her fierce temper! I didn’t know that, to humour her, I should wink at Mr. Heathcliff. I was a faithful servant in telling you! Well, next time you may gather intelligence for yourself!’

‘The next time you bring a tale to me you shall quit my service, Ellen Dean,’ he replied.

‘You’d rather hear nothing about it, I suppose, then, Mr. Linton?’ said I. ‘Heathcliff has your permission to come a-courting to Miss, and to drop in at every opportunity to poison the mistress against you?’

Confused as Catherine was, her wits were alert.

‘Ah! Nelly has played traitor,’ she exclaimed, passionately. ‘Nelly is my hidden enemy. You witch! Let me go, and I’ll make her howl!’

She struggled furiously to free herself from Linton’s arms. Resolving to seek medical aid, I left the room.

In passing through the garden to reach the road, I saw something white moving. Despite my hurry, I stopped to examine it, lest ever after I should imagine that it was a creature of the other world. My surprise and perplexity were great on discovering Miss Isabella's spaniel suspended by a handkerchief, and nearly at its last gasp. I quickly released the dog, wondering how it could have got there, and who had treated it so. While untying it, I thought I caught the beat of horses' feet galloping at some distance; a strange sound at two o'clock in the morning.

Dr. Kenneth was just leaving the house as I came up the street; and my account of Catherine Linton's illness induced him to accompany me back immediately. He was a plain rough man, and bluntly spoke his doubt of her surviving this second attack.

'Nelly Dean,' said he, 'I can't help fancying there's an extra cause for this. What has been happening at the Grange? We've odd reports up here. A stout, hearty lass like Catherine does not fall ill for a trifle. How did it begin?'

'The master will tell you,' I answered; 'but you know the Earnshaws' violent dispositions, and Mrs. Linton caps them all. I may say this; it began in a quarrel. She was struck during a tempest of passion with a kind of fit. That's her account, at least: for she flew off and locked herself up. Afterwards, she refused to eat, and now she alternately raves and remains in a half dream, with her mind filled with all sorts of strange ideas.'

'Mr. Linton will be sorry?' asked Kenneth.

'Sorry? he'll break his heart should anything happen!' I replied. 'Don't alarm him more than necessary.'

'Well, I told him to beware,' said my companion. 'Hasn't he been intimate with Mr. Heathcliff lately?'

'Heathcliff frequently visits at the Grange,' answered I, 'though more because the mistress knew him when a boy, than because the master likes his company. At present he's banned from calling, after presuming to aspire after Miss Linton.'

'And does Miss Linton turn a cold shoulder on him?'

'I'm not in her confidence.'

'No, she's a sly one,' he remarked, shaking his head. 'She keeps her own counsel! But she's a real little fool. I have it from good authority that last night she and Heathcliff were walking in the plantation at the back of your house for two hours; and he pressed her not to go in again, but just mount his horse and ride away with him! She promised to be prepared on their next meeting; so you urge Mr. Linton to look sharp!'

This news filled me with fresh fears, and I ran most of the way back. The little dog was yelping in the garden; I seized it and carried it in with me.

On ascending to Isabella's room, my suspicions were confirmed: it was empty. What could be done? There was a possibility of overtaking them if pursued instantly. I could not pursue them, however; and I dared not tell my master, absorbed as he was in his present calamity, and having no heart to spare for a second grief! I saw nothing for it but to hold my tongue.

When Dr. Kenneth arrived, Catherine lay in a troubled sleep. Her husband hung over her pillow, watching every change of her features. The doctor spoke hopefully of her recovery if we could only keep her perfectly tranquil. To me, he said the danger was not so much death, as the loss of her wits.

I did not close my eyes that night, nor did Mr. Linton: and the servants were all up long before the usual hour, moving stealthily through the house, and exchanging whispers. Everyone was active but Miss Isabella. Her brother asked if she had risen,

and I trembled lest he should send me to call her; but I was spared that. One of the maids, a thoughtless girl, came panting into the chamber, crying: 'Oh, dear, dear! What next? Master, master, our young lady—'

'Hold your noise!' I cried hastily.

'Speak lower, Mary. What is the matter?' said Mr. Linton. 'What ails your young lady?'

'She's gone! Heathcliff's run off wi' her!' gasped the girl.

'No! It cannot be!' exclaimed Linton.

'Why, I met a lad that brings milk here,' she stammered, 'and he asked whether we weren't in trouble at the Grange. Then he told me how a gentleman and lady had stopped at a blacksmith's, two miles out of Gimmerton, not long after midnight! and the blacksmith's daughter recognised them. The man was Heathcliff, she felt certain: the lady had a cloak about her face; but when she took a drink of water she saw her very plain. They rode on away from the village. The lass told it all over Gimmerton this morning.'

'Are we to try and bring her back?' I asked him. 'What should we do?'

'She went of her own accord,' answered the master; 'she had a right to go if she pleased. Trouble me no more about her. Hereafter she is only my sister in name: not because I disown her, but because she has disowned me.'

And that was all he said on the subject. He did not mention her in any way, except to tell me to send her things to her new home, when I knew where it was.

CHAPTER 13

For two months the fugitives remained absent. In those two months, Mrs. Linton overcame the worst of a brain fever. No mother could have nursed an only child more devotedly than Edgar tended her. Day and night he watched her, patiently enduring her irritable nerves and shaken reason; and, though Dr. Kenneth remarked that she had been saved from the grave only to cause constant future anxiety, Edgar was full of gratitude and joy when Catherine's life was declared out of danger. Hour after hour he would sit beside her, under the illusion that as she returned to bodily health, her mind would settle back to its right balance also.

The first time she left her chamber was at the start of March. Mr. Linton had put on her pillow a handful of golden crocuses; her eye caught them in waking, and shone delighted as she gathered them eagerly together.

'These are the earliest flowers at the Heights,' she exclaimed. 'They remind me of soft winds, and warm sunshine, and nearly melted snow. Edgar, is there not a south wind, and is not the snow almost gone?'

'The snow is quite gone, darling,' replied her husband; 'the sky is blue, and the larks are singing, and the becks and brooks are all brim full. I wish you were up those hills: the air blows so sweetly, I feel that it would cure you.'

'I shall be there only once more,' she said; 'and then I shall remain for ever. Next spring you'll look back and think you were happy today.'

Linton tried to cheer her; but she let the tears stream down her cheeks. We knew she was really better, and, therefore, decided that this sadness might be removed by a change of scene. The master told me to light a fire in the parlour, and to set an easy-chair in the sunshine by the window. Then he brought her down, and she sat enjoying the heat, and revived by the familiar objects round her.

By evening she seemed exhausted; yet she would not return to her bedroom, and I had to arrange the parlour sofa for her bed. We fitted up this room for her, where you lie at present, and she was soon strong enough to move from here to the parlour, leaning on Edgar's arm.

I thought she might recover; and there was double cause to desire it, for on her existence depended that of another. We hoped that in a little while Mr. Linton's heart would be gladdened, and his lands secured, by the birth of an heir.

I should mention that Isabella, six weeks after her departure, sent her brother a short note, announcing her marriage with Heathcliff. It appeared dry and cold; but at the bottom was scribbled an obscure apology, asserting that she could not help it.

Linton did not reply to this. In a fortnight more, I got a long letter, which was odd coming from the pen of a new bride. I'll read it: for I keep it still.

Dear Ellen, it begins, – I came last night to Wuthering Heights, and heard, for the first time, that Catherine has been very ill. I must not write to her, I suppose, and my brother is either too angry or too distressed to answer my letter. Still, I must write to somebody, and the only choice left me is you.

Tell Edgar that I'd give the world to see his face again – that my heart returned to Thrushcross Grange twenty-four hours after I left it, and is full of warm feelings for him, and Catherine! But they need not expect me, although not through any lack of affection for them.

I want to ask you two questions: the first is, How did you manage to preserve the common sympathies of human nature when you lived here? I cannot recognise any feeling which those around me share with me.

The second question is this – Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil? Please explain, if you can, what I have married. You must call to see me, Ellen, very soon. Don't write, but come, and bring me something from Edgar.

Now, you shall hear how I have been received in my new home. Despite its lack of comforts, I should dance for joy, if their absence was the total of my miseries!

It was dark when we arrived at the farm-house, and your old fellow-servant, Joseph, came out to receive us by the light of a candle. He raised his torch to my face, squinted malignantly, and turned away to lead the horses into the stables.

Heathcliff stayed to speak to him, and I entered the kitchen – a dingy, untidy hole; it is changed since it was in your charge. By the fire stood a strong, ruffianly child, in dirty clothes, with a look of Catherine about his eyes and mouth.

'This is Edgar's nephew,' I reflected. 'I must shake hands, and kiss him.'

I approached, and, attempting to take his chubby fist, said, 'How do you do, my dear? Shall you and I be friends, Hareton?'

An oath, and a threat to set Throtter on me if I did not 'frame off' rewarded me.

'Hey, Throtter, lad!' whispered the little wretch, rousing a bull-dog from its lair in a corner. 'Now, wilt thou be ganging?' he demanded.

In fear of my life, I stepped outside to wait for the others. Mr. Heathcliff was nowhere visible; and Joseph, whom I asked to accompany me in, screwed up his nose and replied – 'Mim! mim! mim! Did ever Christian body hear aught like it? Mincing un' munching! How can I tell what ye say?'

'I say, I wish you to come with me into the house!' I cried, highly disgusted at his rudeness.

'Not me! I got summut else to do,' he answered with contempt, and continued his work.

I walked round the yard to another door, at which I knocked. It was opened by a tall, gaunt, unkempt man; masses of shaggy hair hung on his shoulders; and his eyes, too, were like a ghostly Catherine's with all their beauty annihilated.

'What's your business here?' he asked grimly. 'Who are you?'

'My name was Isabella Linton,' I replied. 'I'm married to Mr. Heathcliff, and he has brought me here.'

'Is he come back, then?' he asked, glaring like a hungry wolf.

'Yes – just now,' I said; 'but he left me here, and I am frightened of the bull-dog in your kitchen.'

'It's well the hellish villain has kept his word!' growled my host. I wanted to slip away, but he ordered me in, and shut the door.

There was a great fire, and that was the only light in the huge apartment. Its floor had become grey; as had the once brilliant pewter-dishes, now dark with tarnish and dust. I asked if I might call a maid; but Mr. Hindley Earnshaw walked up and down, with his hands in his pockets, quite forgetting my presence.

You'll not be surprised, Ellen, at my feeling very cheerless, remembering that four miles distant lay my delightful home, containing the only people I loved on earth; and there might as well be the Atlantic between us, instead of those four miles! The cause of my worst despair was finding nobody who would be my ally against Heathcliff! I had sought shelter at Wuthering Heights almost gladly, because it was better than living alone with him; but the people here will not interfere.

Meanwhile the clock struck nine, and still my companion paced to and fro, groaning now and then. I could not help weeping, till Earnshaw halted, and gave me a stare of newly-awakened surprise.

I exclaimed – ‘I’m tired with my journey, and I want to go to bed! Where is the maid-servant?’

‘We have none,’ he answered; ‘you must wait on yourself!’

‘Where must I sleep, then?’ I sobbed.

‘Joseph will show you Heathcliff’s chamber,’ said he. Then he added in the strangest tone – ‘Be so good as to lock your door and bolt it!’

‘Why, Mr. Earnshaw?’

‘Look here!’ he replied, pulling out a pistol with a knife attached to the barrel. ‘That’s a great tempter to a desperate man, is it not? I cannot resist going up with this every night, and trying his door. If once I find it open he’s done for. When the time comes, not all the angels in heaven shall save him!’

I surveyed the weapon inquisitively, thinking how powerful I should be with such an instrument! I took it from his hand and touched the blade. He looked astonished at the covetous expression on my face. Snatching it back, he returned it to its hiding-place.

‘I don’t care if you tell him,’ said he.

‘What has Heathcliff done to you?’ I asked. ‘How has he wronged you? Why don’t you tell him to leave?’

‘No!’ thundered Earnshaw; ‘if he tries to leave me, he’s a dead man! Am I to lose all, without a chance of retrieval? Is Hareton to be a beggar? Oh, damnation! I’ll have his gold, and then his blood; and hell shall have his soul!’

Your old master is clearly on the verge of madness, Ellen. Shuddering, I escaped into the kitchen. Joseph was bending over the fire, peering into a large pan; a bowl of oatmeal stood close by. I guessed that the pan held our supper, and, being hungry, I resolved it should be eatable; so, crying out, ‘I’ll make the porridge!’ I removed it out of his reach. ‘Mr. Earnshaw,’ I continued, ‘tells me to wait on myself: so I will, rather than starve.’

‘Good Lord!’ he muttered, sitting down. ‘If I must have a mistress set o’er my head, it’s time to be flitting!’

I took no notice, but went briskly to work. Joseph watched me with growing indignation.

‘There!’ he cried. ‘Hareton, thou won’t sup thy porridge tonight; they’ll be naught but lumps.’

It was rather a rough mess, I own, when poured into the bowls. Hareton seized the jug of milk and drank from it. When I told him he should put it in a mug, he kept drinking and glowered at me defyingly.

‘I shall have my supper in another room,’ I said. ‘Have you no parlour?’

‘Parlour!’ Joseph sneered. ‘Nay, we’ve no parlours. If yah don’t like our company, there’s master’s; an’ if yah don’t like master, there’s us.’

‘Then I shall go upstairs,’ I answered; ‘show me a room.’

I picked up my bowl. With great grumblings, the fellow rose, and we mounted to the garrets.

‘Here’s a room,’ he said, flinging back a cranky door. ‘It’s good enough to eat porridge in.’

The room was a lumber-hole smelling of malt and grain, which were piled around in sacks.

‘Why, man,’ I exclaimed angrily, ‘this is not a place to sleep in. I wish to see my bedroom.’

‘Bed-room!’ he repeated, in a tone of mockery. ‘Yah see all t’ bedrooms there is – yon’s mine.’ He pointed into the second garret.

‘What do I want with yours? Mr. Heathcliff does not sleep up here, does he?’

‘Oh! it’s Master Hathecliff’s ye’re wanting?’ cried he, as if making a new discovery. ‘Couldn’t ye have said so? He allas keeps his locked, an’ nobody ever goes in but hisself.’

‘Well, there are other rooms. For heaven’s sake, let me settle somewhere!’

He made no reply. Plodding down the wooden steps, he halted at an apartment which, from the superior quality of its furniture, I assumed to be the best one. There was a carpet, its pattern hidden by dust; a fireplace hung with cut-paper, dropping to pieces; and a handsome oak bedstead with crimson curtains, which had been wrenched roughly from their rings, so that they trailed upon the floor. The chairs were also damaged, as were the panels of the walls.

‘This here is t’ master’s,’ announced my guide. My supper by this time was cold, and my patience exhausted. I insisted on being provided instantly with a room and a bed.

‘Where the devil?’ he began. ‘The Lord bless us! Ye’ve seen all but Hareton’s bit of a chamber. There’s not another hole to lie down in i’ th’ house!’

I was so vexed, I flung my porridge on the ground; and then sat on the stairs and cried.

‘Ech! ech!’ exclaimed Joseph. ‘T’ master’ll tumble over them broken pots; an’ then we’ll hear summut! Will Hathecliff bide such bonny ways, think ye?’

He went scolding to his den, taking the candle with him; and I remained in the dark. An unexpected aid appeared in the shape of Throtter. The dog pushed its nose against mine by way of salute, and then devoured the porridge, while I collected the shattered earthenware, and dried the spatters of milk with my handkerchief.

Soon I heard Earnshaw’s step, and stole into the nearest doorway. The dog could not avoid him, as I guessed by a piteous yelping. Luckily he passed by me, entered his chamber, and shut the door.

I found shelter in Hareton’s room until Joseph came up with Hareton to put him to bed. ‘There’s room for both ye an’ yer pride downstairs, now,’ he said. ‘Ye may have it all to yerself!’

Gladly did I take advantage of this. I flung myself into a chair by the fire, and slept. My slumber was over too soon. Mr. Heathcliff awoke me; he had just come in, and demanded, in his loving manner, what I was doing there? I told him that he had the key of our room in his pocket.

The adjective *our* gave mortal offence. He swore it was not, nor ever should be, mine – but I’ll not repeat his language! I sometimes wonder at him with an intensity that deadens my fear: yet a tiger or a venomous serpent could not rouse terror in me equal to that which he wakens. He told me of Catherine’s illness, and accused my brother of causing it, promising that I should suffer in Edgar’s place.

I hate him – I am wretched – I have been a fool! Do not utter one breath of this to anyone at the Grange. I shall expect you every day – don’t disappoint me! Isabella.

CHAPTER 14

As soon as I had read this letter I went to the master, and told him about it, informing him of his sister's ardent desire to see him, and her wish to be sent some token of forgiveness.

'Forgiveness!' said Linton. 'I have nothing to forgive her, Ellen. Call at Wuthering Heights this afternoon, if you like, and say that I am not angry, but I'm sorry to have lost her; especially as I can never think she'll be happy. It is out of the question my going to see her, however.'

'And you won't write her a little note, sir?' I implored.

'No. I will not communicate with Heathcliff's family.'

Mr. Edgar's coldness depressed me exceedingly; and all the way from the Grange I puzzled my brains how to soften his refusal of even a few lines to Isabella.

I entered Wuthering Heights without knocking. There never was such a dismal scene as that formerly cheerful great room! If I had been there, I would, at least, have swept the hearth, and wiped the tables. But Isabella already shared the pervading spirit of neglect. Her pretty face was pale and listless; her dress was unchanged, and her hair was carelessly twisted round her head.

Hindley was not there. Mr. Heathcliff sat at a table, turning over some papers, but he rose and asked me how I did, quite friendly, and offered me a chair. He was the only thing there that seemed decent; and I thought he never looked better. He would certainly have struck a stranger as a born and bred gentleman; and his wife as a thorough little slattern! She came forward eagerly to greet me, and held out one hand to take the expected letter. I shook my head. She wouldn't understand the hint, but followed me to a sideboard, where I went to lay my bonnet; and begged me in a whisper to give her what I had brought.

Heathcliff said, 'If you have got anything for Isabella, give it to her, Nelly. You needn't make a secret of it: we have no secrets between us.'

'I have nothing,' I replied, thinking it best to speak the truth at once. 'My master bid me tell his sister that she must not expect either a letter or a visit from him. He sends his love, ma'am, and his wishes for your happiness, and his pardon for the grief you have caused; but he thinks you and he should drop communication.'

Mrs. Heathcliff's lip quivered slightly, and she returned to her seat. Her husband began to ask about Catherine's illness. I told him as much as I thought proper, blaming her for bringing it on herself; and ended by hoping that he would avoid future interference with the family.

'Mrs. Linton is recovering,' I said; 'she'll never be like she was, but her life is spared; and if you really have a regard for her, you won't see her again: nay, you'll leave this country entirely. Catherine Linton is different now from your old friend Catherine Earnshaw. Her appearance is changed greatly, her character much more so; and Mr. Linton will only sustain his affection from now on by the remembrance of what she once was, by common humanity, and a sense of duty!'

Heathcliff, forcing himself to seem calm, said: 'Possibly your master has nothing but common humanity and a sense of duty to fall back upon. But do you imagine that I shall leave Catherine to his duty? Can you compare my feelings to his? Promise that you'll get me an interview with her! What do you say?'

'I say, Mr. Heathcliff,' I replied, 'never, through my means. Another encounter between you and the master would kill her altogether.'

‘With your aid that may be avoided,’ he continued; ‘and if he troubles her, I shall be justified in going to extremes! I wish you would tell me truly whether Catherine would suffer from his loss: the fear that she would restrain me. And there you see the difference between our feelings. If he had been in my place, and I in his, I never would have raised a hand against him. You may look incredulous – but I never would have banished him as long as she desired his company. The moment her affection ceased, I would have torn his heart out, and drunk his blood! But, till then, I would have died before I touched a single hair of his head!’

‘And yet,’ I interrupted, ‘you have no scruples in completely ruining all hopes of her health, by thrusting yourself into her remembrance now, when she has nearly forgotten you, and giving her new distress.’

‘You suppose she has nearly forgotten me?’ he said. ‘Oh, Nelly! you know she has not! You know that for every thought she spends on Linton she spends a thousand on me! If she did not care about me, two words would comprehend my future – *death* and *hell*. Existence, after losing her, would be hell. Edgar Linton couldn’t love as much in eighty years as I could in a day. And Catherine has a heart as deep as I have: he is no dearer to her than her dog. How could he be?’

‘Catherine and Edgar are as fond of each other as any two people can be,’ cried Isabella. ‘I won’t hear my brother depreciated in silence!’

‘Your brother is wondrous fond of you too, isn’t he?’ observed Heathcliff scornfully. ‘He turns you adrift on the world.’

‘I didn’t tell him what I suffer,’ she replied.

‘You have written, then, have you?’

‘I did write to say that I was married – you saw the note.’

‘And nothing since?’

‘No.’

‘My young lady is looking sadly the worse for her change of condition,’ I remarked. ‘Somebody’s love comes short in her case, obviously.’

‘Her own,’ said Heathcliff. ‘She degenerates into a mere slut! She tired of trying to please me uncommonly early. You’d hardly credit it, but the very morrow of our wedding she was weeping to go home. However, I’ll take care she does not disgrace me by rambling abroad.’

‘Well, sir,’ returned I, ‘consider that Mrs. Heathcliff is accustomed to be looked after and waited on. You must let her have a maid, and you must treat her kindly. You cannot doubt that she feels strong attachments, or she wouldn’t have abandoned the friends and comforts of her former home to live with you in this wilderness.’

‘She abandoned them under a delusion,’ he answered; ‘picturing in me a hero of romance. I can hardly regard her as a rational creature, so obstinately has she cherished false impressions of me. But I think she begins to know me: I don’t see the silly smiles and grimaces that provoked me at first; and she no longer thinks I love her. I believed, at one time, no lesson could teach her that!’

‘And yet it is poorly learnt; for this morning she announced, as a piece of appalling intelligence, that I had actually succeeded in making her hate me! Are you sure you hate me, Isabella? If I let you alone for half a day, won’t you come sighing and wheedling to me again? I don’t care who knows that the passion was wholly on one side: I never lied about it. She cannot accuse me of showing one bit of deceitful softness. The first thing she saw me do, on leaving the Grange, was to hang her little dog; and when she pleaded for it, I said I wished I could hang every being belonging

to her, except one: possibly she took that exception for herself. But no brutality disgusted her: I suppose she admires it, as long as she is safe from injury!

‘Now, was it not the depth of absurdity for that pitiful, slavish, mean-minded creature to dream that I could love her? I never met with such an abject thing as she is. She even disgraces the name of Linton; and I’ve run out of ideas to see what she could endure, and still creep shamefully cringing back! But tell her brother that I keep strictly within the limits of the law. I have not given her the slightest right to claim a separation; and, what’s more, she’d thank nobody for dividing us. If she desired to go, she might: the nuisance of her presence outweighs the pleasure of tormenting her!’

‘Mr. Heathcliff,’ said I, ‘this is the talk of a madman. Your wife, most likely, is convinced you are mad; and, for that reason, she has borne with you: but now that you say she may go, she’ll doubtless do so. You are not so bewitched, ma’am, are you, as to remain with him of your own accord?’

‘Take care, Ellen!’ answered Isabella, her eyes sparkling angrily. ‘Don’t believe a single word he speaks. He’s a lying fiend! a monster, not a human being! I’ve been told I might leave him before; and I’ve made the attempt, but I dare not repeat it! Only, Ellen, promise you’ll not mention this conversation to my brother or Catherine. Heathcliff wishes to provoke Edgar: he says he has married me to obtain power over him; but I’ll die first! I just pray that he may forget his diabolical prudence and kill me! The single pleasure I can imagine is to die, or to see him dead!’

‘That will do!’ said Heathcliff. ‘If you are called upon in a court of law, you’ll remember her language, Nelly! You’re not fit to be your own guardian, Isabella, and I, being your legal protector, must keep you in my custody. Go upstairs; I have something to say to Ellen Dean in private. Upstairs, child!’

He thrust her from the room; and returned muttering, ‘I have no pity! I have no pity! The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush out their entrails! It is a moral teething; and I grind with greater energy in proportion to the increase of pain.’

‘Do you understand what the word pity means?’ I said, taking up my bonnet. ‘Did you ever feel a touch of it in your life?’

‘Put that down!’ he interrupted. ‘You are not going yet. You must help me to see Catherine, and that without delay. I swear that I mean no harm: I don’t desire to cause any disturbance, or to insult Mr. Linton; I only wish to hear from herself how she is, and to ask if anything that I could do would be of use to her. Last night I was in the Grange garden six hours, and I’ll return there to-night; and haunt the place till I find an opportunity of entering. If Edgar Linton meets me, I shall knock him down. If his servants oppose me, I shall threaten them off with pistols. But wouldn’t it be better to prevent my meeting them? And you could do it so easily. I’d warn you when I came, and then you might let me in as soon as she was alone, and watch till I departed, your conscience quite calm: you would be preventing mischief.’

I protested, and told him it would be treacherous, and cruel and selfish. ‘Mrs. Linton is all nerves, and she couldn’t bear the surprise,’ I said. ‘Don’t persist, sir! or I shall be obliged to inform my master of your plans; and he’ll take measures to secure his house against you!’

‘In that case I’ll take measures to secure you, woman!’ exclaimed Heathcliff. ‘You shall not leave Wuthering Heights till tomorrow. It is foolish to assert that Catherine could not bear to see me; and as to surprising her, I don’t desire it: you must prepare her. You say she never mentions my name. To whom should she mention me if I am a forbidden topic in the house? She thinks you are all spies for her husband. I’ve no doubt she’s in hell among you! You say she is often restless, and her mind is

unsettled. How the devil could it be otherwise in her frightful isolation? And that insipid, paltry creature attending her from *duty* and *humanity*! He might as well plant an oak in a flower-pot, and expect it to thrive, as imagine he can restore her to vigour in the soil of his shallow cares! Am I to fight my way to Catherine? Or will you be my friend, and do what I request? Decide!’

Well, Mr. Lockwood, I argued and refused him fifty times; but in the end he forced me to agree to carry a letter to my mistress. If she consented, I promised to let him know of Linton’s next absence from home, when he might come and visit.

Was it right or wrong? I fear it was wrong, though I thought it might prevent another explosion, and even create a favourable crisis in Catherine’s mental illness. Then I remembered Mr. Edgar’s stern rebuke of my carrying tales; and I vowed that this betrayal of trust should be my last. My journey homeward was sadder than my journey thither; and many misgivings I had, before I put the message into Mrs. Linton’s hand.

But here is Dr. Kenneth; I’ll go down, and tell him how much better you are. My history is dree, as we say, and will serve to while away another morning.

Dree, and dreary! I reflected as the good woman descended to receive the doctor: and not exactly of the kind which I should have chosen to amuse me. But never mind! I’ll extract wholesome medicines from Mrs. Dean’s bitter herbs; and let me beware of the fascination that lurks in Catherine Heathcliff’s brilliant eyes. I should be in a fix if I surrendered my heart to that young person, and the daughter turned out a second edition of the mother.

CHAPTER 15

Another week over, and I am nearer health, and spring! I have now heard all my neighbour's history, at different sittings. I'll continue it in her own words. She is a very fair narrator, and I don't think I could improve her style.

Mrs. Dean said: In the evening of my visit to the Heights, I knew as well as if I saw him that Mr. Heathcliff was around Thrushcross Grange. I shunned going out, because I still carried his letter in my pocket, and didn't want to be threatened any more. I had decided not to give it to Catherine till my master went out, as I could not guess how it would affect her.

In consequence, it did not reach her for three days. The fourth day was Sunday, and I brought it to her after the family were gone to church. There was a manservant left in the house with me, and we generally locked the doors; but on that occasion the weather was so warm and pleasant that I set them wide open; and, as I knew who would be coming, I told the servant that the mistress wished for some oranges, and he must run over to the village and get a few. He departed, and I went upstairs.

Mrs. Linton sat in a white dress, with a light shawl over her shoulders, by the open window, as usual. Her thick, long hair had been cut at the beginning of her illness, and now she wore it simply combed over her temples and neck. Her appearance was altered, as I had told Heathcliff; but when she was calm, there seemed unearthly beauty in the change. The flash of her eyes had been succeeded by a dreamy and melancholy softness; they appeared always to gaze beyond this world. Her pale face and peculiar expression stamped her as one doomed to die.

A book lay spread on the sill before her, the wind fluttering its leaves. I believe Linton had laid it there: for he would spend many an hour in trying to interest her in some subject which had formerly amused her. In her better moods she endured his efforts placidly, only now and then suppressing a wearied sigh, and stopping him at last with the saddest of smiles and kisses. At other times, she would turn petulantly away, and hide her face in her hands, or even push him off angrily.

Gimmerton chapel bells were still ringing; and the mellow flow of the beck came soothingly on the ear. At Wuthering Heights it always sounded on quiet days following a great thaw or steady rain. And of Wuthering Heights Catherine was thinking as she listened: that is, if she thought or listened at all; she had a vague, distant look.

'There's a letter for you, Mrs. Linton,' I said, gently putting it in her hand. 'You must read it immediately, because it wants an answer. Shall I open it?'

'Yes,' she answered, without looking at it.

I opened it – it was very short. Then I stood waiting till she should glance down; but she did not, so at last I said, 'Must I read it, ma'am? It is from Mr. Heathcliff.'

There was a start and a troubled gleam of recollection. She lifted the letter, and seemed to read it; and when she came to the signature she sighed: yet still I found she had not gathered its meaning, for she merely pointed to the name, and gazed at me with mournful and questioning eagerness.

'Well, he wishes to see you,' said I. 'He's in the garden, and impatient to know your answer.'

As I spoke, I observed a large dog lying outside on the grass raise its ears and wag its tail, announcing that someone approached whom it did not consider a stranger.

Mrs. Linton listened breathlessly. A step crossed the hall; the open house was too tempting for Heathcliff to resist walking in.

With straining eagerness Catherine gazed towards the doorway. In a stride or two he was at her side, and had her grasped in his arms.

He neither spoke nor loosed his hold for some five minutes, during which time he bestowed more kisses than ever he gave in his life before, I daresay: but my mistress had kissed him first, and I plainly saw that he could hardly bear, for downright agony, to look into her face! The instant he beheld her, he knew that there was no prospect of recovery – she was fated, sure to die.

‘Oh, Cathy! Oh, my life! how can I bear it?’ was the first sentence he uttered, in a tone of despair. He stared at her earnestly; but his eyes burned with anguish, not with tears.

‘What now?’ said Catherine, leaning back, and returning his look with a clouded brow. ‘You and Edgar have broken my heart, Heathcliff! And you both bewail the deed to me, as if you were the people to be pitied! I shall not pity you. You have killed me – and grown strong on it! How many years do you mean to live after I am gone?’

Heathcliff had knelt to embrace her; he attempted to rise, but she seized his hair, and kept him down.

‘I wish I could hold you,’ she continued bitterly, ‘till we were both dead! I care nothing for your sufferings. Why shouldn’t you suffer? I do! Will you forget me? Will you be happy when I am in the earth? Will you say twenty years hence, “That’s the grave of Catherine Earnshaw – I loved her long ago; but it is past. I’ve loved many others since: my children are dearer to me than she was; and, at death, I shall not rejoice that I am going to her: I shall be sorry that I must leave them!” Will you say so, Heathcliff?’

‘Don’t torture me,’ cried he, wrenching his head free, and grinding his teeth.

They made a strange and fearful picture. Catherine’s face had a wild vindictiveness in its white cheek, and a bloodless lip and glittering eye; and she still held some of his hair in her fingers. Her companion had taken her arm so roughly that on his letting go I saw four distinct impressions left blue in the colourless skin.

‘Are you possessed with a devil,’ he said savagely, ‘to talk in that manner to me when you are dying? Those words will be branded in my memory eternally after you have left me. You know you lie to say I have killed you: and, Catherine, you know that I could as soon forget you as my existence! Is it not sufficient for your infernal selfishness, that while you are at peace I shall writhe in the torments of hell?’

‘I shall not be at peace,’ moaned Catherine, her heart beating visibly in her agitation. She said nothing further till the paroxysm was over; then she continued, more kindly—

‘I’m not wishing you greater torment than I have, Heathcliff. I only wish us never to be parted: and should my words distress you hereafter, think I feel the same distress underground, and forgive me! Come here! You never harmed me in your life. Your anger will be worse to remember than my harsh words! Won’t you come here again? Do!’

Heathcliff went to the back of her chair, his face white with emotion. She bent round to look at him; but turning abruptly, he walked to the fireplace, where he stood silent, his back towards us. Mrs. Linton’s glance followed him suspiciously: after a pause she said to me, with indignant disappointment:—

‘Oh, you see, Nelly, he would not relent a moment to keep me out of the grave. That is how I’m loved! Well, never mind. That is not *my* Heathcliff. I shall love mine yet; and take him with me: he’s in my soul.’ She added musingly, ‘The thing that irks me most is this shattered prison. I’m tired of being enclosed here. I’m wearying to escape into that glorious world: not seeing it dimly through tears, but to be really in it. Nelly, you are sorry for me – very soon that will be altered. I shall be sorry for you. I shall be far beyond and above you all. I wonder he won’t be near me! Heathcliff, dear! you should not be sullen now. Do come to me, Heathcliff.’

In her eagerness she rose and supported herself on the arm of the chair. He turned to her, looking absolutely desperate. His eyes, wide and wet, flashed fiercely on her; his breast heaved convulsively. An instant they held apart, and then Catherine made a spring, and he caught her, and they were locked in an embrace from which I thought my mistress would never be released alive: in fact, she seemed unconscious.

He flung himself into the nearest seat, and on my approaching to see if she had fainted, he gnashed at me, and foamed like a mad dog, and held her with greedy jealousy. I did not feel as if he were human; so I stood off, in great perplexity.

A movement of Catherine’s relieved me a little: she put up her hand to his cheek; while he, covering her with frantic caresses, said wildly—

‘You’ve been cruel – cruel and false. Why did you despise me? Why did you betray your own heart, Cathy? You deserve this. You have killed yourself. Yes, you may kiss me, and cry; your tears will damn you. You loved me – what right had you to leave me? Because misery and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, you, of your own will, did it. I have not broken your heart – *you* have broken it; and in breaking it, you have broken mine. So much the worse for me that I am strong. Do I want to live? What kind of living will it be when you – oh, God! would *you* like to live with your soul in the grave?’

‘Let me alone,’ sobbed Catherine. ‘If I’ve done wrong, I’m dying for it. It is enough! You left me too: but I forgive you. Forgive me!’

‘It is hard to forgive, and to look at those eyes, and feel those wasted hands,’ he answered. ‘Kiss me again; and don’t let me see your eyes! I forgive what you have done to me. I love *my* murderer – but *yours*! How can I?’

They were silent – their faces hidden against each other, and washed by each other’s tears. At least, I suppose the weeping was on both sides; as it seemed Heathcliff could weep on a great occasion like this.

I grew very uncomfortable, meanwhile; for the afternoon wore fast away, and I could see a crowd outside Gimmerton chapel.

‘Service is over,’ I announced. ‘My master will be here in half an hour.’

Heathcliff groaned a curse, and strained Catherine closer: she never moved.

Soon I perceived a group of the servants approaching. Mr. Linton was not far behind; he sauntered slowly up, probably enjoying the lovely afternoon.

‘Now he is here,’ I exclaimed. ‘For heaven’s sake, hurry down! Do be quick; and stay among the trees till he is inside.’

‘I must go, Cathy,’ said Heathcliff. ‘But I’ll see you again before you are asleep. I won’t stray five yards from your window.’

‘You must not go!’ she answered, holding him as firmly as her strength allowed. ‘You shall not, I tell you.’

‘For one hour,’ he pleaded earnestly.

‘Not for one minute,’ she replied.

‘I must – Linton will be up immediately,’ he persisted, alarmed.

He would have risen – but she clung fast to him, gasping: there was mad resolution in her face.

‘No!’ she shrieked. ‘Oh, don’t go. It is the last time! Edgar will not hurt us. Heathcliff, I shall die!’

‘Damn the fool! There he is,’ cried Heathcliff, sinking back into his seat. ‘Hush, my darling! Hush! I’ll stay. If he shot me so, I’d expire with a blessing on my lips.’

I heard my master mounting the stairs – the cold sweat ran from my forehead: I was horrified.

‘Are you going to listen to her ravings?’ I said, passionately. ‘She does not know what she says. Will you ruin her, because she has not wit to help herself? Get up! That is the most diabolical deed that ever you did. We are all done for.’

I wrung my hands, and cried out; and Mr. Linton hastened his step at the noise. In my agitation, I was glad to observe that Catherine’s arms had fallen limp, and her head hung down.

‘She’s fainted, or dead,’ I thought: ‘so much the better. Far better that she should be dead, than lingering a burden and a misery-maker to all about her.’

Edgar sprang to Heathcliff, pale with astonishment and rage. What he meant to do I cannot tell; Heathcliff at once placed the lifeless-looking form in his arms.

‘Look there!’ he said. ‘Help her first – then you shall speak to me!’

He walked into the parlour, and sat down. Mr. Linton summoned me, and with great difficulty we managed to restore her to sensation; but she was bewildered; she sighed, and moaned, and knew nobody.

Edgar, in his anxiety, forgot her hated friend. I did not. I went, at the earliest opportunity, and begged him to depart; affirming that Catherine was better, and that he should hear from me in the morning how she passed the night.

‘I shall stay in the garden,’ he answered; ‘and, Nelly, mind you keep your word tomorrow. I shall be under those larch-trees.’

With a last glance at the door, he left.

CHAPTER 16

About twelve o'clock that night was born the Catherine you saw at Wuthering Heights: a puny, seven-months' child; and two hours later the mother died, having never recovered consciousness.

Edgar's sorrow sunk deep; and was made worse, in my eyes, by his being left without an heir. As I gazed on the feeble orphan, I mentally abused old Linton for securing his estate to his own daughter, instead of his son's. An unwelcomed infant it was, poor thing! It might have wailed out of life, and nobody cared during those first hours of existence. We redeemed the neglect afterwards; but its beginning was as friendless as its end is likely to be.

Next morning, the cheerful light stole in through the blinds of the silent room, and suffused the couch and its occupant with a mellow, tender glow. Edgar Linton had his head laid on the pillow, and his eyes shut. His young, fair features were almost as deathlike as those of the form beside him: but his was the hush of exhausted anguish, and hers of perfect peace. Her brow smooth, her lids closed, her lips smiling, no angel could be more beautiful. Seeing the infinite calm in which she lay, I echoed the words she had uttered a few hours before: 'Far beyond and above us all! Her spirit is at home with God!'

I saw in her a repose that neither earth nor hell could break – the Eternity of endless love and joy. How much selfishness there is even in a love like Mr. Linton's, when he so regretted Catherine's blessed release! To be sure, one might have doubted, after her wayward life, whether she merited a haven of peace at last; but her tranquil corpse seemed to promise equal quiet to her spirit.

The master looked asleep, and soon after sunrise I stole out into the fresh air. I hoped to see Mr. Heathcliff. If he had remained among the larches all night, he would have heard nothing; but if he had come nearer, he would know, from the lights and the opening and shutting of doors, that all was not right within.

I wished, yet feared, to find him. I felt the terrible news must be told; but how to do it I did not know. He was not far away, in the park; leaning against an old ash-tree, his hat off, and his hair soaked with dew. He had been standing a long time in that position, for I saw a pair of thrushes pass scarcely three feet from him, busy in building their nest, and taking no notice of him.

He raised his eyes and spoke. 'She's dead! I've not waited for you to learn that. Put your handkerchief away – don't snivel before me. Damn you all! she wants none of your tears!'

I was weeping as much for him as her: we do sometimes pity creatures that feel no pity for themselves or others. A foolish notion struck me that he prayed, because his lips moved and his gaze was bent on the ground.

'Yes, she's dead!' I answered. 'Gone to heaven, I hope!'

'Did she die like a saint, then?' asked Heathcliff, attempting a sneer. 'Come, tell me truly. How did—?'

He tried to say the name, but could not manage it; and compressing his mouth he held a silent combat with his inward agony, defying my sympathy with a ferocious stare. 'How did she die?' he resumed at last, trembling in spite of himself, to his very finger-ends.

'Poor wretch!' I thought; 'you have a heart and nerves the same as any man! Why try to conceal them?'

‘Quietly as a lamb!’ I answered, aloud. ‘She drew a sigh, and stretched, and sank again to sleep; and I felt one little pulse at her heart, and nothing more!’

‘And – did she ever mention me?’ he asked, hesitating, as if he dreaded the answer.

‘Her senses never returned: she recognised nobody,’ I said. ‘She lies with a sweet smile on her face. Her life closed in a gentle dream. May she wake as kindly in the other world!’

‘May she wake in torment!’ he cried, with frightful vehemence, stamping his foot, and groaning in sudden passion. ‘Why, she’s a liar to the end! Where is she? Not *there* – not in heaven – not perished – where? I pray one prayer – Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living. You said I killed you – haunt me, then! Be with me always – take any form – drive me mad! only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!’

He dashed his head against the trunk, and howled like a savage beast. There were splashes of blood on the tree, and his hand and forehead were both stained; probably he had been doing the same thing through the night. It appalled me. But when he noticed me watching, he thundered a command for me to go, and I obeyed. He was beyond my skill to quiet or console!

Mrs. Linton’s funeral was to take place on the following Friday. Till then her coffin remained uncovered, strewn with flowers, in the drawing-room. Linton spent his days and nights there, a sleepless guardian; and – unknown to anyone but me – Heathcliff spent his nights outside, equally sleepless. I did not speak to him: still, I knew he planned to enter, if he could; and on the Tuesday, after dark, when my master had retired, I opened one of the windows, to give Heathcliff a chance of saying one last farewell.

He entered cautiously and briefly, not betraying his presence by the slightest noise. Indeed, I shouldn’t have known that he had been there, except for the disarrangement of the drapery about the corpse’s face; and on the floor lay a curl of light hair, fastened with a silver thread, which I found had been taken from a locket hung round Catherine’s neck. Heathcliff had opened it and cast out its contents, replacing them by a black lock of his own. I twisted the two, and enclosed them together.

Mr. Hindley Earnshaw was, of course, invited to the funeral, but he never came; so that, besides her husband, the mourners were wholly composed of tenants and servants. Isabella was not asked.

To the surprise of the villagers, Catherine was buried neither in the chapel under the Lintons’ monument, nor by the tombs of her own relations, outside. Her resting-place was on a green slope in a corner of the church-yard, where the wall is so low that heather and bilberry-plants have climbed over it from the moor. Her husband lies in the same spot now; and they have each a simple headstone to mark their graves.

CHAPTER 17

That week the weather broke: the wind shifted to the north-east, and brought rain first, and then sleet and snow. The primroses and crocuses were hidden under wintry drifts; the larks were silent, the young leaves smitten and blackened.

A dreary, dismal morning! I was sitting in the lonely parlour with the child moaning on my knee; rocking it and watching the snowflakes on the window, when the door opened, and someone entered, out of breath and laughing!

‘Quiet!’ I cried, supposing it to be one of the maids.

‘Excuse me!’ answered a familiar voice; ‘but I cannot stop myself.’

The speaker came forward, panting.

‘I have run the whole way from Wuthering Heights!’ she continued. ‘The falls I’ve had! I’m aching all over! Please order the carriage to take me to Gimmerton, and tell a servant to seek a few clothes in my wardrobe.’

The intruder was Mrs. Heathcliff. Her hair was dripping; she was dressed in a light, girlish frock with short sleeves, which clung to her with wet. Her feet were protected merely by thin slippers; add to this a deep cut under one ear, a white face scratched and bruised, and a frame hardly able to support itself through fatigue; and you may fancy my alarm.

‘My dear young lady,’ I exclaimed, ‘I’ll stir nowhere, till you have removed your clothes, and put on dry things; and certainly you shall not go to Gimmerton tonight.’

‘Certainly I shall,’ she said. ‘Ah, see how the blood flows down my neck now! The fire does make it smart.’

Not until the coachman had been instructed to get ready, did she let me bind her wound and help her to change her clothes.

‘Now, Ellen,’ she said, when she was seated with a cup of tea, ‘you sit down opposite me, and put poor Catherine’s baby away: I don’t like to see it! You mustn’t think I care little for Catherine, because I laughed: I’ve cried, too, bitterly. We parted unreconciled, and I shan’t forgive myself. But, for all that, I was not going to sympathise with him – the brute beast! Oh, give me the poker! This is the last thing of his I have.’

She slipped the gold ring from her finger, and threw it on the floor.

‘I’ll smash it!’ she continued, striking it with childish spite, ‘and then I’ll burn it!’ and she threw it among the coals. ‘There! he shall buy another, if he gets me back again. He’d be capable of coming to seek me, to tease Edgar. Edgar has not been kind, has he? I won’t ask him for help. If I had not learned he was out, I’d have halted at the kitchen, warmed myself, and departed again, to anywhere out of the reach of my accursed – of that goblin! Ah, he was in such a fury! If he had caught me! It’s a pity Earnshaw is not his match in strength: I wouldn’t have run till I’d seen him beaten, had Hindley been able to do it!’

‘Don’t talk so fast, Miss!’ I interrupted; ‘you’ll make the cut bleed again. Drink your tea, and give over laughing: laughter is sadly out of place under this roof, and in your condition!’

‘True,’ she replied. ‘Listen to that child wailing! Send it out of my hearing for an hour; I shan’t stay any longer.’

I rang the bell, and gave it to a servant’s care. Then I inquired what had urged her to escape from Wuthering Heights, and where she meant to go, if she would not stay with us.

‘I wish to stay,’ answered she, ‘to cheer Edgar and take care of the baby, but I tell you Heathcliff wouldn’t let me! Do you think he could bear to think that we were tranquil, without resolving to poison our comfort? He detests me: when I enter his presence, I see hatred in his face. Because of it, I feel pretty certain that he would not chase me over England; and therefore I have escaped. He has extinguished my love; yet I can recollect how I loved him; and can dimly imagine that I could still love him, if – no, no! Even if he doted on me, his devilish nature would have revealed itself somehow. Catherine had an awfully perverted taste to esteem him so dearly, knowing him so well. Monster! I wish he could be blotted out of creation!’

‘Hush, hush! He’s a human being,’ I said. ‘Be more charitable!’

‘He’s *not* a human being,’ she retorted; ‘and he has no claim on my charity. I gave him my heart, and he pinched it to death, and flung it back to me. I would not feel sorry for him if he groaned until his dying day, and wept tears of blood for Catherine! No, indeed, I wouldn’t!’ And here Isabella began to cry; but immediately dashing the tears away, she went on.

‘You asked, what has driven me to flight at last? I had succeeded in rousing his rage to such a pitch that he forgot his prudence, and became murderously violent. I had pleasure in exasperating him: my pleasure woke my instinct of self-preservation, so I broke free.

‘Yesterday Mr. Earnshaw should have been at the funeral. He kept himself tolerably sober for the purpose – not going to bed mad at six o’clock and getting up drunk at twelve. Consequently, he rose in suicidal low spirits, sat down by the fire and swallowed gin and brandy by tumblerfuls.

‘Heathcliff – I shudder to name him! has been a stranger in the house since last Sunday. He has not eaten a meal with us for nearly a week. He has come home at dawn, and locked himself in his chamber – as if anybody dreamt of wanting his company! There he has stayed, praying to dust and ashes, and confusing God with his own black father. When he was hoarse with prayers, he would be off again; always straight down to the Grange!

‘Once he was gone, I recovered my spirits enough to bear Joseph’s eternal lectures without weeping. You wouldn’t think that I should cry at anything Joseph could say; but he and Hareton are detestable companions. I’d rather sit with Hindley, and hear his awful talk, than with “t’ little master” and that odious old man! When Heathcliff is not in, I sit by the fire, near Mr. Earnshaw. He is quieter now than he used to be, if no one provokes him: more sullen and depressed, and less furious.

‘Yesterday I sat in my nook reading till almost midnight. With the wild snow blowing outside, my thoughts continually turned to the church-yard and the new-made grave. Hindley sat opposite, his head leant on his hand; he had neither stirred nor spoken for two or three hours. There was no sound through the house but the moaning wind, which shook the windows, and the faint crackling of the coals. Hareton and Joseph were probably fast asleep in bed.

‘The doleful silence was broken at length by the sound of the kitchen latch: Heathcliff had returned earlier than usual; owing, I suppose, to the sudden storm. That entrance was fastened, and we heard him coming round to get in by the other. I rose, but Hindley turned to look at me.

“I’ll keep him out five minutes,” he said. “You won’t object?”

“No, you may keep him out the whole night for me,” I answered. “Do bolt the door!”

‘Earnshaw did this, and then leaned over the table, searching in my eyes for a sympathy with the burning hate that gleamed from his. He looked like an assassin.

“‘You, and I,” he said, “have each a great debt to settle with that man! If we were neither of us cowards, we might combine. Are you willing to endure to the last?”

“‘I’m weary of enduring now,” I replied; “but treachery and violence are spears pointed at both ends; they wound those who resort to them.”

“‘Treachery and violence are a just return for treachery and violence!” cried Hindley. “Mrs. Heathcliff, I’ll ask you to do nothing but sit still and be dumb. I’m sure you would be as glad to see the fiend dead as I would. Damn the hellish villain! He knocks at the door as if he were master here already! Promise to hold your tongue, and you’ll be a free woman!”

‘He took out his pistol with its knife, and would have put out the candle, when I seized his arm.

“‘I’ll not hold my tongue!” I said; “you mustn’t touch him. Let the door remain shut!”

“‘No! I’ve formed my resolution, and by God I’ll do it!” cried the desperate man. “I’ll do you a kindness in spite of yourself, and Hareton justice! Nobody alive would regret me, if I cut my throat this minute – and it’s time to make an end!”

‘I might as well have struggled with a bear, or reasoned with a lunatic. All I could do was run to a window and warn Heathcliff.

“‘You’d better seek shelter somewhere else to-night!” I exclaimed, rather triumphantly. “Mr. Earnshaw has a mind to shoot you, if you try to enter.”

“‘You’d better open the door, you ___” he answered, addressing me by a term that I don’t care to repeat.

“‘I shall not meddle,” I retorted. “Come in and get shot, if you please. I’ve done my duty.”

‘I shut the window and returned to my place by the fire. Earnshaw swore at me, affirming that I loved the villain yet; and calling me all sorts of names. And I, in my secret heart, thought what a blessing it would be for him should Heathcliff put him out of his misery; and what a blessing for me should he send Heathcliff to hell!

‘As I sat thinking this, the window behind me was banged on to the floor by a blow, and Heathcliff’s black countenance looked through. It was too narrow for his shoulders to follow, and I smiled, exulting in my fancied security. His hair and clothes were white with snow, and his sharp cannibal teeth gleamed through the dark.

“‘Isabella, let me in, or I’ll make you repent!” he snarled.

“‘I cannot commit murder,” I replied. “Mr. Hindley stands guard with a knife and loaded pistol.”

“‘Let me in by the kitchen door,” he said.

“‘Hindley will be there before me,” I answered: “and that’s a poor love of yours that cannot bear a shower of snow! The moment a blast of winter returns, you must run for shelter! Heathcliff, if I were you, I’d stretch myself over her grave and die like a faithful dog. The world is surely not worth living in now, is it? You had distinctly impressed on me the idea that Catherine was the whole joy of your life: I can’t imagine how you think of surviving her loss.”

“‘He’s there, is he?” exclaimed Hindley, rushing over.

‘I wouldn’t have aided an attempt on Heathcliff’s life, Ellen. Still, I was fearfully disappointed when he flung himself on Earnshaw’s weapon and wrenched it from his grasp.

'The charge exploded, and the knife, in springing back, closed into its owner's wrist. Heathcliff pulled it away, slitting the flesh, and thrust it dripping into his pocket. He then took a stone, broke the window-frame, and sprang in. His enemy had fallen senseless with pain and the gushing flow of blood. The ruffian kicked and trampled on him, and dashed his head repeatedly against the flagstones, holding me with one hand to prevent me from summoning Joseph. He abstained from finishing him off; but finally stopped and dragged Earnshaw's body on to the settle. There he tore off the sleeve of his coat, and bound up the wound with brutal roughness, spitting and cursing. Meanwhile, I lost no time in seeking Joseph, who hurried in, gasping:

"What is there to do, now?"

"There's this to do," thundered Heathcliff, "that your master's mad; and should go to an asylum. And how the devil did you come to lock me out, you toothless hound? Don't stand mumbling there. Come, wash that stuff away!"

"Ye've been murdering him!" exclaimed Joseph, lifting his hands and eyes in horror. "If ever I seed a sight like this!"

'Heathcliff pushed him to his knees in the middle of the blood, and flung a towel to him; but instead of drying it up, Joseph joined his hands and began a prayer, which made me laugh.

"Oh, I forgot you," said the tyrant. "You conspire with him against me, do you, viper?"

'He shook me till my teeth rattled, and threw me beside Joseph, who finished his prayer and rose, vowing he would set off for the Grange directly. Mr. Linton was a magistrate, and he should inquire into this.

'He was so obstinate in his resolution, that Heathcliff forced me to recount what had taken place, and tell the old man that Earnshaw was the aggressor. Joseph hastened to give a dose of spirits to his master, who groaned as he regained consciousness. Heathcliff, aware that Earnshaw was ignorant of the beating he'd received while insensible, called him intoxicated; and advised him to get to bed. He then left, and I departed to my own room, marvelling that I had escaped so easily.

'This morning, when I came down, Mr. Earnshaw was sitting by the fire, deadly sick; his evil genius Heathcliff, almost as gaunt and ghastly, leant against the chimney. Neither appeared inclined to dine, so I ate heartily alone. I felt a certain satisfaction and superiority, as I glanced towards my silent companions, with the comfort of a quiet conscience. After I had finished, I took the unusual liberty of drawing near the fire, and kneeling beside Earnshaw.

'Heathcliff did not glance my way, and I gazed up at his features. His forehead, that I once thought so manly, and that I now think so diabolical, was shaded with a heavy cloud; his basilisk eyes were nearly quenched by sleeplessness, and their lashes were wet: his lips, devoid of their ferocious sneer, were sealed in an expression of unspeakable sadness. Had it been another, I would have covered my face in the presence of such grief. In his case, I was gratified; and I couldn't miss this chance of sticking in a dart.'

'Fie, Miss!' I interrupted. 'One might suppose you had never opened a Bible in your life. It is both mean and presumptuous to add your torture to God's judgement!'

'In general I'd agree, Ellen,' she continued; 'but I owe Heathcliff so much. It is utterly impossible I can ever be revenged, and therefore I cannot forgive him. Hindley wanted some water, and I handed him a glass, and asked him how he was.

"Every inch of me is as sore as if I had been fighting with a legion of imps!" he replied.

“No wonder,” I remarked. “Catherine used to boast that she stood between you and bodily harm: she meant that certain persons would not hurt you for fear of offending her. It’s as well people don’t really rise from the grave, or last night she might have witnessed a repulsive scene! Are not you bruised, and cut on your chest and shoulders?”

“What do you mean?” he answered. “Did Heathcliff strike me when I was down?”

“He trampled and kicked you, and dashed you on the ground,” I whispered. “And he wanted to tear you with his teeth; he’s barely human.”

‘Mr. Earnshaw looked up at Heathcliff, who, absorbed in his black anguish, saw nothing around him.

“Oh, if God would but give me strength to strangle him in my last agony, I’d go to hell with joy,” groaned the impatient Hindley, trying to rise, and sinking back in despair.

“Nay, it’s enough that he has murdered one of you,” I observed aloud. “At the Grange, everyone knows your sister would have been living now had it not been for Mr. Heathcliff. When I recollect how happy Catherine was before he came – I curse the day.”

‘Heathcliff’s attention was roused, for I saw that he wept and drew his breath in suffocating sighs. I stared at him, and laughed scornfully. The clouded windows of hell flashed a moment towards me; the fiend which usually looked out, however, was dimmed and drowned.

“Go out of my sight,” he said, his voice hardly intelligible.

“I beg your pardon,” I replied. “But I loved Catherine too; and I need to attend on her brother. Now, that she’s dead, I see her in Hindley: he has exactly her eyes, if you had not tried to gouge them out, and her—”

“Get up, wretched idiot, before I stamp you to death!” he cried.

“But then,” I continued, standing ready to flee, “if poor Catherine had trusted you, and assumed the ridiculous, degrading title of Mrs. Heathcliff, she wouldn’t have borne your abominable behaviour! She would have voiced her hatred and disgust.”

‘He snatched a dinner-knife from the table and flung it at my head. It struck beneath my ear; but, pulling it out, I sprang to the door and delivered another sentence; which I hope went deep. As I left, he made a furious rush, which was stopped by his host; and both fell locked together on the hearth.

‘In my flight through the kitchen I bid Joseph hurry to his master; I knocked over Hareton, who was hanging a litter of puppies from a chair-back; and, blessed as a soul escaped from purgatory, I leaped and flew down the steep road; then shot across the moor, rolling over banks, and wading through marshes towards the Grange. And I would rather dwell in Hell than, even for one night, stay beneath the roof of Wuthering Heights again.’

Isabella ceased speaking, and took a drink of tea; then she rose, and put on a shawl. Turning a deaf ear to my entreaties for her to stay another hour, she kissed Edgar’s and Catherine’s portraits, kissed me likewise, and went to the carriage. She was driven away, never to revisit this neighbourhood: but she wrote regularly to my master. She lived near London; there she had a son born a few months after her escape. He was christened Linton, and, from the first, she reported him to be an ailing, peevish creature.

Mr. Heathcliff, meeting me one day in the village, inquired where she lived. I refused to tell. He remarked that it did not matter, only she must beware of coming to

her brother. He learnt from some of the other servants about the existence of the child, and often asked about the infant; on hearing its name, he smiled grimly, and observed: 'They wish me to hate it too, do they?'

'I don't think they wish you to know anything about it,' I answered.

'But I'll have it,' he said, 'when I want it. They may reckon on that!'

Fortunately its mother died before that time arrived; some thirteen years after the death of Catherine, when Linton was twelve.

My master was pleased that Isabella had left her husband, whom he abhorred with an intensity which his mild nature would scarcely seem to allow. So deep was his aversion, that he would not go anywhere where he was likely to see or hear of Heathcliff. He became a hermit: he gave up his office of magistrate, ceased to attend church, avoided the village, and lived a life of seclusion within his park and grounds; only varied by solitary rambles on the moors, and visits to the grave of his wife.

But he was too good to be unhappy long. Time brought resignation, and he recalled her memory with ardent, tender love, and hopeful aspiring to the better world.

And he had earthly consolation also. For a few days, I said, he seemed unaware of Catherine's baby: but that coldness melted, and soon the tiny thing ruled his heart. She was named Catherine, but he always called her Cathy: it gave her a distinction from the mother, and yet a connection with her.

I used to compare Edgar to Hindley Earnshaw, whose conduct was so opposite in similar circumstances. They had both been fond husbands, and were both attached to their children; but Hindley was the worse and weaker man. Linton, on the contrary, trusted God; and God comforted him. One hoped, and the other despaired. Hindley's end was what might have been expected, scarcely six months after his sister's. I learnt of his death from Dr. Kenneth.

'Well, Nelly,' said he, riding into the yard one morning, 'Who's given us the slip now, do you think?'

'Not Mr. Heathcliff, surely?'

'What! would you weep for him?' said the doctor. 'No, Heathcliff's a tough young fellow.'

'Who is it, then?' I repeated impatiently.

'Hindley Earnshaw!' he replied, 'He died true to his character: drunk as a lord. Poor lad! One can't help missing an old companion: though he had the worst tricks that ever man imagined. He's barely twenty-seven, it seems.'

This blow was greater to me than the shock of Mrs. Linton's death. I sat down and wept as if for a blood relation. I could not help pondering on the question – 'Had he had fair play?' That idea bothered me so much that I asked leave to go to Wuthering Heights, and assist in the last duties to the dead.

Mr. Linton was extremely reluctant to consent, but I pleaded that my old master and foster-brother had a claim on my services as strong as his own. Besides, I reminded him that the child Hareton was his wife's nephew, and that he ought to act as its guardian and inquire how the property was left. He told me to speak to his lawyer; and at length permitted me to go.

Calling at the village, I asked the lawyer to accompany me. He shook his head, and advised that Heathcliff should be let alone. He thought that Hareton would be found little more than a beggar.

'His father died in debt,' he said; 'the whole property is mortgaged, and the only chance for Hareton is to allow him an opportunity of creating some interest in Heathcliff's heart, so that he may be kind to him.'

When I reached the Heights, I explained that I had come to see everything carried on decently. Mr. Heathcliff said he did not perceive that I was wanted; but I might stay and order the arrangements for the funeral, if I chose.

‘Really,’ he remarked, ‘that fool’s body should be buried at the cross-roads, without ceremony. I happened to leave him for ten minutes yesterday, and in that interval he fastened the doors of the house against me, and then spent the night in drinking himself to death! We broke in this morning; and there he was, laid over the settle. I sent Joseph to get Kenneth, but he did not come till the beast had changed into carrion: he was cold and stark.’

Joseph confirmed this, but muttered: ‘He warn’t dead when I left, nowt o’ the sort!’

At the funeral, Mr. Heathcliff appeared hard and careless. At one time, indeed, he even showed something like exultation: it was when the people were bearing the coffin from the house. Before following it, he lifted Hareton on to the table and said, with peculiar gusto, ‘Now, my bonny lad, you are mine! And we’ll see if one tree won’t grow as crooked as another, with the same wind to twist it!’

The unsuspecting lad played with Heathcliff’s whiskers, and stroked his cheek; but I observed tartly, ‘That boy must go back with me to Thrushcross Grange, sir. Mr. Linton has ordered me to take him.’

‘Well,’ said the scoundrel, ‘we’ll not argue now: but I have a fancy to try my hand at rearing a young one; so tell your master that I must supply the place of this with my own, if he should attempt to remove it.’

This hint was enough to bind our hands. When I repeated it to Edgar, he spoke no more of interfering.

Heathcliff was now the master of Wuthering Heights: for Earnshaw had mortgaged every yard of land he owned to supply his mania for gaming; and Heathcliff was the mortgagee. So Hareton became completely dependent on his father’s enemy; and now he lives in his own house as a servant with no wages: quite unable to right himself, and ignorant that he has been wronged.

CHAPTER 18

The twelve years following that dismal period, continued Mrs. Dean, were the happiest of my life: my greatest troubles were our little lady's minor illnesses. After the first six months, she grew like a larch, and could walk and talk before the heath blossomed a second time over Mrs. Linton's dust.

She was the most winning thing that ever brought sunshine into a desolate house: a real beauty, with the Earnshaws' handsome dark eyes, but the Lintons' fair skin and yellow curling hair. Her spirit was high, and her heart was sensitive and lively. That capacity for intense attachments reminded me of her mother: yet she did not resemble her: for she could be soft and mild as a dove, and she had a gentle voice. Her anger was never furious; her love never fierce: it was deep and tender.

However, she was also saucy, like all indulged children. If a servant vexed her, it was always – 'I shall tell papa!' And if her father reprov'd her, even by a look, you would have thought her heart-broken: I don't believe he ever spoke a harsh word to her. He taught her himself, and she learned rapidly and eagerly.

Till she reached the age of thirteen she had not once been beyond Thrushcross Park by herself. Mr. Linton would take her with him a mile or so outside, on rare occasions; but he trusted her to no one else. The chapel was the only building she had entered other than her own home. She knew nothing of Wuthering Heights and Mr. Heathcliff; and was, apparently, perfectly contented.

Sometimes, indeed, while surveying the country from her window, she would ask: 'Ellen, how long will it be before I can walk to the top of those hills? I wonder what lies on the other side – is it the sea?'

'No, Miss Cathy,' I would answer; 'it is hills again, just like these.'

'And what are those golden rocks like when you stand under them?'

Penistone Crags particularly attracted her notice; especially when the setting sun shone on their heights. I explained that they were bare masses of stone, with hardly enough earth in their clefts to nourish a stunted tree.

'And why are they bright so long after it is evening here?' she pursued.

'Because they are a great deal higher up than we are,' replied I; 'you could not climb them, they are too high and steep. In winter the frost is always there before it comes to us; and deep into summer I have found snow under their north-east side!'

'Oh, you have been on them!' she cried gleefully. 'Then I can go, too, when I am a woman. Has papa been, Ellen?'

'Papa would tell you, Miss,' I answered, hastily, 'that they are not worth the trouble of visiting. The moors, where you ramble with him, are much nicer; and Thrushcross Park is the finest place in the world.'

'But I know the park, and I don't know those,' she murmured. 'And I should like to look round me from that tallest point: my pony Minny shall take me some time.'

'Now, am I old enough to go to Penistone Crags?' became her constant question. The road there wound close by Wuthering Heights; and Edgar always answered, 'Not yet, love: not yet.'

I said Mrs. Heathcliff lived over a dozen years after leaving her husband. She and Edgar were both delicate; what her last illness was, I am not certain, but she wrote to inform her brother that she was probably dying, and begged him to come to her. She wished to bid him adieu, and deliver her son Linton safely into his hands.

My master did not hesitate: reluctant as he usually was to leave home, he flew to her; telling me that in his absence, I must ensure that Catherine did not wander out of the park.

He was away three weeks. The first day or two Catherine sat in the library, too sad for either reading or playing: her quiet state caused me little trouble; but it was followed by fretful weariness; and to amuse her, I sent her on her travels round the grounds – on foot, or on a pony; listening to her real and imaginary adventures when she returned.

The summer shone; and she took such a taste for this solitary rambling that she often stayed out till tea; and then spent the evenings recounting her fanciful tales. I did not fear her leaving the park, because the gates were generally locked, and I thought she would scarcely venture out alone, even if they had stood wide open.

Unluckily, my confidence proved misplaced. Catherine came to me one morning, and said she was an Arabian merchant, going to cross the Desert with his caravan; and I must give her plenty of food for herself, a horse, and three camels, impersonated by a large hound and a couple of pointer dogs. I put some dainties in a basket beside her saddle; and she sprang up gaily, and trotted off with a merry laugh, mocking my advice to avoid galloping.

The naughty thing never appeared at tea. The hound, being an old dog and fond of its ease, returned; but neither Cathy, nor the pony, nor the two pointers were visible in any direction: so I sent servants down this path and that, and went wandering in search of her myself.

There was a labourer working on the borders of the grounds, and I asked him if he had seen our young lady.

‘I saw her this morning,’ he replied: ‘she leapt her pony over the hedge yonder, and galloped out of sight.’

You may guess how I felt at hearing this news. It struck me directly she must have started for Penistone Crags.

‘What will become of her?’ I exclaimed, making straight for the high-road. I walked swiftly, mile after mile, till a turn brought me in view of Wuthering Heights; but no Catherine could I see. The Crags lie about four miles from the Grange, and I began to fear night would fall before I could reach them.

‘What if she has slipped in clambering among them,’ I reflected, ‘and been killed, or broken some bones?’ My suspense was painful; and in hurrying past the Heights it gave me great relief to see Charlie, the fiercest of the pointers, lying under a window, with a bleeding ear.

I ran to the door and knocked loudly. A woman whom I knew answered: she had been servant there since the death of Mr. Earnshaw.

‘Ah,’ said she, ‘you are come a-seeking your little mistress! Don’t be frightened. She’s here safe: but I’m glad you’re not the master.’

‘He is not at home then?’ I panted, breathless.

‘No,’ she replied: ‘both he and Joseph are out, and they won’t return this hour or more. Step in and rest a bit.’

I entered, and beheld my stray lamb seated on the hearth, rocking herself in a little chair that had been her mother’s when a child. She seemed perfectly at home, laughing and chattering to Hareton – now a great, strong lad of eighteen – who stared at her with curiosity and astonishment: comprehending little of the stream of remarks and questions which she poured forth.

‘Well, Miss!’ I exclaimed, concealing my joy with an angry face. ‘This is your last ride, till papa comes back. I’ll not trust you again, you naughty, naughty girl!’

‘Aha, Ellen!’ she cried gaily, jumping up and running to my side. ‘I shall have a pretty story to tell tonight. Have you ever been here before?’

‘Put that hat on, and come home at once,’ said I. ‘I’m dreadfully grieved at you, Miss Cathy: you’ve done extremely wrong! It’s no use pouting and crying: that won’t repay the trouble I’ve had, scouring the country for you after your Papa charged me to keep you safe! You’re a cunning little fox.’

‘What have I done?’ sobbed she. ‘Papa charged me nothing: he’ll not scold me, Ellen – he’s never cross, like you!’

‘Come, come!’ I repeated. ‘Let us have no petulance. Oh, for shame! You thirteen years old, and such a baby!’

‘Nay,’ said the servant, ‘don’t be hard on the bonny lass, Mrs. Dean. We made her stop though she wanted to ride on. Hareton offered to go with her, and I thought he should: it’s a wild road over the hills.’

Hareton stood with his hands in his pockets, too awkward to speak.

‘How long am I to wait?’ I continued, ignoring the woman’s interference. ‘It will be dark in ten minutes. Where is the pony, Miss Cathy? And where is Phoenix? Be quick!’

‘The pony is in the yard,’ she replied, ‘and Phoenix is shut in there. He’s been bitten – and so has Charlie. I was going to tell you all about it; but you are in a bad temper, and don’t deserve to hear.’

I picked up her hat, but she, seeing that the people of the house took her side, began to caper round the room; and on my giving chase, ran like a mouse over and under and behind the furniture. Hareton and the woman laughed, and she joined them; till I cried, in great irritation, ‘Well, Miss Cathy, if you knew whose house this is you’d be glad enough to get out.’

‘It’s your father’s, isn’t it?’ said she, turning to Hareton.

‘Nay,’ he replied, looking down, and blushing.

‘Whose then – your master’s?’ she asked.

He coloured deeper, muttered an oath, and turned away.

‘Who is his master?’ continued the tiresome girl, appealing to me. ‘He talked about “our house,” and “our folk.” I thought he was the owner’s son. And he never said Miss: he should have done, shouldn’t he, if he’s a servant?’

Hareton grew black as a thunder-cloud at this. I silently shook Catherine, and put her hat on her head.

‘Get my horse,’ she said, addressing Hareton as if he were a stable-boy. ‘You may come with me. I want to see where the goblin-hunter rises in the marsh, and to hear about the fairishes, as you call them: but make haste! What’s the matter? Get my horse, I say.’

‘I’ll see thee damned before I be thy servant!’ growled the lad.

‘You’ll see me what?’ asked Catherine in surprise.

‘Damned – thou saucy witch!’ he replied.

‘There, Miss Cathy! you see you have got into pretty company,’ I said. ‘Nice words to use to a young lady! Don’t argue with him. Come, let us find your pony, and begone.’

‘But, Ellen,’ cried she, staring in astonishment, ‘how dare he speak so to me? You wicked creature, I shall tell papa what you said!’

Hareton did not appear to feel this threat; so the tears sprang into her eyes with indignation. 'You bring the pony,' she exclaimed, turning to the woman, 'and let my dog free this moment!'

'Softly, Miss,' she answered; 'you'll lose nothing by being civil. Mr. Hareton there is your cousin: and I was never hired to serve you.'

'My cousin!' cried Cathy, with a scornful laugh.

'Yes, indeed.'

'Oh, Ellen! don't let them say such things,' she pursued, troubled. 'Papa is gone to fetch my cousin from London: my cousin is a gentleman's son. That—' she stopped, and wept outright.

'Hush!' I whispered; 'people can have many cousins, Miss Cathy; only they needn't keep their company, if they be disagreeable and bad.'

'He's not my cousin, Ellen!' she said.

I was vexed. I had no doubt that Linton's approaching arrival would now be reported to Mr. Heathcliff; and I was sure that Catherine would seek an explanation about Hareton from her father as soon as he returned.

Hareton, recovering from his disgust at being taken for a servant, seemed moved by her distress; and, having fetched the pony to the door, he took a fine terrier pup from the kennel, and putting it into her hand, bid her whist! for he meant naught. She looked at him with awe and horror, then wept anew.

I could scarcely help smiling at this antipathy to the poor fellow. He was a well-made, athletic youth, good-looking, strong and healthy, but dressed as a rough farm-worker. Still, he looked as if he had better qualities than his father ever possessed. Mr. Heathcliff, I believe, had not treated him physically ill, thanks to his fearless nature: he had none of the timidity that would have tempted Heathcliff to mistreat him.

Instead, Heathcliff had bent his ill-will on making him a brute: he was never taught to read or write; never rebuked for any bad habit, nor led towards virtue, or guarded by a single word against vice.

And from what I heard, Joseph had made matters worse by flattering and petting him, because he was the head of the old family. Joseph laid the whole burden of Hareton's faults on Heathcliff's shoulders. He wouldn't correct the lad no matter how ill he behaved. It gave Joseph satisfaction, apparently, to watch him go the worst lengths: he allowed that the lad was ruined and his soul damned, but reflected that Heathcliff must answer for it.

I only speak from hearsay; for I saw little of life at Wuthering Heights. The villagers said Mr. Heathcliff was miserly, and a cruel hard landlord to his tenants; but the house, inside, had regained its ancient aspect of comfort under its female management, and there was none of the riot of Hindley's time. The master was too gloomy to seek companionship; and he is still.

Well, Miss Cathy rejected the peace-offering of the terrier, and we set out for home with our own dogs, sadly out of sorts. She told me that she had aimed for Penistone Crag; and she arrived at the gate of the farm-house, when Hareton came out with some dogs, which attacked hers before their owners could separate them. Catherine told Hareton who she was, and where she was going; and asked him to show her the way. He told her about the Fairy Cave, and other queer places. I gathered that he was a favourite till she hurt his feelings by addressing him as a servant. Then the language he had used rankled; she was shocked to be insulted so by a stranger!

She did not comprehend it; and I had hard work to make her promise not to tell her father. I explained how he objected to the whole household at the Heights, and how sorry he would be to find she had been there; but I insisted most on the fact that he might be so angry with me that I should have to leave. Cathy couldn't bear that prospect: she pledged her word, and kept it for my sake. After all, she was a sweet little girl.

CHAPTER 19

A letter, edged with black, came from my master. Isabella was dead; and Edgar was returning with his youthful nephew. Catherine ran wild with joy at the idea of welcoming her father back; and looked forward to seeing her 'real' cousin. On the evening of their expected arrival, she persuaded me to walk with her through the grounds to meet them.

'Linton is just six months younger than I am,' she chattered, as we strolled under the trees. 'How delightful it will be to have him for a playfellow! Aunt Isabella sent papa a beautiful lock of his hair; it was lighter than mine. I've often thought what a pleasure it would be to see its owner. Oh! I am happy – and dear papa! Come, Ellen, let us run!'

She ran to the gate, and then sat on the grassy bank beside the path, and tried to wait patiently; but that was impossible.

'How long they are!' she exclaimed. 'Ah, I see some dust on the road – they are coming!'

The travelling carriage rolled into sight. Miss Cathy shrieked and stretched out her arms as soon as she saw her father's face looking from the window. Edgar descended, and while they exchanged caresses I took a peep in at Linton. He was asleep in a corner, wrapped in a warm, fur-lined cloak. A pale, delicate, effeminate boy, who might have been taken for my master's younger brother, so strong was the resemblance: but there was a sickly peevishness in his aspect that Edgar Linton never had.

Mr Linton saw me looking; and advised me not to disturb him; for the journey had fatigued him.

'Now, darling,' he said to his daughter, 'your cousin is not so strong or so merry as you are, and he has lost his mother, remember; so don't expect him to play and run about with you. Let him be quiet this evening, at least.'

Edgar and Cathy walked up to the house, while the carriage was driven round to the steps. There he roused Linton and lifted him out.

'This is your cousin Cathy, Linton,' he said, putting their little hands together. 'She's fond of you already; and mind you don't grieve her by crying. Try to be cheerful now; the travelling is at an end, and you can rest and amuse yourself as you please.'

'Let me go to bed, then,' answered the boy, shrinking from Catherine, and starting to weep.

'Come, come, there's a good child,' I whispered, leading him in. 'You'll make her weep too – see how sorry she is for you!'

Certainly, his cousin looked as sad as he did. All three went to the library, where tea was laid ready. I removed Linton's cap and cloak, and placed him on a chair by the table; but he began to cry afresh. My master inquired what was the matter.

'I can't sit on a chair,' sobbed the boy.

'Go to the sofa, then, and Ellen shall bring you some tea,' answered his uncle patiently.

He had been greatly tried during the journey, I felt convinced, by his fretful, ailing charge. Linton slowly trailed off, and lay down, and Cathy carried a footstool to his side. At first she sat silent; but that could not last: she had resolved to make a pet of her little cousin; and she commenced stroking his curls, and kissing his cheek, and

offering him tea in her saucer, like a baby. This pleased him: he dried his eyes, and lightened into a faint smile.

‘Oh, he’ll do very well,’ said the master to me, watching them. ‘Very well, if we can keep him, Ellen. The company of a child of his own age will give him new spirit.’

‘Ay, if we can keep him!’ I mused to myself; I felt that there was little hope of that. I thought, how ever will that weakling live at Wuthering Heights, with Heathcliff and Hareton? what playmates and instructors they’ll be.

Our doubts were soon decided. I had just taken the children upstairs to bed, and had come back down, when a maid informed me that Joseph was at the door, and wished to speak with the master.

‘It is an unlikely hour to be troubling people, and the instant they have returned from a long journey,’ I said. ‘I don’t think the master can see him.’

However, Joseph had advanced through the kitchen as I uttered these words, and now presented himself in his Sunday clothes, with his most sanctimonious and sourest face.

‘Good-evening, Joseph,’ I said, coldly. ‘What brings you here tonight?’

‘It’s Master Linton I must speak to,’ he answered, waving me disdainfully aside.

‘Mr. Linton is going to bed; unless you have something particular to say, I’m sure he won’t hear it now,’ I continued. ‘You had better entrust your message to me.’

‘Which is his room?’ he pursued, surveying the range of closed doors.

Reluctantly I went to the library, and announced him. But Joseph followed close at my heels, and, pushing into the room, began in a high tone, as if anticipating opposition:

‘Heathcliff has sent me for his lad, and I mustn’t go back without him.’

Edgar Linton was silent a minute; sorrow overcast his features. Recalling Isabella’s anxious wishes for her son, he grieved bitterly at the prospect of yielding him up, and searched in his heart how it might be avoided. No plan offered itself: there was nothing left but to resign him. However, he was not going to rouse him from his sleep.

‘Tell Mr. Heathcliff,’ he answered calmly, ‘that his son shall come to Wuthering Heights tomorrow. He is in bed, and too tired to travel now. You may also tell him that Linton’s mother desired him to remain under my guardianship; and, at present, his health is very precarious.’

‘No!’ said Joseph. ‘Heathcliff makes no account o’ the mother; he’ll have his lad; and I must take him – so now yah know!’

‘Not tonight!’ answered Linton decisively. ‘Walk downstairs at once, and repeat to your master what I have said. Ellen, show him down. Go!’

And, aiding the indignant elder with his arm, he rid the room of him and closed the door.

‘Very weell!’ shouted Joseph as he left. ‘To-morn, he’ll come hisself; and thrust *him* out, if yah dare!’

CHAPTER 20

To stop the danger of this threat being fulfilled, Mr. Linton told me to take the boy to Wuthering Heights early, on Catherine's pony. 'Do not tell my daughter where he is gone,' he said; 'it is better for her to remain in ignorance, lest she should be anxious to visit the Heights. Tell her Linton's father sent for him suddenly, and he has been obliged to leave us.'

Linton was very reluctant to be roused from his bed at five o'clock, and astonished to be informed that he must prepare for further travelling. I told him he was going to spend some time with his father, Mr. Heathcliff, who wished to see him.

'My father!' he cried, in strange perplexity. 'Mamma never told me I had a father. Where does he live? I'd rather stay with uncle.'

'He lives just beyond those hills,' I replied; 'but you may walk over here when you get hearty. You should be glad to go home, and to see him. You must try to love him, and then he will love you.'

'But why have I not heard of him before?' asked Linton. 'Why didn't mamma and he live together, as other people do?'

'He had business to keep him in the north,' I answered, 'and your mother's health required her to reside in the south.'

'And why didn't mamma speak to me about him?' persevered the child. 'She often talked of uncle. How am I to love papa? I don't know him.'

'Oh, all children love their parents,' I said. 'Your mother, perhaps, thought you would want to be with him if she mentioned him often to you. Let us hurry. It's a beautiful morning for a ride.'

'Is the little girl to go with us?' he demanded.

'Not now,' I replied. 'I shall be your companion.'

Linton sank back on his pillow. 'I won't go without uncle,' he cried, and obstinately resisted any progress towards dressing, until I had to call for my master's help. He was assured that his absence should be short, and that Mr. Edgar and Cathy would visit him; and I invented other promises, equally ill-founded, on the way.

The heather-scented air and the bright sunshine made him less despondent after a while, and he began to ask about his new home.

'Is Wuthering Heights as pleasant as Thrushcross Grange?'

'It is not so buried in trees,' I replied, 'nor so large, but you can see the country beautifully all round; and the air is healthier – fresher and drier. You may think the building old and dark at first; but it is a respectable house. And you will have such nice rambles on the moors. Hareton Earnshaw – Miss Cathy's other cousin – will show you all the sweetest spots; and you can bring a book in fine weather; and your uncle may sometimes join you in a walk.'

'What is my father like?' he asked. 'Is he as young and handsome as uncle?'

'He's as young,' said I; 'but he has black hair and eyes, and looks sterner; and he is taller and bigger altogether. He'll not seem to you so gentle and kind at first, perhaps. But be frank and cordial with him, and he'll be fonder of you than any uncle, for you are his own.'

'Black hair and eyes!' mused Linton. 'I can't imagine him. Then I am not like him, am I?'

'Not much,' I answered, surveying with regret his white complexion and large languid eyes – his mother's eyes, but without a trace of her sparkling spirit.

‘How strange that he should never come to see mamma and me!’ he murmured.

‘Why, Master Linton,’ said I, ‘three hundred miles is a great distance. Mr. Heathcliff probably meant to come, but never found an opportunity. Don’t question him on the subject: it will disturb him for no good.’

When we halted at the garden-gate, I watched him as he surveyed the carved lattices, the straggling gooseberry-bushes and crooked firs, with solemn intentness, and then shook his head, as if he disapproved of his new home.

But he had the sense not to complain. I opened the door. The family had just finished breakfast: the servant was clearing the table. Joseph stood by his master’s chair; and Hareton was preparing for the hayfield.

‘Hallo, Nelly!’ said Mr. Heathcliff, when he saw me. ‘I feared I should have to come down and fetch my property myself. You’ve brought it, have you? Let us see it.’

He got up and strode to the door: Hareton and Joseph followed. Poor Linton ran a frightened eye over their faces.

‘Surely,’ said Joseph after a grave inspection, ‘he’s swopped wi’ ye, Master, an’ yon’s his lass!’

Heathcliff uttered a scornful laugh.

‘God! what a beauty! what a lovely, charming thing!’ he exclaimed. ‘Haven’t they reared it on snails and sour milk, Nelly? Oh, damn my soul! but that’s worse than I expected – and the devil knows I was not sanguine!’

I told the trembling and bewildered child to enter. He did not understand his father’s speech: indeed, he was not yet certain that the grim, sneering stranger was his father. But he clung to me, and on Mr. Heathcliff’s bidding him ‘come here’ he hid his face on my shoulder and wept.

‘Tut, tut!’ said Heathcliff, dragging him roughly between his knees, and then holding up his head by the chin. ‘None of that nonsense! We’re not going to hurt thee, Linton – isn’t that thy name? Thou art thy mother’s child, entirely! Where is my share in thee, puling chicken?’

He took off the boy’s cap and pushed back his thick flaxen curls, and felt his slender arms. Meanwhile Linton ceased crying, and lifted his great blue eyes to inspect the inspector.

‘Do you know me?’ asked Heathcliff, having satisfied himself that the limbs were all equally frail and feeble.

‘No,’ said Linton, with a gaze of vacant fear.

‘You’ve heard of me, I daresay?’

‘No,’ he replied again.

‘No! What a shame of your mother! She was a wicked slut to leave you in ignorance of the sort of father you possessed. Now, don’t wince, and colour up! Though it is something to see you have not white blood. Be a good lad; and I’ll do for you. Nelly, if you be tired you may sit down; if not, get home again.’

‘Well,’ replied I, ‘I hope you’ll be kind to the boy, Mr. Heathcliff, for he’s all the family you have in the wide world, that you will ever know.’

‘I’ll be very kind to him, you needn’t fear,’ he said, laughing. ‘Only nobody else must be kind to him. And, to begin my kindness, Joseph, bring the lad some breakfast. Hareton, you infernal calf, begone to your work.’

‘Yes, Nell,’ he added, ‘my son is prospective owner of your place, and I want the triumph of seeing my descendant the lord of their estates; my child hiring their children to till their fathers’ lands. That is the only reason I can endure the whelp. But that is enough: he’s safe with me. I have a room furnished for him handsomely; I’ve

engaged a tutor, also, to come three times a week. I've ordered Hareton to obey my son: and in fact I've arranged everything to set him above his associates. I do regret, however, that he so little deserves the trouble: I hoped to find him a worthy object of pride; and I'm bitterly disappointed with the whey-faced, whining wretch!

While he was speaking, Joseph returned bearing a basin of milk-porridge, and placed it before Linton: who stirred it with a look of aversion.

'I shan't eat it!' he said snappishly. 'Take it away.'

Joseph snatched up the food indignantly. 'Yon dainty chap says he cannot eat it! His mother were just the same.'

'Don't mention his mother to me,' said Heathcliff angrily. 'Get him something that he can eat. What is his usual food, Nelly?'

I suggested boiled milk or tea, reflecting that at least Heathcliff saw the need to treat him well.

I slipped out while Linton was engaged in timidly rebuffing the advances of a friendly sheep-dog. But as I closed the door, I heard a frantic cry—

'Don't leave me! I'll not stay here!'

I mounted Minny, and urged her to a trot; and so my brief guardianship ended.

CHAPTER 21

We had sad work with little Cathy that day: she rose in high glee, eager to join her cousin, and such passionate tears followed the news of his departure that Edgar had to promise he would come back soon.

However, time dimmed her memory of him. Though at intervals she asked when Linton would return, when she did see him again she did not recognise him.

Whenever I met the housekeeper of Wuthering Heights, I used to ask her how the young master got on; for he was never to be seen. She said he was in weak health, and was tiresome; and that Mr. Heathcliff disliked him, though he tried to conceal it: he could not sit in the same room with him for long. Linton learnt his lessons and spent his evenings in a small parlour: or else lay in bed all day: for he was constantly getting coughs, and colds, and aches, and pains.

‘And I never knew such a fainthearted, fussy creature,’ added the woman. ‘He will go on, if I leave the window open in the evening. Oh! it’s killing, a breath of night air! And he must have a fire in the middle of summer; and he must always have sweets, and milk, milk for ever, and never mind the rest of us. There he’ll sit, wrapped in his fur cloak in his chair by the fire, with some toast and water; and if Hareton comes to amuse him – Hareton is not bad-natured, though he’s rough – they’re sure to part with one swearing and the other crying. Heathcliff stays away from him.’

I gathered that Linton was selfish and disagreeable, and my interest in him decayed: though I still wished he had been left with us. Mr. Edgar thought a great deal about him, I fancy, and told me to ask the housekeeper whether he ever came into the village. She said he had only been twice, on horseback, with his father; and both times he pretended to be exhausted for three or four days afterwards. That housekeeper left two years later; but her successor lives there still.

Time wore on at the Grange in its pleasant way till Miss Cathy reached sixteen. We did not rejoice on her birthday, because it was also the anniversary of my late mistress’s death. Her father always spent that day alone in the library; and walked, at dusk, to Gimmerton churchyard; so Catherine had to amuse herself.

It was a beautiful spring day, and when her father had retired, my young lady came down dressed for going out, and asked to have a ramble on the edge of the moor with me: Mr. Linton had given her leave, if we were back within the hour.

‘So hurry, Ellen!’ she cried. ‘I wish to go where a colony of grouse are settled: I want to see whether they have made their nests yet.’

I put on my bonnet and walked out. She bounded before me like a young greyhound; and, at first, I found plenty of entertainment in listening to the larks singing, and enjoying the sweet, warm sunshine; and watching her, my pet and my delight, with her golden ringlets flying behind, and her eyes radiant with cloudless pleasure. She was a happy creature, and an angel, in those days. It’s a pity she could not be content.

‘Well,’ said I, ‘where are your birds, Miss Cathy?’

‘Only a little further, Ellen,’ she answered.

But I was weary, and told her we must halt, and go back. I shouted to her, as she was far ahead; she either did not hear or did not care, for she sprang on, and I had to follow, until we were near Wuthering Heights. Finally, she dived into a hollow, and when I caught sight of her again, I saw a couple of people stop her, one of whom I felt convinced was Mr. Heathcliff himself.

Cathy had been caught hunting out the nests of the grouse, which were on Heathcliff's land; and he was reproving the poacher.

'I've not taken any,' she said, as I reached them. 'Papa told me there were nests here, and I wished to see the eggs.'

Heathcliff glanced at me with an ill-meaning smile, and demanded who 'papa' was?

'Mr. Linton of Thrushcross Grange,' she replied. 'Who are you? That man I've seen before. Is he your son?'

She pointed to Hareton, who was bigger and stronger than two years previously, but seemed as awkward and rough as ever.

'Miss Cathy,' I interrupted, 'we really must go back.'

'No, that man is not my son,' answered Heathcliff, pushing me aside. 'But I have one, and you have seen him before too; and, though your nurse is in a hurry, I think you would both be the better for a little rest. Will you walk into my house? You'll receive a kind welcome.'

I whispered to Catherine that she mustn't agree.

'Why?' she asked, aloud. 'I'm tired. Let us go, Ellen. Besides, he says I have seen his son. He's mistaken, I think; but I guess he lives at the farmhouse I visited in coming from Penistone Crag.'

'You shall walk with me, Nelly,' said Heathcliff, seizing my arm.

'No, she's not going,' I cried, but she was already scampering ahead. 'Mr. Heathcliff, it's very wrong,' I continued: 'you know you mean no good. She'll see Linton, and I shall have the blame.'

'I want her to see Linton,' he answered; 'he's looking better just now; it's not often he's fit to be seen. We'll persuade her to keep the visit secret: where is the harm of it?'

'The harm of it is, that her father would hate me if he found I let her enter your house; and I am convinced you have a bad design in encouraging her.'

'My design is honest. I'll inform you of it,' he said. 'That the two cousins may fall in love, and get married. I'm acting generously to your master: his young chit has no expectations, and should she follow my wishes she'll be provided for. I am resolved to bring their union about.'

'And I'm resolved she shall never approach your house with me again,' I returned, as we reached the gate, where Miss Cathy waited.

As Heathcliff opened the door, she gave him several looks, as if she could not make up her mind what to think of him; but he smiled at her, and softened his voice; and I was foolish enough to imagine the memory of her mother might disarm him.

Linton stood on the hearth. He had been out walking in the fields, and was calling to Joseph to bring him dry shoes. He had grown tall for his age, still wanting some months of sixteen. His features were pretty, and his eye and complexion brighter than I remembered, though their brightness was borrowed from the sun.

'Now, who is that?' asked Mr. Heathcliff, turning to Cathy. 'Can you tell?'

'Your son?' she said doubtfully.

'Yes, yes,' answered he: 'but is this the only time you have seen him? Ah! you have a short memory. Linton, don't you recall your cousin, that you used to wish to see?'

'What, Linton!' cried Cathy in joyful surprise. 'Is that little Linton? He's taller than I am!'

The youth stepped forward; she kissed him fervently, and they gazed with wonder at each other. Catherine's figure was as elastic as steel, and she was sparkling with health and spirits. Linton was very slight and languid, but had a graceful manner.

After their greeting, Cathy went to Mr. Heathcliff, who lingered by the door, pretending not to watch them.

'So you are my uncle!' she cried, reaching up to kiss him. 'I thought I liked you, though you were cross at first. Why don't you visit us with Linton?'

'I visited once or twice too often before you were born,' he answered. 'There – damn it! If you have any kisses to spare, give them to Linton: they are thrown away on me.'

'Naughty Ellen!' exclaimed Catherine, flying to me next with her lavish caresses. 'Wicked Ellen! to try to stop me entering. But I'll take this walk every morning: may I, uncle? and sometimes bring papa. Won't you be glad to see us?'

'Of course,' replied the uncle, suppressing a grimace. 'But wait,' he continued, 'now I think of it, Mr. Linton has a prejudice against me: we quarrelled at one time, and, if you mention coming here to him, he'll forbid your visits. Therefore, you must not mention it.'

'Why did you quarrel?' asked Catherine, crestfallen.

'He thought me too poor to wed his sister,' answered Heathcliff, 'and was grieved that I got her: his pride was hurt, and he'll never forgive it.'

'That's wrong!' said the young lady: 'some time I'll tell him so. But Linton and I have no share in your quarrel. He shall come to the Grange.'

'It will be too far for me,' murmured her cousin: 'to walk four miles would kill me. No, come here, Miss Catherine, now and then: not every morning, but once or twice a week.'

The father gave his son a glance of bitter contempt.

'I am afraid, Nelly, I shall lose my labour,' he muttered to me. 'Miss Catherine will discover his value, and send him to the devil. Now, if it had been Hareton! – Do you know that, twenty times a day, I covet Hareton, with all his degradation? I'd have loved the lad if he had been someone else. I think he's safe from her love, but I'll pit him against that paltry creature, if it doesn't bestir itself. We calculate it will scarcely last till it's eighteen. Oh, confound the vapid thing! He's drying his feet, and never looks at her. Linton!'

'Yes, father,' answered the boy.

'Have you nothing to show your cousin anywhere, not even a rabbit? Take her into the garden, before you change your shoes; and into the stable to see your horse.'

'Wouldn't you rather sit here?'

asked Linton, addressing Cathy. 'I don't know,' she replied, casting a longing look towards the door, and eager to be active.

He shrank closer to the fire. Heathcliff rose, and went into the yard, calling out for Hareton. Presently the two re-entered. Hareton had been washing himself, as was visible by the glow on his cheeks and his wetted hair.

'Oh, uncle,' cried Miss Cathy. 'That is not my cousin, is he?'

'Yes,' Heathcliff replied, 'your mother's nephew. Don't you like him? Is he not a handsome lad?'

The uncivil little thing stood on tiptoe, and whispered in Heathcliff's ear. He laughed; Hareton darkened: I saw that he was very sensitive to slights, and had a dim notion of his inferiority. But his master exclaimed:

‘You’ll be the favourite, Hareton! She says you are a – something very flattering. Go with her round the farm. And behave like a gentleman, mind! Don’t use any bad words; and don’t stare, speak slowly, and keep your hands out of your pockets. Be off, and entertain her as nicely as you can.’

He watched the couple walking past the window. Earnshaw had his face averted from his companion. Catherine took a sly glance at him, and then looked around her, singing to supply the lack of conversation.

‘I’ve tied his tongue,’ observed Heathcliff. ‘He’ll not say a single word now! Nelly, when I was his age, did I ever look so stupid and “gaumless?”’

‘Worse,’ I replied, ‘because more sullen.’

‘I’ve a pleasure in him,’ he continued. ‘He has satisfied my expectations. If he were a born fool I should not enjoy it half so much. But he’s no fool; and I can sympathise with all his feelings, having felt them myself. I know what he suffers now; it is merely a beginning of what he shall suffer, though. He’ll never be able to emerge from his coarseness and ignorance. He even takes a pride in his brutishness. Don’t you think Hindley would be proud of his son, if he could see him? almost as proud as I am of mine. But one is gold put to the use of paving-stones, and the other is tin polished to ape silver. Mine has nothing valuable about it; yet I shall make it go as far as such poor stuff can. His had first-rate qualities, and they are lost.’

‘And the best of it is, Hareton is damnably fond of me! I’ve outmatched Hindley there. If the villain could rise from his grave to abuse me, I should have the fun of seeing his son fight him back again, indignant that he should dare to rail at the one friend he has in the world!’

Heathcliff chuckled a fiendish laugh. I made no reply. Meantime, young Linton, who sat too far from us to hear what was said, began to show uneasiness, and glanced restlessly towards the window.

‘Get up, you idle boy!’ Heathcliff exclaimed, with assumed heartiness. ‘Away after them!’

Linton gathered his energies, and left the hearth. The window was open, and, as he stepped out, I heard Cathy inquiring what was that inscription over the door? Hareton stared up, and scratched his head like a true clown.

‘It’s some damnable writing,’ he answered. ‘I cannot read it.’

‘Can’t read it?’ cried Catherine.

Linton giggled. ‘He does not know his letters,’ he said to her. ‘Could you believe in the existence of such a colossal dunce?’

‘Is he all as he should be?’ asked Miss Cathy, seriously; ‘or is he simple? I’ve questioned him twice now, and he looked so stupid I think he does not understand me.’

Linton laughed again, and glanced tauntingly at Hareton; who certainly did not seem to understand him just then.

‘There’s nothing the matter but laziness; is there, Earnshaw?’ he said. ‘My cousin fancies you are an idiot. That is the consequence of scorning “book-larning,” as you would say. Have you noticed, Catherine, his frightful Yorkshire pronunciation?’

‘Why, where the devil is the use on’t?’ growled Hareton. The two youngsters broke into a noisy fit of merriment.

‘Where is the use of the devil in that sentence?’ tittered Linton. ‘Papa told you not to say any bad words, and you can’t open your mouth without one. Do try to behave like a gentleman, now do!’

‘If thou weren’t more a lass than a lad, I’d fell thee this minute, I would!’ retorted the angry youth, retreating in rage and mortification.

Mr. Heathcliff, having overheard, smiled when he saw him go; but cast a look of aversion on the flippant pair, who remained chattering in the doorway. Linton was lively enough in discussing Hareton’s faults, while Cathy relished his spiteful sayings, without considering their ill-nature. I began to dislike Linton, and to excuse his father for holding him cheap.

We stayed till afternoon: I could not tear Miss Cathy away sooner. As we walked home, I tried to enlighten her about the characters of the people we had left: but she decided that I was prejudiced against them.

‘Aha!’ she cried, ‘you take papa’s side, Ellen: or else you wouldn’t have told me that Linton lived far away. I’m extremely angry; only I’m so pleased I can’t show it! I’ll scold papa for quarrelling with my uncle.’

And so she chattered on, till I gave up. She did not mention the visit to her father that night, because she did not see him. Next day it all came out, and I was not sorry: I thought he could warn her better than me. But he was too timid in saying why she should shun Wuthering Heights.

‘Papa!’ exclaimed Cathy, ‘guess whom I saw yesterday, on the moors? Ah, papa, you’ve not done right, have you? But I have found you out; and Ellen, who is in league with you!’

She gave a faithful account of her excursion; and my master, though he looked at me reproachfully, said nothing till she finished. Then he asked if she knew why he had concealed Linton’s nearness from her?

‘Because you disliked Mr. Heathcliff,’ she answered.

‘No, it was not because I disliked Mr. Heathcliff,’ he said, ‘but because Mr. Heathcliff dislikes me. He is a diabolical man, delighting to wrong and ruin those he hates, if they give him the slightest opportunity. I knew that you could not meet your cousin without being brought into contact with him; and I knew he would detest you on my account; so for your own good, I took care that you should not see Linton again. I meant to explain this as you grew older.’

‘But Mr. Heathcliff was quite cordial, papa,’ observed Catherine, not at all convinced; ‘and he didn’t object to our seeing each other. He said I might come to his house when I pleased; only I must not tell you, because you would not forgive him for marrying aunt Isabella. You are the one to be blamed: he is willing to let us be friends.’

My master, seeing that she would not take his word for it, gave a hasty sketch of Heathcliff’s conduct to Isabella, and the manner in which Wuthering Heights became his property. He felt that, but for Heathcliff, his wife might yet have been alive; in his eyes, Heathcliff seemed a murderer.

Miss Cathy – knowing of no bad deeds except her own small acts of disobedience – was amazed at the blackness of spirit that could brood on revenge for years. She appeared so deeply impressed and shocked at this new view of human nature that Mr. Edgar did not pursue the subject. He merely added: ‘This is why I wish you to avoid his house and family; now think no more about them.’

Catherine kissed her father, and sat down quietly to her lessons, and the day passed as usual: but in the evening, when I went to help her undress, I found her crying.

‘Oh, fie, silly child!’ I exclaimed. ‘This is not a cause for grief.’

‘I’m not crying for myself, Ellen,’ she answered, ‘it’s for Linton. He expected to see me again tomorrow, and he’ll be so disappointed!’

‘Nonsense!’ said I, ‘do you imagine he has thought of you? Nobody would weep at losing a relation they had just seen twice. Linton will trouble himself no further about you.’

‘But may I not write a note to tell him why I cannot come?’ she asked. ‘And send those books I promised to lend him? May I not, Ellen?’

‘No, indeed!’ replied I with decision. ‘Then he would write to you, and there’d never be an end of it. No, Miss Catherine, the acquaintance must be dropped entirely: so papa expects. Get into bed.’

She threw me a very naughty look, so naughty that I would not kiss her good-night at first: I shut her door, in great displeasure; but, repenting half-way, I returned softly, and lo! there was Miss standing at the table with a bit of paper and a pencil in her hand, which she guiltily slipped out of sight.

‘You’ll get nobody to take that, Catherine,’ I said, ‘if you write it; and now I shall put out your candle.’

I extinguished the flame, receiving a slap on my hand and a petulant ‘cross thing!’ The letter was finished and taken to its destination by a milk-fetcher from the village; but that I didn’t learn till some time afterwards.

Weeks passed, and Cathy recovered her temper; though she grew wondrous fond of stealing off to corners by herself. If I came near her while she was reading, she would bend over the book to hide it; and I detected edges of loose paper sticking out beyond the leaves.

She also started coming down early in the morning and lingering about the kitchen, as if she were expecting the arrival of something; and she had a small drawer in a cabinet in the library, whose key she took special care to remove when she left it.

One day, as she inspected this drawer, I observed that it contained bits of folded paper. My suspicions were roused; I determined to take a peep at them. Among my house keys, I found one that would fit the lock. Having opened it at night, I emptied the contents into my apron, and took them with me to examine at leisure.

They were letters from Linton; answers to letters sent by her. The earlier replies were embarrassed and short; gradually, however, they expanded into love-letters, foolish, naturally, yet with touches here and there which I thought were borrowed from a more experienced source. Some of them struck me as odd compounds of ardour and flatness; beginning in strong feeling, and ending in the affected, wordy style that a schoolboy might use to an imaginary sweetheart.

Whether they satisfied Cathy I don’t know; but they appeared very worthless trash to me. I tied them in a handkerchief and set them aside, relocking the empty drawer.

My young lady descended early, and visited the kitchen: I watched her go to the door, on the arrival of the milk-boy; and, while the dairymaid filled his milk-can, she tucked something into his jacket pocket, and plucked something out.

I went round by the garden, and laid wait for the milk-boy. Taking the letter from him, and telling him to go home sharp, I read Miss Cathy’s affectionate composition.

It was very pretty and very silly. I shook my head, and went into the house. After her morning studies, Cathy went to the drawer. Her father sat reading; and I was mending a curtain, but with my eye fixed on her. Never did any bird flying back to a plundered nest express more complete despair than she by her single ‘Oh!’ and her changed expression. Mr. Linton looked up.

‘What is the matter, love? Have you hurt yourself?’ he said.

His tone and look told her that *he* had not discovered the hoard.

‘No, papa!’ she gasped. ‘Ellen! come upstairs – I’m sick!’

I accompanied her out.

‘Oh, Ellen! you have got them,’ she began immediately when we were alone. ‘Oh, give them to me, and I’ll never, never do it again! Don’t tell papa. I’ve been exceedingly naughty, but I won’t do it any more!’

‘So,’ I exclaimed gravely, ‘Miss Catherine, you may well be ashamed! Fine trash you study in your leisure hours, to be sure! And what do you suppose the master will think? I haven’t shown it to him yet, but I will. For shame! You must have started it: Linton would not have thought of it, I’m certain.’

‘I didn’t!’ sobbed Cathy. ‘I didn’t once think of loving him till—’

‘Loving!’ cried I scornfully. ‘Loving! Did anybody ever hear the like! I might as well talk of loving the miller who comes once a year to buy our corn. You have seen Linton hardly four hours in your life! I’m taking this to your father.’

She sprang at her precious letters, but I held them above my head. She entreated me to burn them – anything rather than show them. At length I relented a little.

‘If I burn them,’ I said, ‘will you promise faithfully neither to send nor receive a letter again, nor a book, nor locks of hair, nor playthings?’

‘We don’t send playthings,’ cried Catherine, her pride overcoming her shame.

‘Nor anything at all, then, my lady?’ I said. ‘Unless you promise, here I go.’

‘I promise, Ellen!’ she cried, catching my dress. ‘Oh, put them in the fire, do, do!’

But when I went to the fire the sacrifice was too painful to be borne. She begged that I would spare her one or two to keep.

I unknotted the handkerchief, and dropped some in. The flame curled up the chimney.

‘I will have one, you cruel wretch!’ she screamed, darting her hand into the fire, and drawing forth some half-burnt fragments, at the expense of her fingers.

‘Very well – and I will have some to exhibit to papa!’ I answered, turning to the door.

She emptied her blackened pieces into the flames, and motioned me to finish the task. It was done; I stirred the ashes, and she mutely retired to her room. I went to tell my master that the young lady’s sickness was almost gone, but that I judged it best for her to lie down a while. She reappeared at tea, pale, and red about the eyes, and marvellously subdued.

Next morning I answered the letter by a slip of paper, inscribed, ‘Master Heathcliff is requested to send no more notes to Miss Linton, as she will not receive them.’ And, henceforth, the little boy came with vacant pockets.

CHAPTER 22

Summer drew to an end, and autumn came. Harvest was late that year. Mr. Linton and his daughter would frequently walk out among the reapers; once they stayed till dusk, and the evening being chill and damp, my master caught a bad cold that kept him indoors all winter.

Poor Cathy had been considerably sadder and duller since abandoning her little romance; and her father insisted on her reading less, and taking more exercise. I kept her company as much as possible, although I could only spare two or three hours a day, and my society was less desirable to her than her father's.

On a fresh afternoon in October, when paths were rustling with withered leaves, and the cold blue sky was half hidden by rain-clouds, my young lady still insisted on her ramble; so I unwillingly donned a cloak, and took my umbrella to accompany her on a stroll to the bottom of the park. It was a walk which she took if low-spirited – as she always was when Mr. Edgar was ill; she guessed his state from his silence and melancholy.

She went sadly on: there was no running or bounding now. And often I detected her raising a hand, and brushing something off her cheek. I gazed round for a means of diverting her thoughts.

On one side of the road rose a high bank, where hazels and stunted oaks clung uncertainly; strong winds had blown some nearly horizontal. In summer Miss Catherine delighted to climb these and sit in the branches, swinging twenty feet above the ground. I, pleased with her agility, still scolded every time I caught her there, but so mildly that she knew there was no need to descend. From dinner to tea she would lie in her breeze-rocked cradle, singing old songs, or watching the birds: or half thinking, half dreaming, happier than words can express.

'Look, Miss!' I exclaimed, pointing to the roots of one twisted tree. 'Winter is not here yet. There's a little flower there, the last bluebell of the year. Will you pluck it, to show to papa?'

Cathy stared at the lonely blossom, and replied, 'No, I'll not touch it: but it looks sad, does it not, Ellen?'

'Yes,' I observed, 'like you: your cheeks are bloodless; let us hold hands and run. I daresay I shall keep up with you.'

'No,' she repeated, and continued walking on, pausing at intervals. Frequently her hand was lifted to her averted face.

'Catherine, why are you crying, love?' I asked, putting my arm round her. 'You mustn't cry because papa has a cold; be thankful it is nothing worse.'

Her breath was stifled by sobs.

'Oh, it will be something worse,' she said. 'And what shall I do when papa and you leave me? How dreary the world will be, when papa and you are dead.'

'Why,' said I, 'we'll hope there are years to come before that: master is young, and I am strong, and hardly forty-five. My mother lived till eighty. And suppose Mr. Linton were spared till he saw sixty! Would it not be foolish to mourn him twenty years beforehand?'

'But Aunt Isabella was younger than papa,' she remarked, with timid hope.

'Aunt Isabella had not you and me to nurse her,' I replied. 'She hadn't as much to live for as your father. You can cheer him by being cheerful; and avoid giving him anxiety: mind that, Cathy! You might kill him if you were wild and reckless, and

cherished a fanciful affection for the son of a person who would be glad to have him in his grave; and if you let him discover that you fretted over the separation he thought it best to make.'

'I fret about nothing except papa's illness,' she answered. 'I care for nothing in comparison with papa. And I'll never, never, do an act or say a word to vex him. I love him better than myself, Ellen.'

'Good words,' I replied. 'But deeds must prove it also; and after he is well, don't forget it.'

As we talked, we neared a door that opened on the road. Cathy climbed up and sat on top of the wall, reaching over to gather some rose-hips that bloomed scarlet on the wild-rose trees shadowing the highway. In stretching to pick them, her hat fell off; and as the door was locked, she proposed scrambling down to recover it. I bid her be careful, and she nimbly disappeared.

But the return was no such easy matter: the stones were smooth. I heard her laughing and exclaiming, 'Ellen! you'll have to fetch the key. I can't scale the ramparts on this side!'

'I have my bundle of keys in my pocket,' I answered: 'perhaps I may manage to open it; if not, I'll go.'

Catherine danced to and fro before the door, while I tried all the large keys in turn. I found that none would do; so, telling her to stay there, I was about to hurry home as fast as I could, when an approaching sound arrested me. It was the trot of a horse; Cathy's dance stopped also.

'Who is that?' I whispered.

'Ellen, I wish you could open the door,' she whispered back anxiously.

'Ho, Miss Linton!' cried a deep voice. 'I'm glad to meet you. Don't hurry in, for I have something to ask.'

'I shan't speak to you, Mr. Heathcliff,' answered Catherine. 'Papa says you are a wicked man, and you hate both him and me.'

'That is nothing to the purpose,' said Heathcliff. 'I don't hate my son, I suppose; and it is about him that I want to speak. Yes; you have cause to blush. Two or three months ago, were you not in the habit of writing to Linton? making love in play, eh? You both deserved flogging for that! You especially, the elder; and less sensitive, as it turns out. I've got your letters, and if you give me any pertness I'll send them to your father. I presume you grew weary of the amusement and dropped it? Well, you dropped Linton with it into a Slough of Despond. He was really in love. As true as I live, he's dying for you; actually breaking his heart at your fickleness. He gets worse daily; and he'll be dead before summer, unless you restore him!'

'How can you lie so to the poor child?' I called from the inside. 'Pray ride on! Cathy, don't you believe that vile nonsense.'

'I was not aware there were eavesdroppers,' muttered the villain. 'Worthy Mrs. Dean, I like you, but I don't like your double-dealing,' he added aloud. 'Catherine Linton (the very name warms me), my bonny lass, I shall be away from home all this week; go and see if have not spoken truth: do, there's a darling! I swear, Linton's going to his grave, and none but you can save him!'

The lock gave way and I rushed out.

'I swear Linton is dying,' repeated Heathcliff, looking hard at me. 'And grief and disappointment are hastening his death. Nelly, if you won't let her go, you can walk over yourself. I shall not return till this time next week; and I think your master would scarcely object to her visiting her cousin.'

‘Come in,’ said I, taking Cathy by the arm. She lingered, viewing Heathcliff with troubled eyes.

He pushed his horse close, and, bending down, said, ‘Miss Catherine, I’ll admit that I have little patience with Linton; and Hareton and Joseph have less. He’s with a harsh set. He pines for kindness, as well as love; and a kind word from you would be his best medicine. Be generous, and go to see him. He dreams of you day and night, and thinks you hate him, since you neither write nor call.’

I closed the door and rolled a stone against it. Then I drew Cathy underneath my umbrella: for the rain began to drive through the moaning branches. As we hurried home, we did not talk about the encounter with Heathcliff; but I guessed that Catherine’s heart was clouded now in double darkness. Her features were sad: she evidently regarded his words as true.

The master was asleep in bed when we came in. Cathy and I took our tea together; and afterwards she lay on the rug, and told me not to talk, for she was weary. I got a book, and pretended to read. After a while I saw she was again weeping silently: so I began ridiculing Mr. Heathcliff’s assertions about his son.

‘You may be right, Ellen,’ she answered; ‘but I shall never feel at ease till I know. And I must tell Linton it is not my fault that I don’t write.’

What use were my protests against her silly credulity? Next day I went to Wuthering Heights beside my wilful young mistress’s pony. I couldn’t bear to see her sorrow: and I yielded, in the faint hope that Linton himself might prove how little of the tale was true.

CHAPTER 23

It was a misty morning – half frost, half drizzle – and temporary brooks crossed our path, until my feet were thoroughly wetted, and I was cross and low. We entered Wuthering Heights by the kitchen, to check whether Mr. Heathcliff were really absent.

Joseph seemed sitting in a sort of paradise alone, beside a roaring fire, with a quart of ale and a toasted oat-cake, and his pipe in his mouth. I asked if the master was in.

‘Nay!’ he snarled. ‘Yah must go back where yah come fro.’

‘Joseph!’ cried a peevish voice from the inner room. ‘How often am I to call you? There are only a few red ashes now. Joseph! come this moment.’

A resolute stare into the grate showed that Joseph had no ear for this appeal. The housekeeper and Hareton were invisible. We knew Linton’s voice, and entered.

‘Oh, I hope you’ll die in a garret, starving!’ said the boy, mistaking our approach for Joseph’s. He stopped on seeing us: his cousin flew to him.

‘Is that you, Miss Linton?’ he said, raising his head from the arm of the great chair. ‘No – don’t kiss me: it takes my breath. Dear me! Papa said you would call. Will you shut the door, please? you left it open; and those detestable creatures won’t bring coals to the fire. It’s so cold!’

I fetched some coal myself. The invalid had a tiresome cough, and looked feverish and ill.

‘Well, Linton,’ murmured Catherine, ‘are you glad to see me? Can I do you any good?’

‘Why didn’t you come before?’ he asked. ‘You should have come, instead of writing. It tired me dreadfully writing those long letters. I’d far rather have talked to you. Now I cannot bear to talk. Is Zillah in the kitchen?’

I replied, ‘Nobody is there but Joseph.’

‘I want a drink,’ he exclaimed fretfully. ‘Zillah is constantly gadding off to Gimmerton since papa went: it’s miserable!’

‘Is your father attentive to you, Master Heathcliff?’ I asked.

‘Attentive? He makes *them* a little more attentive at least,’ he cried. ‘The wretches! Do you know, Miss Linton, that brute Hareton laughs at me! I hate him! I hate them all: they are odious.’

Cathy found a pitcher of water, filled a tumbler, and brought it to him. Having swallowed a little, he appeared more tranquil, and said she was very kind.

‘And are you glad to see me?’ asked she, seeing the faint dawn of a smile.

‘Yes, I am. It’s something new to hear a voice like yours!’ he replied. ‘But I have been vexed, because you wouldn’t come. And papa swore it was because I was a pitiful, shuffling, worthless thing; and he said you despised me. But you don’t despise me, do you?’

‘Despise you? No! Next to papa and Ellen, I love you better than anybody living. I don’t love Mr. Heathcliff, though. Will he stay away many days?’

‘Not many,’ answered Linton; ‘but he goes on to the moors frequently, to shoot, and you might spend an hour or two with me then. Do say you will. I should not be peevish with you, and you’d always be ready to help me, wouldn’t you?’

‘Yes,’ said Catherine, stroking his long soft hair: ‘if I could only get papa’s consent, I’d spend half my time with you. Pretty Linton! I wish you were my brother.’

‘Papa says you would love me better than your father, if you were my wife; so I’d rather you were that.’

‘No, I should never love anybody better than papa,’ she returned gravely. ‘And people hate their wives, sometimes; but not their sisters and brothers.’

Linton denied that people ever hated their wives; but Cathy affirmed they did, and instanced his own father’s aversion to her aunt. I tried to stop her thoughtless tongue, but Master Heathcliff, much irritated, asserted that her tale was false.

‘Papa told me; and papa does not tell falsehoods,’ she answered pertly.

‘My papa calls yours a sneaking fool!’ cried Linton.

‘Yours is a wicked man,’ retorted Catherine; ‘and you are very naughty to repeat what he says. He must be wicked to have made Aunt Isabella leave him.’

‘She didn’t leave him,’ said the boy.

‘She did,’ cried my young lady.

‘Well, I’ll tell you something!’ said Linton. ‘Your mother hated your father: now then.’

‘Oh!’ exclaimed Catherine, enraged.

‘And she loved mine,’ added he.

‘You little liar! I hate you now!’ she panted, and her face grew red with passion.

‘She did! she did!’ sang Linton.

‘Hush, Master Heathcliff!’ I said; ‘that’s your father’s tale, too, I suppose.’

‘It isn’t: you hold your tongue!’ he answered. ‘She did, she did, Catherine! she did!’

Cathy gave his chair a violent push, and caused him to fall against one arm. He was immediately seized by a suffocating cough that soon ended his triumph. It lasted so long that it frightened even me. As to his cousin, she wept, aghast at the mischief she had done. I held him till the fit exhausted itself, and he thrust me away. Catherine quelled her weeping, took a seat, and looked solemnly into the fire.

‘How do you feel now, Master Heathcliff?’ I inquired.

‘I wish she felt as I do,’ he replied: ‘spiteful, cruel thing! Hareton never struck me in his life. And I was better to-day: and there—’ his voice died in a whimper.

‘I didn’t strike you!’ muttered Cathy, chewing her lip to prevent another burst of emotion.

He sighed and moaned like one under great suffering, and kept it up for a quarter of an hour; on purpose to distress his cousin apparently, for whenever he caught a stifled sob from her he put renewed pain and pathos into his voice.

‘I’m sorry I hurt you, Linton,’ she said at length. ‘But I had no idea that you could be hurt by that little push. You’re not much hurt, are you, Linton? Speak to me!’

‘I can’t speak to you,’ he murmured; ‘I shall lie awake all night choking with this cough. You’ll be comfortably asleep while I’m in agony. I wonder how you would like those fearful nights!’ And he began to wail aloud in self-pity.

‘Since you are in the habit of passing dreadful nights,’ I said, ‘it won’t be Miss who spoils your ease: you’d be the same without her. However, she shall not disturb you again.’

‘Must I go?’ asked Catherine dolefully. ‘Do you want me to go, Linton?’

‘Let me alone, at least,’ said he; ‘I can’t bear your talking.’

She lingered for a while; but as he neither looked up nor spoke, she finally moved towards the door, and I followed. We were recalled by a scream. Linton had slid from his seat on to the hearthstone, and lay writhing like a perverse, indulged child, determined to be as annoying as it can. I saw at once it would be folly to try

humouring him. But Cathy ran back in terror, knelt down, and cried, and soothed, and entreated, till he grew quiet.

‘I shall lift him on to the settle,’ I said, ‘and he may roll about as he pleases: we can’t stay to watch him. I hope you are satisfied, Miss Cathy, that you are not the person to benefit him; his health is not dependent on you. Now, come away! as soon as he knows there is nobody nearby to care for his nonsense, he’ll be glad to lie still.’

She placed a cushion under his head, but he tossed uneasily, as if it were a block of wood.

‘I can’t do with that,’ he said; ‘it’s not high enough.’

Catherine brought another.

‘That’s too high,’ murmured the provoking thing.

‘How must I arrange it, then?’ she asked despairingly.

He twined himself up to her, and leaned on her shoulder.

‘No, that won’t do,’ I said. ‘You’ll be content with the cushion, Master Heathcliff. Miss has wasted too much time on you already: we cannot remain five minutes longer.’

‘Yes, yes, we can!’ replied Cathy. ‘He’s good and patient now. I shall have far greater misery than he will tonight, if I believe he is the worse for my visit: and then I will not dare come again. Tell the truth, Linton; for I mustn’t come, if I have hurt you.’

‘You must come, to cure me,’ he answered. ‘You ought to come, because you have hurt me extremely! I was not as ill when you entered – was I?’

‘But you’ve made yourself ill by crying,’ said his cousin. ‘However, we’ll be friends now. Would you wish to see me sometimes, really?’

‘I told you I did,’ he replied impatiently. ‘Sit down and let me lean on your knee. That’s like mamma used to do. Sit still and don’t talk: but you may sing; or you may say a nice long interesting ballad – one of those you promised to teach me; or a story. I’d rather have a ballad, though: begin.’

Catherine repeated the longest she could remember. The employment pleased both mightily. Linton would have another, and after that another, despite my objections; and so they went on until we heard Hareton outside, returning for his dinner.

‘And Catherine, will you be here tomorrow?’ asked Linton, holding her frock as she rose reluctantly.

‘No,’ I answered, ‘nor next day neither.’ She, however, gave a different response, for his forehead cleared as she stooped and whispered in his ear.

‘You won’t go tomorrow, Miss!’ I said, when we were out of the house. She smiled.

‘I’ll have that lock mended,’ I continued.

‘I can get over the wall,’ she said, laughing. ‘You are not my jailer, Ellen. Besides, I’m almost seventeen. And I’m certain Linton would recover quickly if he had me to look after him. I’m older than he is, and wiser: I can coax him. He’s a pretty little darling when he’s good. I’d make such a pet of him, if he were mine. We should never quarrel. Don’t you like him, Ellen?’

‘Like him!’ I exclaimed. ‘The worst-tempered bit of a sickly slip that ever struggled into its teens! Happily, as Mr. Heathcliff guessed, he’ll not reach twenty. I doubt whether he’ll see spring, indeed. And small loss to his family, so tedious and selfish he is. I’m glad you have no chance of having him for a husband, Miss Catherine.’

My companion grew serious at hearing this speech.

‘He’s younger than I,’ she answered, after some thought, ‘and he ought to live as long as I do. He’s as strong now as when he first came, I’m sure. It’s only a cold that ails him, the same as papa. You say papa will get better, and why shouldn’t he?’

‘Well, well,’ I cried, ‘after all, we needn’t trouble ourselves; for listen, Miss, if you attempt going to Wuthering Heights again, with or without me, I shall inform Mr. Linton. Unless he allows it, the intimacy with your cousin must not be revived.’

‘It has been revived,’ muttered Cathy sulkily.

‘Must not be continued, then,’ I said.

‘We’ll see,’ was her reply, and she set off at a gallop.

We reached home before dinner-time; I hastened to change my soaked shoes and stockings; but on the next morning I was laid up, and for three weeks I was unable to attend to my duties: a calamity never experienced before or since.

My little mistress behaved like an angel in waiting on me, and cheering my solitude. The moment she left Mr. Linton’s room she appeared at my bedside. Her day was divided between us: she neglected her meals, her studies, and her play; and she was the fondest nurse that ever watched.

But after six o’clock, the evening was her own. Poor thing! I never considered what she did with herself after tea. And though frequently, when she looked in to bid me good-night, I remarked a fresh colour in her cheeks, I laid it to the charge of a hot fire in the library, rather than a cold ride across the moors.

CHAPTER 24

After three weeks I was able to quit my chamber. The first time I sat up in the evening I asked Catherine to read to me, because my eyes were weak. We were in the library: she consented, rather unwillingly; so I asked her to choose a book she liked. She read for a while; then came frequent questions.

‘Ellen, are not you tired? Hadn’t you better lie down now?’

‘No, no, dear, I’m not tired,’ I replied.

Next she began to yawn and stretch, saying, ‘Ellen, *I’m* tired.’

‘Stop reading then and talk,’ I answered.

That was worse: she fretted and sighed, and looked at her watch till eight, and finally went to her room, rubbing her eyes. The following night she seemed more impatient still; and on the third complained of a headache, and left me.

I thought her conduct odd; so I went to ask her to come and lie on the sofa, instead of upstairs in the dark. I could not find her upstairs, nor below. The servants said they had not seen her. I listened at Mr. Edgar’s door; all was silence. I returned to her apartment, extinguished my candle, and seated myself in the window.

The moon shone bright; a sprinkling of snow covered the ground, and I reflected that she might have taken it into her head to walk about the garden. I did detect a figure creeping along the inner fence of the park; but on its emerging into the light, I recognised one of the grooms. He stood a while viewing the road through the grounds before moving away; but soon reappeared leading Miss’s pony; and there she was, walking by its side. The man took the pony stealthily across the grass towards the stable.

Cathy entered by the window of the drawing-room, and glided noiselessly up to where I waited. She closed the door gently, slipped off her snowy shoes, untied her hat, and was taking off her cloak when I suddenly rose and revealed myself. The surprise petrified her: she stood fixed.

‘My dear Miss Catherine,’ I began, ‘where have you been riding at this hour? And why did you try to deceive me by telling a tale? Where have you been?’

‘To the bottom of the park,’ she stammered. ‘I didn’t tell a tale.’

‘Oh, Catherine!’ I cried, sorrowfully. ‘You know you have been doing wrong, or you wouldn’t tell me lies. That does grieve me. I’d rather be three months ill, than hear you tell a lie.’

She sprang forward, and bursting into tears, threw her arms round my neck.

‘Ellen, I’m so afraid of you being angry,’ she said. ‘Promise not to be angry, and you shall know the truth.’

I assured her I would not scold, whatever her secret might be. I guessed it, of course. She began—

‘I’ve been to Wuthering Heights, Ellen, every day since you fell ill. I asked Michael to prepare Minny every evening, and to put her back in the stable: you mustn’t scold him either. I was at the Heights by half-past six, and generally stayed till half-past eight, and then galloped home. It was not to amuse myself: I was often wretched. Perhaps once in a week I was happy. After my first visit, I got the key of the park door from Michael. I told him how my cousin wished me to visit him, because he was sick, and couldn’t come to the Grange. Michael is fond of reading, so I gave him books, and he offered to do what I wished.

‘On my second visit Linton seemed lively; and Zillah the housekeeper made us a good fire, and told us that Joseph was out at a prayer-meeting and Hareton Earnshaw

was off with his dogs, so we might do what we liked. She brought me wine and gingerbread, and seemed very good-natured, and Linton sat in the arm-chair, and I in the little rocking chair, and we laughed and talked so merrily, and found so much to say: we planned where we would go, and what we would do in summer.

‘But we almost quarrelled over that. He said the pleasantest manner of spending a hot July day was lying on the heather in the middle of the moors, with the bees humming dreamily about, and the larks singing overhead, and the blue sky and bright sun shining cloudlessly.

‘That was his most perfect idea of heaven’s happiness: mine was rocking in a rustling green tree, with a west wind blowing, and bright white clouds flitting rapidly above; and not only larks, but thrushes, and blackbirds, and linnets, and cuckoos pouring out music on every side, and the moors seen at a distance, broken into cool dusky dells; but close by, great swells of long grass undulating in waves to the breeze; and woods and sounding water, and the whole world awake and wild with joy.

‘He wanted all to lie in an ecstasy of peace; I wanted all to sparkle and dance in a glorious jubilee. I said his heaven would be only half alive; and he said mine would be drunk: I said I should fall asleep in his; and he said he could not breathe in mine, and grew very snappish. At last, we agreed to try both, as soon as the right weather came; and then we kissed each other and were friends.

‘Then I asked Linton to play at blindman’s buff; but he wouldn’t: there was no pleasure in it, he said; but he consented to play at ball. We found two in a cupboard, among a heap of old toys, and battledores and shuttlecocks. One was marked C., and the other H.; I wished to have the C., because that stood for Catherine, and the H. might be for Heathcliff, but Linton didn’t like it. I kept beating him: and he got cross again. He recovered his good humour, though, when I sang to him; and when I had to go, he begged me to come the following evening; so I promised. Minny and I went flying home as light as air; and I dreamt of Wuthering Heights and my sweet, darling cousin, till morning.

‘On the morrow I was sad; partly because you were poorly, and partly because I wished that my father approved of my visits: but it was beautiful moonlight after tea. As I rode there, I looked forward to another happy evening. At their garden, that fellow Earnshaw met me, took my bridle, and bid me go in by the front door. He patted Minny’s neck, and said she was a bonny beast. I told him to leave my horse alone, or else it would kick him.

‘He answered in his vulgar accent, “It wouldn’t do mitch hurt if it did,” and surveyed its legs with a smile. When he opened the door, he looked up to the inscription above, and said, with a stupid mixture of awkwardness and elation: “Miss Catherine! I can read yon, now.”

“Wonderful,” I exclaimed. “Let us hear you – you are grown clever!”

‘He spelt over by syllables, the name “Hareton Earnshaw.”

“And the figures?” I cried.

“I cannot tell them yet,” he answered.

“Oh, you dunce!” I said, laughing heartily.

‘The fool stared uncertainly, with a grin hovering about his lips, and a scowl gathering over his eyes. I asked him to walk away, for I came to see Linton, not him. He reddened and skulked off, a picture of mortified vanity. He imagined himself to be as accomplished as Linton, I suppose, because he could spell his own name.’

‘Stop, Miss Catherine, dear!’ I interrupted. ‘I shall not scold, but I don’t like your conduct there. Hareton is your cousin; and it was a praiseworthy ambition for him to

wish to learn to read. Probably he did not learn merely to show off: you had made him ashamed of his ignorance, I have no doubt; and he wished to remedy it and to please you. To sneer at his attempt was very rude. If you had been brought up in his circumstances, would you be any better? He was as intelligent a child as ever you were; and I'm hurt that he should be despised now, because that base Heathcliff has treated him so unjustly.'

'Well, Ellen, you won't cry about it, will you?' she exclaimed, surprised at my earnestness. 'But wait, and you shall hear if it were worth while being civil to the brute. I entered; Linton was lying on the settle, and half got up to welcome me.'

"I'm ill to-night, Catherine, love," he said; "Come, and sit by me. I was sure you wouldn't break your word, and I'll make you promise again, before you go."

'I knew that I mustn't tease him, as he was ill; and I spoke softly to him. I had brought some of my nicest books: he asked me to read, and I was about to comply, when Earnshaw burst in. He advanced on us, seized Linton by the arm, and swung him off the seat.'

"Get to thy own room!" he said, passionately. He looked furious. "Take her there if she comes to see thee: thou shan't keep me out of here. Begone wi' ye both!"

'He swore at us, and clenched his fist at me. I was afraid for a moment, and I dropped a book; he kicked it after me, and shut us out. I heard a malignant laugh by the fire, and turning, saw that odious Joseph rubbing his bony hands.'

"He's a grand lad! He's gotten t' right spirit in him! He knows who should be t' master! He made ye shift!"

"Where must we go?" I asked my cousin, ignoring the old wretch.

'Linton was white and trembling. He looked frightful; for his thin face and large eyes bore an expression of powerless fury. He shook the door handle.'

"If you don't let me in, I'll kill you!" he shrieked. "Devil! – I'll kill you!"

'Joseph laughed again.'

"There, that's t' father!" he cried. "Don't be afeard, Hareton, lad – he cannot get at thee!"

'I tried to pull Linton away; but he shrieked, and then had a dreadful fit of coughing; blood gushed from his mouth, and he fell on the ground. I ran into the yard, sick with terror, and called for Zillah. She came hurrying from the cow-shed, and I dragged her in. Earnshaw was taking poor Linton upstairs. Zillah and I went up after him; but he stopped me at the top of the steps, and said I must go home. I exclaimed that I would enter.'

'But Joseph locked the door, and declared I should not. I stood crying till the housekeeper reappeared. She said Linton would be better in a bit, but he couldn't stand that shrieking; and she nearly carried me into the kitchen.'

'Ellen, I sobbed until my eyes were almost blind; and the ruffian you have such sympathy with stood opposite: every now and then saying "hush," and denying that it was his fault. Finally, when I said that I would tell papa, and that he should be put in prison and hanged, he began blubbering himself, and hurried out. Still, I was not rid of him: when at length they made me leave, he suddenly appeared.'

"Miss Catherine, I'm grieved," he began, "but it's too bad—"

'I gave him a cut with my whip. He thundered one of his horrid curses, and I galloped home half out of my senses.'

'I didn't go to Wuthering Heights the next evening: I wished to go, but I dreaded to hear that Linton was dead, and shuddered at the thought of meeting Hareton. On the third day I took courage, and stole off once more. I walked there, hoping to creep

into the house unobserved; however, the dogs barked at me. Zillah received me, and saying "the lad was mending nicely," showed me into a small, tidy room, where, to my joy, I beheld Linton on a little sofa, reading one of my books.

'But he would neither speak to me nor look at me, through a whole hour, Ellen: he has such an unhappy temper. And when he did open his mouth, it was to say that I had caused the uproar, and Hareton was not to blame! I got up and walked out. He said faintly; "Catherine!" but I wouldn't turn back; and the next day I stayed at home.

'Yet I was so miserable that when Michael came to ask if he must saddle Minny, I said "Yes." This time I did not try to conceal my presence.

"Young master is in the parlour," said Zillah. I went in; Earnshaw was there also, but he quitted the room directly. Linton sat in the great arm-chair half asleep. I began in a serious tone—

"As you don't like me, Linton, and as you think I come on purpose to hurt you, this is our last meeting. Let us say good-bye; and tell Mr. Heathcliff that you have no wish to see me."

"Sit down, Catherine," he answered. "You are so much happier than I am, you ought to be better. Papa shows so much scorn of me, that I doubt my own worth; and I feel so cross and bitter, I hate everybody! I am bad in temper, and bad in spirit, almost always; and, if you choose, you may say good-bye. Only, Catherine, do me this justice: believe that if I might be as sweet, and as kind, and as good as you are, I would be, willingly. And believe that your kindness has made me love you deeper than if I deserved your love: and though I cannot help showing my nature to you, I regret it and repent it; and shall regret and repent it till I die!"

'I felt he spoke the truth; and I felt I must forgive him. We were reconciled; yet I was sorry Linton had that distorted nature. He'll never let his friends be at ease, and he'll never be at ease himself!

'About three times, I think, we have been merry and hopeful, as we were the first evening; the rest of my visits were dreary and troubled: sometimes with his selfishness, and sometimes with his sufferings: but I've learned to endure both.

'Mr. Heathcliff avoids me: I have hardly seen him at all. Last Sunday, I heard him abusing poor Linton cruelly for his conduct of the night before. I don't know how he knew of it, unless he listened. Linton had certainly behaved provokingly: however, it was nobody's business but mine, and I interrupted Mr. Heathcliff by entering and telling him so. He laughed, and went away, saying he was glad I took that view. Since then, I've told Linton he must whisper his bitter things. Now, Ellen, you have heard all. You will not tell Papa, will you?'

'I'll make up my mind by tomorrow, Miss Catherine,' I replied. 'I'll leave you to rest, and go think it over.'

I thought it over aloud, in my master's presence; walking straight from her room to his, and relating the whole story, except for her conversations with her cousin, and any mention of Hareton. Mr. Linton was alarmed and distressed. In the morning, Catherine learnt of my betrayal, and she learnt also that her secret visits were to end.

In vain she wept, and implored her father to have pity: all she got to comfort her was a promise that her father would write and allow Linton to come to the Grange when he pleased; but explaining that he must no longer expect to see Catherine at Wuthering Heights. Perhaps, had he been aware of his nephew's character and state of health, he would have withheld even that slight consolation.

CHAPTER 25

‘These things happened last winter, sir,’ said Mrs. Dean. ‘I did not think, back then, I should be amusing a stranger with relating them! Yet, who knows how long you’ll be a stranger? I fancy no one could see Catherine Linton and not love her. You smile; but why do you look so lively and interested when I talk about her? and why have you asked me to hang her picture over your fireplace?’

‘Stop, my good friend!’ I cried. ‘It may be very possible that I should love her; but would she love me? I doubt it: and my home is not here. I’m of the busy world, and to its arms I must return. Go on. Did Catherine obey her father?’

‘She did.’ The housekeeper continued her story:

Edgar spoke without anger, with the deep tenderness of one about to leave his treasure, who can bequeath only words to guide her.

He said to me, ‘I wish my nephew would write, Ellen. Tell me, sincerely: is he changed for the better, or is he likely to improve as he grows to a man?’

‘He’s very delicate, sir,’ I replied; ‘and scarcely likely to reach manhood: but this I can say, he does not resemble his father; and if Miss Catherine had the misfortune to marry him, he would not be beyond her control unless she were foolishly indulgent. However, master, you’ll have plenty of time to get acquainted with him: it’s still four years until he’s of age at twenty-one.’

Edgar sighed; and, walking to the window, looked out towards Gimmerton Church. It was a misty afternoon, but the February sun shone dimly, and we could just distinguish the gravestones.

‘I’ve prayed often,’ he murmured, ‘for the approach of what is coming. I’ve been very happy with my little Cathy. But I’ve been as happy musing by myself among those stones, under that old church: lying on the green mound of her mother’s grave, and yearning for the time when I might lie beneath it. What can I do for Cathy? It doesn’t matter that Linton is Heathcliff’s son, if he could console her for my loss. But if Linton is unworthy – only a feeble tool to his father – I cannot abandon her to him! And, hard though it be, I must make her sad while I live, and leave her solitary when I die. Darling! I’d rather resign her to God, and lay her in the earth before me.’

‘Resign her to God, sir,’ I answered, ‘and if we should lose you – which may God forbid – I’ll stand her friend to the last. Miss Catherine is a good girl, and does her duty.’

Spring advanced; yet my master gathered no strength, though he resumed his walks in the grounds with his daughter. She thought he was recovering: his cheek was often flushed, and his eyes were bright.

On her seventeenth birthday, he wrote again to Linton, expressing his great desire to see him; and, had the invalid been presentable, I’ve no doubt his father would have let him come. As it was, Linton replied that Mr. Heathcliff objected to his calling at the Grange; but that his uncle’s kind remembrance delighted him, and he hoped to meet him sometimes in his rambles, and to ask that his cousin and he might not remain divided. That part of his letter was simple, and probably his own.

‘I do not ask,’ he said, ‘that she may visit here; but am I never to see her? Do sometimes ride with her towards the Heights; and let us exchange a few words, in your presence! Dear uncle! send me a kind note tomorrow, and allow me to join you anywhere except at Thrushcross Grange. My father’s character is not mine: he says I

am more your nephew than his son; and though I have faults which make me unworthy of Catherine, she has excused them. My health is better; but while I am cut off from hope, and doomed to solitude, how can I be cheerful and well?’

Edgar, though he felt for the boy, could not grant his request; because he could not accompany Catherine. He said, in summer, perhaps, they might meet: meantime, he sent him advice, and wished him to continue writing.

Linton obeyed. If he had been unrestrained, he would probably have spoiled all by filling his letters with complaints: but his father kept a sharp watch over him, and insisted on seeing every line; so he merely suggested that Mr. Linton must allow him an interview with Cathy soon.

At length my master agreed to their having a ride or a walk together once a week, under my guardianship, on the moors near the Grange. He was still declining in health. Though he had set aside money for my young lady’s fortune, he had a natural desire that she might return to Wuthering Heights, the house of her ancestors; and her only prospect of doing that was by marrying his heir. He had no idea that Linton was failing almost as fast as himself; nor had any one, I believe: no doctor visited the Heights.

I, for my part, began to think that Linton must be rallying, when he mentioned riding and walking on the moors. I could not picture a father treating a dying child as tyrannically and wickedly as I afterwards learned Heathcliff had treated him, to make him write so eagerly, when his greedy plans were threatened with defeat by death.

CHAPTER 26

Summer was already past its prime, when Edgar yielded, and Catherine and I set out on our first ride to join her cousin. It was a day devoid of sunshine, but too hazy to threaten rain. Our place of meeting had been fixed by the cross-roads. On arriving there, however, a little herd-boy, sent as a messenger, told us: 'Master Linton were just this side of th' Heights: and we must go on a bit further.'

When we reached him, he was scarcely a quarter of a mile from his own door. He lay on the heath, and did not rise till we came within a few yards of him. Then he walked so feebly, and looked so pale, that I immediately exclaimed, 'Why, Master Heathcliff, how ill you do look!'

Catherine surveyed him with grief and astonishment; anxiously she inquired whether he were worse than usual?

'No – better – better!' he panted, trembling, and holding her hand as if he needed its support, while his large blue eyes wandered over her with a expression of haggard wildness.

'But you have been worse since I saw you last,' persisted Cathy; 'you are thinner, and—'

'I'm tired,' he interrupted, hurriedly. 'It is too hot for walking; let us rest here. In the morning, I often feel sick – papa says I grow so fast.'

Dissatisfied, Cathy sat down beside him.

'This is something like your paradise,' said she, making an effort at cheerfulness; 'only there are clouds; but they are so soft and mellow, it is nicer than sunshine. Next week, if you can, we'll ride down to the Grange Park, and try my paradise.'

Linton did not appear to remember what she talked of. He had great difficulty in holding any kind of conversation. His lack of interest was so obvious that Cathy could not conceal her disappointment. His pettishness had yielded to a listless apathy; the self-absorbed moroseness of a confirmed invalid.

Catherine saw that he endured, rather than enjoyed, our company; and she soon proposed to depart. That proposal unexpectedly roused Linton from his lethargy, and threw him into a strange state of agitation. He glanced fearfully towards the Heights, begging she would remain another half-hour, at least.

'But I think,' said Cathy, 'you'd be more comfortable at home than sitting here. If I could amuse you, I'd willingly stay.'

'Stay to rest,' he replied. 'It is the heat that make me dull; and I walked about a great deal before you came. Tell uncle I'm in good health, will you?'

'I'll tell him that you say so, Linton. I couldn't affirm that you are,' observed my young lady.

'And be here again next Thursday,' continued he. 'And thank him for permitting you to come. And – and, if you did meet my father, and he asked you about me, don't tell him I've been silent and stupid – he'll be angry.'

'I care nothing for his anger,' exclaimed Cathy.

'But I do,' said her cousin, shuddering. 'Don't provoke him against me, Catherine, for he is very hard.'

'Is he severe to you, Master Heathcliff?' I inquired.

Linton looked at me, but did not answer. After sitting by his side another ten minutes, while his head fell drowsily on his breast, and he uttered nothing except

suppressed moans, Cathy began to look for bilberries, and share them with me: she did not offer them to him.

‘Is it half-an-hour now, Ellen?’ she whispered. ‘He’s asleep, and papa will be wanting us back.’

‘Wait till he wakes,’ I answered. ‘You were mighty eager to come, but your longing to see poor Linton has soon evaporated!’

‘Why did he wish to see me?’ returned Catherine. ‘He’s in such a strange mood. It’s as if this meeting were a task he was compelled to perform for fear his father should scold him. Though I’m glad he’s better in health, I’m sorry he’s so much less pleasant, and less affectionate to me.’

‘You think he is better in health, then?’ I said.

‘Yes,’ she answered; ‘because he always made such a great deal of his sufferings. He is not completely well, but he’s better, very likely.’

‘There you differ with me, Miss Cathy,’ I remarked; ‘I should say he is far worse.’

Linton started from his slumber in bewildered terror, and asked if anyone had called his name.

‘I thought I heard my father,’ he gasped, glancing around. ‘You are sure nobody spoke?’

‘Quite sure,’ replied his cousin. ‘Are you truly stronger, Linton, than last winter?’

The tears gushed from Linton’s eyes as he answered, ‘Yes, yes, I am!’ Still under the spell of the imaginary voice, his gaze wandered up and down to detect its owner.

Cathy rose. ‘For today we must part,’ she said. ‘And I won’t conceal that I have been sadly disappointed with our meeting; though I’ll mention it to nobody: not that I stand in awe of Mr. Heathcliff.’

‘Hush,’ murmured Linton; ‘for God’s sake, hush! He’s coming.’ And he clung to Catherine’s arm; but she hastily freed herself, and whistled to her pony.

‘I’ll be here next Thursday,’ she cried, springing to the saddle. ‘Good-bye. Quick, Ellen!’ And so we left him.

Before we reached home, Catherine’s displeasure softened into a perplexed pity, blended with vague, uneasy doubts about Linton. I shared her doubts, though I counselled her not to say much; for we should judge his state better after a second journey.

My master requested an account of our trip. His nephew’s thanks were duly delivered, but we said little else; for I hardly knew what to hide and what to reveal.

CHAPTER 27

In the next seven days Edgar Linton's state grew rapidly worse. Catherine could no longer be deluded: she brooded on the dreadful probability of her father's death, gradually ripening into certainty.

She had not the heart to mention her ride when Thursday came round. I obtained permission to send her out of doors: for her father's chamber had become her whole world. She grudged each moment that she did not spend bending over his pillow, or seated by his side. She grew pale with watching, and my master gladly dismissed her to what he thought would be a happy change of scene; drawing comfort from the hope that she would not now be left entirely alone after his death.

He had a fixed idea, that, as his nephew resembled him in looks, he would resemble him in mind; for Linton's letters bore few signs of his defective character. I did not correct the error, since there was no point disturbing his last moments.

We set off on a golden afternoon of August: every breath from the hills so full of life, that it seemed whoever breathed it, even though dying, might revive. Catherine's face was just like the landscape – shadows and sunshine flitting over it in rapid succession; but the shadows rested longer.

We found Linton watching at the same spot as before. He received us with greater animation this time: not the animation of joy, though; it looked more like fear.

'It is late!' he said, speaking with difficulty. 'Is not your father very ill? I thought you wouldn't come.'

'Why cannot you say at once you don't want me?' cried Catherine. 'It is strange, Linton, that for the second time you have brought me here apparently to distress us both, and for no reason besides!'

Linton shivered, and glanced at her, half ashamed; but his cousin was out of patience.

'My father is very ill,' she said; 'why am I called from his bedside, when you didn't really want me?'

'Catherine, don't look so angry!' he murmured. 'Despise me if you please; I am a worthless, cowardly wretch. Hate my father: but don't hate me.'

'Nonsense!' cried Catherine in a passion. 'Silly boy! He trembles as if I were really going to touch him! I shall return home: let go my frock! Don't cry and look so frightened. Ellen, tell him how disgraceful this conduct is. Don't degrade yourself into an abject reptile – *don't!*'

With a streaming face and an expression of agony, Linton had thrown himself upon the ground: he seemed convulsed with terror.

'Oh!' he sobbed, 'I cannot bear it! Catherine, I'm a traitor, and I dare not tell you! But leave me, and I shall be killed! Dear Catherine, my life is in your hands: and you have said you loved me. You'll not go, then? kind, sweet, good Catherine! And perhaps you will consent – and he'll let me die with you!'

My young lady, on witnessing his intense anguish, stooped to raise him. The old feeling of indulgent tenderness overcame her vexation, and she grew thoroughly moved and alarmed.

'Consent to what?' she asked. 'To stay? tell me the meaning of this strange talk, and I will. Be calm, and confess all that weighs on your heart. You wouldn't injure me, Linton, would you? You wouldn't let any enemy hurt me, if you could prevent it? I'll believe you are a coward, but not a cowardly betrayer of your best friend.'

‘But my father threatened me,’ gasped the boy, ‘and I dread him – I dread him! I dare not tell!’

‘Oh, well!’ said Catherine, with scornful compassion, ‘keep your secret: I’m not afraid!’

He wept wildly, kissing her hands, and yet could not summon courage to speak out. I was wondering what the mystery might be, when, hearing a rustle, I looked up and saw Mr. Heathcliff close upon us. He didn’t cast a glance towards my companions, though Linton’s sobs were audible; but hailing me in the hearty tone he assumed to none besides, he said—

‘How are you at the Grange, Nelly? Let us hear. The rumour goes,’ he added, in a lower tone, ‘that Edgar Linton is on his death-bed: perhaps they exaggerate his illness?’

‘No; my master is dying,’ I replied. ‘A sad thing it will be for us all, but a blessing for him!’

‘How long will he last, do you think?’ he asked.

‘I don’t know,’ I said.

‘Because,’ he continued, looking at the two young people, ‘that lad seems determined to beat me; and I’d thank his uncle to be quick, and go before him! Hallo! has the whelp been playing that game long? I did give him some lessons about snivelling. Is he pretty lively with Miss Linton generally?’

‘Lively? No – he has shown the greatest distress,’ I answered. ‘I should say that instead of rambling on the hills, he ought to be in bed, under the hands of a doctor.’

‘He shall be, in a day or two,’ muttered Heathcliff. ‘But first – get up, Linton!’ he shouted. ‘Don’t grovel on the ground. Up, this moment!’

Linton had sunk down in helpless fear. He made several efforts to obey, but had no strength, and fell back again with a moan. Mr. Heathcliff advanced, and lifted him to lean against a ridge of turf.

‘Now,’ said he, with curbed ferocity, ‘I’m getting angry. If you don’t command that paltry spirit of yours – damn you! get up directly!’

‘I will, father,’ he panted. ‘Only, let me alone, or I shall faint. I’ve done as you wished. Catherine will tell you that I – that I – have been cheerful. Ah! keep by me, Catherine; give me your hand.’

‘Take mine,’ said his father; ‘stand on your feet. She’ll lend you her arm: that’s right. You would imagine I was the devil himself, Miss Linton, to excite such horror. Be so kind as to walk home with him, will you? He shudders if I touch him.’

‘Linton dear!’ whispered Catherine, ‘I can’t go to Wuthering Heights: papa has forbidden me. Why are you so afraid?’

‘I’m not to re-enter that house without you!’ he said.

‘Stop!’ cried his father. ‘We’ll respect Catherine’s scruples. Nelly, take him in, and I’ll follow your advice concerning the doctor.’

‘Good,’ replied I. ‘But I must remain with my mistress: minding your son is not my business.’

‘You’ll force me to pinch the baby and make it scream,’ said Heathcliff. ‘Come, then, my hero. Shall I escort you?’

He approached his son once more; but, shrinking back, Linton clung to Cathy, and frantically implored her to accompany him. How could she refuse? We did not know the reason for his dread; but he was powerless under its grip.

We reached the threshold. Catherine walked in and was leading the invalid to a chair; when Mr. Heathcliff, pushing me forward, exclaimed, 'Nelly, I have a mind to be hospitable today: sit down, and allow me to shut the door.'

He shut and locked it also.

'You shall have tea before you go home,' he added. 'Hareton is gone with some cattle to the Lees, and Zillah and Joseph have a day off; and, though I'm used to being alone, I'd rather have some interesting company. Miss Linton, take your seat by Linton: the present is hardly worth accepting; but I have nothing else to offer. How she does stare! It's odd how savage I feel towards anything that seems afraid of me! Had I been born where laws are less strict, I should treat myself to a slow vivisection of those two, as an evening's amusement.'

He drew in his breath, struck the table, and swore to himself: 'By hell! I hate them.'

'I am not afraid of you!' exclaimed Catherine. She stepped close up, her black eyes flashing with passion and resolution. 'Give me that key: I will have it!' she said. 'I wouldn't eat or drink here, if I were starving.'

Heathcliff had the key in his hand. He looked up with surprise at her boldness; or, possibly, reminded by her voice of the person from whom she inherited it. She snatched at the key, and half succeeded in getting it out of his fingers: but he recovered it speedily.

'Now, Catherine Linton,' he said, 'stand off, or I shall knock you down; and that will make Mrs. Dean mad.'

Regardless of this warning, she captured his closed hand and its contents again.

'We will go!' she repeated, trying to make the iron muscles relax; and finding that her nails made no impression, she applied her teeth sharply. Heathcliff glanced at me to keep me from interfering. Then he opened his fingers suddenly, but before she could take the key, he seized her and gave her a shower of terrific slaps on both sides of the head.

At this diabolical violence I rushed on him furiously. 'You villain!' I began to cry. A touch on the chest silenced me: I am stout, and soon put out of breath; and I staggered dizzily back, feeling ready to burst a blood-vessel.

The scene was over in two minutes. Catherine, released, put her hands to her head, as if she were not sure whether her ears were off or on. She trembled like a reed, poor thing, and leant against the table perfectly bewildered.

'I know how to chastise children, you see,' said the scoundrel grimly. 'Go to Linton now, and cry at your ease! I shall be your father, tomorrow – all the father you'll have in a few days – and you shall have plenty of *that*. You can bear plenty; you're no weakling: you shall have a daily taste, if I catch such a devil of a temper in you again!'

Cathy ran to me instead of to Linton, and knelt down and put her burning cheek on my lap, weeping aloud. Her cousin had shrunk into a corner of the settle, as quiet as a mouse, congratulating himself, I dare say, that the correction had alighted on another than him. Mr. Heathcliff, perceiving us all confounded, rose, and made the tea himself. He poured it out, and handed me a cup.

'Wash away your annoyance,' he said. 'It is not poisoned, though I prepared it. I'm going out to seek your horses.'

Our first thought, on his departure, was to force an exit somewhere. We tried the kitchen door, but that was locked: and the windows were too narrow for even Cathy's little figure.

‘Master Linton,’ I cried, ‘you know what your diabolical father is after, and you shall tell us, or I’ll box your ears.’

‘Yes, Linton, you must tell,’ said Catherine. ‘It was for your sake I came; and it will be wickedly ungrateful if you refuse.’

‘Give me some tea – I’m thirsty. Then I’ll tell you,’ he answered. ‘Mrs. Dean, go away. I don’t like you standing over me. Now, Catherine, you are letting your tears fall into my cup. I won’t drink that. Give me another.’

Catherine pushed another cup to him, and wiped her face. I felt disgusted at the little wretch’s composure, since he was no longer in terror for himself. His anguish had subsided as soon as he entered Wuthering Heights; so I guessed he had been menaced if he failed to decoy us there; and now had no further fears.

‘Papa wants us to be married,’ he continued, sipping some tea. ‘And he knows your papa wouldn’t let us marry now; and he’s afraid of my dying if we wait; so we are to be married in the morning, and you are to stay here all night; and, if you do as he wishes, you shall return home next day, and take me with you.’

‘Take you with her, pitiful changeling!’ I exclaimed. ‘You marry? Do you imagine that beautiful young lady, that healthy girl, will tie herself to a little perishing monkey like you? You want whipping for bringing us here at all, with your dastardly tricks: and – don’t look so silly! I’ve a good mind to shake you, for your treachery, and your imbecile conceit.’

I did give him a slight shaking; but it brought on the cough. He started moaning and weeping, and Catherine rebuked me.

‘Stay all night? No,’ she said, looking round. ‘Ellen, I’ll burn that door down to get out.’

At once Linton was up in alarm for his dear self again. He clasped her in his feeble arms sobbing: ‘Won’t you have me, and save me? Oh, darling Catherine! You must obey my father – you must!’

‘I must obey my own,’ she replied, ‘and relieve him from this cruel suspense. The whole night! What would he think? He’ll be distressed already. I’ll either break or burn a way out of the house. Be quiet! I love papa better than you!’ Catherine was near distraught: she persisted that she must go home, and was entreating him when our jailor re-entered.

‘Your horses have trotted off,’ he said. ‘Linton! snivelling again? Have done, and get to bed. In a month or two, my lad, you’ll be able to pay her back with a vigorous hand. There, to bed! Zillah won’t be here tonight; you must undress yourself. Hush! I’ll not come near you: you needn’t fear. By chance, you’ve managed tolerably. I’ll see to the rest.’

He held the door open for his son, who slunk out like a frightened spaniel. Heathcliff locked the door, and approached the fire, where my mistress and I stood silent. Catherine looked up, instinctively raising her hand to her cheek. He scowled on her and muttered, ‘Oh! so you are not afraid of me? Your courage is well disguised: you seem damnably afraid!’

‘I am afraid now,’ she replied, ‘because, if I stay, papa will be miserable: and how can I endure that – when he – when he – Mr. Heathcliff, let me go home! I promise to marry Linton: papa would like me to: and I love him. Why should you wish to force me to do what I’ll willingly do myself?’

‘Let him dare to force you,’ I cried. ‘There’s law in the land, thank God!’

‘Silence!’ said the ruffian. ‘To the devil with you! Miss Linton, I shall enjoy myself remarkably in thinking your father will be miserable: I shall not sleep for

satisfaction. You could have hit on no surer way of fixing your residence under my roof for the next twenty-four hours than telling me of his misery. As to your promise to marry Linton, I'll take care you shall keep it; for you shall not quit this place till it is done.'

'Send Ellen, then, to let papa know I'm safe!' exclaimed Catherine, weeping bitterly. 'Or let me be married now. Poor papa! Ellen, he'll think we're lost!'

'Not he! He'll think you are tired of waiting on him, and have run off for amusement,' answered Heathcliff. 'It is quite natural that you should weary of nursing a sick man. Catherine, his happiest days were over when your days began. He cursed you, I dare say, for coming into the world (I did, at least); and he should curse you as he goes out of it. I'd join him. I don't love you! How should I? Weep away. You'll be doing plenty of weeping hereafter; unless Linton improves as your father hopes. His letters of advice entertained me vastly. In his last he recommended my jewel to be kind and careful of his. But Linton requires his whole stock of care and kindness for himself: he can play the tyrant well. He'll undertake to torture any number of cats, if their teeth be drawn and their claws cut. You'll be able to tell his uncle fine tales of his kindness, when you get home, I assure you.'

'You're right there!' I said; 'Show your son's resemblance to yourself, and Miss Cathy will think twice before she takes him!'

'It doesn't matter now,' he answered; 'because she must either accept him, or remain a prisoner, till your master dies. I can keep you both concealed here.'

'I'll marry him within the hour,' said Catherine, 'if I may go home afterwards. Mr. Heathcliff, you're a cruel man, but you're not a fiend. If papa thought I had left him on purpose, and if he died before I returned, could I bear to live? I'm going to kneel here, and I'll not get up till you look back at me! No, don't turn away! do look! I don't hate you. I'm not angry that you struck me. Have you never loved anybody in all your life, uncle? never? Ah! you must look once. I'm so wretched, you can't help pitying me.'

'Keep your lizard's fingers off; and move away, or I'll kick you!' cried Heathcliff, brutally repulsing her. 'I'd rather be hugged by a snake. How the devil can you dream of fawning on me? I detest you!' He shook himself, as if his flesh crept; and thrust back his chair. I opened my mouth to abuse him; but was silenced by a threat.

It was growing dark – we heard voices at the garden-gate. Our host hurried out instantly: after two or three minutes, he returned alone.

'I thought it had been your cousin Hareton,' I observed to Catherine. 'I wish he would arrive! He might take our part.'

'It was three servants sent to seek you from the Grange,' said Heathcliff, overhearing me. 'You should have called through the window; but that chit is glad you didn't. She's glad to be obliged to stay, I'm certain.'

At learning the chance we had missed, we both wept; and he allowed us to wail on till nine o'clock. Then he bid us go upstairs to Zillah's chamber; and I whispered to my companion to obey: thinking perhaps we might get through the window there, or out by the garret skylight. The window, however, was too narrow, and the garret was locked.

We neither of us lay down. Catherine waited by the window, and watched anxiously for morning; a deep sigh being her only answer when I begged her to rest. I sat in a chair, and rocked to and fro, passing harsh judgment on myself; for, that dismal night, I thought Heathcliff himself less guilty than I.

At seven o'clock he came for Catherine. She ran to the door immediately, and he pulled her out. When I rose to follow, he turned the lock again. I demanded my release.

'Be patient,' he replied; 'I'll send up your breakfast in a while.'

I thumped on the panels, and rattled the latch angrily. He told me I must endure it another hour, and then went away. I endured it two or three hours, until at length, I heard a footstep: not Heathcliff's.

'I've brought you something to eat,' said a voice; 'open t' door!'

It was Hareton, laden with food. 'Take it,' he added, thrusting the tray into my hand, and retired, ignoring my prayers.

I remained enclosed the whole day, and the whole of the next night; and another, and another. Five nights and four days I remained, seeing nobody but Hareton; and he was a model jailor: surly, and dumb, and deaf to every appeal to his compassion.

CHAPTER 28

On the fifth day, a lighter step approached; and Zillah entered the room. She wore a scarlet shawl and black silk bonnet, and a willow-basket swung on her arm.

‘Eh, dear! Mrs. Dean!’ she exclaimed. ‘There’s talk about you at Gimmerton. We thought you were sunk in the Blackhorse marsh, and missy with you, till master told me you’d been found, and he’d lodged you here! And how long were you in the hole? Did master save you, Mrs. Dean?’

‘Your master is a scoundrel!’ I replied. ‘He needn’t have started that tale!’

‘It’s not his tale,’ said Zillah. ‘They tell it in the village – about your being lost in the marsh; and I calls to Earnshaw, when I come in, “Eh, Mr. Hareton, it’s a sad pity of that likely young lass, and Nelly Dean.” He stared, so I told him the rumour. The master listened, and smiled, and said, “If they have been in the marsh, they are out now, Zillah. Nelly Dean is lodged in your room. You can tell her to leave, when you go up; here is the key. The bog-water got into her head; but she has come to her senses. Bid her go to the Grange, and carry a message that her young lady will follow in time to attend the squire’s funeral.”’

‘Mr. Edgar is not dead?’ I gasped. ‘Oh! Zillah!’

‘No, no; he’s not dead,’ she replied. ‘Dr. Kenneth thinks he may last another day.’

I snatched my things, and hastened below. The door stood wide open; but nobody seemed to be there, until a cough drew my attention to the hearth. Linton lay on the settle, sucking a stick of sugar-candy, and watching me with apathetic eyes.

‘Where is Miss Catherine?’ I demanded sternly. ‘Is she gone?’

‘No,’ he replied; ‘she’s upstairs: we won’t let her go.’

‘You won’t let her, little idiot!’ I exclaimed. ‘Direct me to her room immediately, or I’ll make you sing out.’

‘Papa would make you sing out, if you went there,’ he answered. ‘He says I’m not to be soft with Catherine: she’s my wife, and it’s shameful that she should wish to leave me. He says she hates me and wants me to die, so that she may have my money; but she shan’t have it: and she shan’t go home! She may cry, and be sick as much as she pleases!’

He closed his eyelids, as if he meant to drop asleep.

‘Master Heathcliff,’ I said, ‘have you forgotten all Catherine’s kindness to you last winter, when she brought you books and sung you songs, and came many a time through wind and snow to see you? She wept to miss one evening, because you would be disappointed; and you felt then that she was a hundred times too good to you: and now you believe the lies your father tells, though you know he detests you both. And you join him against her. That’s fine gratitude, is it not?’

Linton’s mouth fell open, and he took the sugar-candy from his lips.

‘Did she come to Wuthering Heights because she hated you?’ I continued. ‘Think! As to your money, she does not even know that you will have any. You say she’s sick; and yet you leave her alone, up there in a strange house! She pitied your sufferings, but you won’t pity hers! After pretending such affection, you store every tear you have for yourself, and lie there at ease. Ah! you’re a heartless, selfish boy!’

‘I can’t stay with her,’ he answered crossly. ‘She cries so I can’t bear it. And she won’t stop, though I say I’ll call my father. I did call him once, and he threatened to strangle her if she was not quiet; but she began again the instant he left the room, moaning all night, though I screamed for vexation because I couldn’t sleep.’

‘Is Mr. Heathcliff out?’ I inquired, perceiving that the wretched creature had no power to sympathize with his cousin.

‘He’s in the courtyard,’ he replied, ‘talking to Dr. Kenneth; who says uncle is dying at last. I’m glad, for I shall be master of the Grange after him. Catherine always spoke of it as her house. It isn’t hers! It’s mine: papa says everything she has is mine. She offered to give me all her nice books, and her pretty birds, and her pony Minny, if I would let her out; but I told her they were all, all mine.’

‘Then she cried, and took a little picture from her neck, and said I should have that; two pictures in a gold case, on one side her mother, and on the other uncle, when they were young. I said they were mine, too; and tried to get them from her. The spiteful thing wouldn’t let me: she pushed me off, and hurt me. I shrieked out – that frightens her – she heard papa coming, and she broke the hinges and divided the case, and gave me her mother’s portrait. She tried to hide the other, but I told papa, and he took mine, and ordered her to give hers to me; she refused, and he – he struck her down, and wrenched it off the chain, and crushed it with his foot.’

‘And were you pleased to see her struck?’ I asked.

‘I winced,’ he answered: ‘I wince to see my father strike a dog or a horse, he does it so hard. Yet I was glad at first – she deserved punishing: but when papa was gone, she showed me her cheek cut on the inside, and her mouth filling with blood; and then she gathered up the bits of the picture, and went and sat down with her face to the wall, and she has never spoken to me since: and I sometimes think she can’t speak for pain. She’s a naughty thing for crying continually; and she looks so pale and wild, I’m afraid of her.’

‘And you can get the key if you choose?’ I said.

‘Yes, when I am upstairs,’ he answered; ‘but I can’t walk upstairs now.’

‘In what room is it?’ I asked.

‘Oh,’ he cried, ‘I shan’t tell you. Nobody is to know. You’ve tired me – go away!’ And he shut his eyes again.

I considered it best to depart without seeing Mr. Heathcliff, and to bring a rescue for my young lady from Thrushcross Grange.

On reaching the Grange, the astonishment and joy of my fellow-servants was intense. I went to tell Mr. Edgar the news; but how changed I found him, even in those few days! He lay, an image of sadness and resignation, awaiting his death. He murmured Catherine’s name: I touched his hand.

‘Catherine is coming, dear master!’ I whispered; ‘she is alive and well; and will be here, I hope, to-night.’

I trembled at the effects of this news: he half rose up, looked round eagerly, and then sank back in a swoon. When he recovered, I related the events of our visit, saying Heathcliff forced me to go in. I said as little as possible against Linton; nor did I describe his father’s brutal conduct – not wishing to add more bitterness to Edgar’s already over-flowing cup.

He guessed that one of his enemy’s purposes was to secure the property and the estate to his son: yet why Heathcliff did not wait till his death was a puzzle to my master, because he was ignorant of how nearly he and his nephew would quit the world together. However, he felt that his will had better be altered, to put Catherine’s fortune in the hands of trustees for her use during life, and for her children after her. Then it could not fall to Mr. Heathcliff should Linton die.

I sent a man to fetch the attorney; and four more men, with weapons, went to demand my young lady from her jailor. Both parties were delayed. The single servant

returned first. He said Mr. Green, the lawyer, was out when he arrived, and he had to wait two hours for him; and then Mr. Green told him he had business in the village; but that he would be at Thrushcross Grange before morning.

The four men came back unaccompanied also. They brought word that Catherine was too ill to quit her room, and Heathcliff would not let them see her. I scolded the stupid fellows for listening to that tale, and resolved to take a whole mob up to the Heights, and storm it unless the prisoner were surrendered to us.

Happily, I was spared the journey and the trouble. At three o'clock, a sharp knock at the front door made me jump.

'Oh! it is only Green,' I said; but it was not the attorney. My own sweet little mistress sprang on my neck sobbing, 'Ellen, Ellen! Is papa alive?'

'Yes,' I cried: 'yes, my angel, he is. God be thanked, you are safe with us again!'

She wanted to run, breathless as she was, to Mr. Linton's room; but I made her sit down, and washed her pale face. Then I said I must go first, and tell of her arrival; imploring her to say she should be happy with young Heathcliff. She assured me she would not complain.

I couldn't bear to be present at their meeting. I stood outside the chamber-door a quarter of an hour before going in. All was composed, however: Catherine's despair was as silent as her father's joy. She supported him calmly; and he gazed at her with eyes full of ecstasy.

He died blissfully, Mr. Lockwood: he died so. Kissing her cheek, he murmured, 'I am going to her; and you, darling child, shall come to us!' He never stirred or spoke again; but continued that rapt, radiant gaze, till his pulse stopped and his soul departed.

Catherine sat there dry-eyed till the sun rose: she stayed till noon, and would have remained brooding over that deathbed, but I insisted on her coming away and taking some rest. At dinner-time Mr. Green, the lawyer, appeared, having called at Wuthering Heights to get his instructions. He had sold himself to Mr. Heathcliff: that was the cause of his delay.

Mr. Green took upon himself to order everybody about the place. He gave all the servants but me notice to quit. He tried to insist that Edgar Linton should not be buried beside his wife, but in the chapel, with his family. There was the will, however, to hinder that, and I protested loudly. The funeral was hurried over; Catherine, Mrs. Linton Heathcliff now, was allowed to stay at the Grange till her father's corpse had quitted it.

She told me that her anguish had at last spurred Linton to take the risk of liberating her. He had the cunning to unlock and re-lock the door, without shutting it; and when he should have gone to bed, he begged to sleep with Hareton. Catherine stole out before dawn, finding an open window in her mother's empty room. She climbed out easily, and got to the ground by means of the fir-tree close by. Her accomplice suffered for his share in the escape, despite his timid contrivances.

CHAPTER 29

The evening after the funeral, my young lady and I were seated in the library, musing mournfully on our loss and the gloomy future.

We had just agreed that it would be best if Catherine were permitted to continue living at the Grange; at least during Linton's life: he being allowed to join her there, and I to remain as housekeeper. That seemed rather too favourable an arrangement to hope for; and yet I did hope, and began to cheer up under the prospect; when a servant rushed hastily in, and said 'that devil Heathcliff' was coming through the court: should he fasten the door in his face?

Even if we had been mad enough to do that, we had not time. He made no ceremony of knocking or announcing his name: he was master, and availed himself of the master's privilege to walk straight in, without saying a word. Hearing our voices in the library, he entered and shut the door.

It was the same room into which he had been ushered, as a guest, eighteen years before: the same moon shone through the window; and the same autumn landscape lay outside. We had not yet lighted a candle, but the portraits on the wall were visible: the splendid head of Mrs. Linton, and the graceful one of her husband.

Heathcliff advanced to the hearth. Time had little altered his appearance either. His dark face was rather sallow and more composed, his frame a stone or two heavier, perhaps; no other difference.

Catherine had risen, meaning to dash out.

'Stop!' he said, arresting her by the arm. 'No more running away! I'm come to fetch you home; and I hope you'll be a dutiful daughter and not encourage my son to further disobedience. I was embarrassed how to punish him: he's such a cobweb, a pinch would annihilate him; but he's received his due! I just set him in a chair, and never touched him. I sent Hareton out, and we had the room to ourselves.

'After two hours, I called Joseph to carry him up again; and ever since then my presence is as potent on his nerves as a ghost; and I fancy he sees me often, though I am not near. Hareton says he wakes and shrieks in the night by the hour together, and calls you to protect him from me; and, whether you like your precious mate, or not, you must come.'

'Why not let Catherine stay here,' I pleaded, 'and send Master Linton to her? You'd not miss them.'

'I'm seeking a tenant for the Grange,' he answered; 'and I want my children about me. Besides, that lass owes me her services for her bread. I'm not going to keep her in luxury and idleness after Linton is gone. Make haste and get ready, now.'

'I shall,' said Catherine. 'Linton is all I have to love in the world, and though you have tried to make us hate each other, you cannot do it. And I defy you to hurt him when I am by, and I defy you to frighten me!'

'You are a boastful champion,' replied Heathcliff; 'but I don't like you well enough to hurt him: you shall get the full benefit of him. It is not I who will make him hateful to you – it is his own sweet spirit. He's as bitter as gall at your desertion: don't expect thanks for your devotion.'

'I know he has a bad nature,' said Catherine: 'he's your son. But I'm glad I've a better, to forgive it; and I know he loves me, and for that reason I love him. Mr. Heathcliff, you have nobody to love you; and, however miserable you make us, we shall still have the revenge of thinking that your cruelty arises from your greater

misery. You are miserable, are you not? Lonely, like the devil, and envious like him? Nobody loves you – nobody will cry for you when you die! I wouldn't be you!

Catherine spoke with a kind of dreary triumph: she seemed to have made up her mind to enter into the spirit of her future family, and draw pleasure from the griefs of her enemies.

'You shall be sorry to be yourself presently,' said her father-in-law, 'if you stand there another minute. Begone, witch, and get your things!'

She scornfully withdrew. I began to beg for Zillah's place at the Heights, offering to resign mine to her; but he bid me be silent; and then glanced round the room and looked at the pictures.

Having studied Mrs. Linton's, he said, 'I shall take that home. Not because I need it, but—' He turned abruptly to the fire, and continued, with what, for lack of a better word, I must call a smile:

'I'll tell you what I did yesterday! I got the sexton, who was digging Linton's grave, to remove the earth off her coffin lid, and I opened it. I thought I would have stayed there: when I saw her face again – it is hers yet! – he had hard work to move me; but he said it would change if the air blew on it, and so I struck one side of the coffin loose, and covered it up: not Linton's side, damn him! I wish he'd been soldered in lead. And I bribed the sexton to pull it away when I'm laid there, and slide mine out too; I'll have it made so. By the time Linton gets to us he'll not know which is which!'

'You were very wicked, Mr. Heathcliff!' I exclaimed; 'were you not ashamed to disturb the dead?'

'I disturbed nobody, Nelly,' he replied; 'and I gave some ease to myself. I shall be a great deal more comfortable now; and you'll have a better chance of keeping me underground, when I get there. Disturbed her? No! she has disturbed me, night and day, through eighteen years – incessantly – remorselessly – till yesternight; and yesternight I was tranquil. I dreamt I was sleeping the last sleep by that sleeper, with my heart stopped and my cheek frozen against hers.'

'And if she had been dissolved into earth, or worse, what would you have dreamt of then?' I said.

'Of dissolving with her, and being more happy still!' he answered. 'Do you suppose I dread any change of that sort? I expected it on raising the lid – but I'm pleased that it should not commence till I share it. You know I was wild after she died; and from dawn to dawn, prayed her to return to me – her spirit. I have a strong faith in ghosts: I have a conviction that they can, and do, exist among us!

'The day she was buried, there came a fall of snow. In the evening I went to the churchyard: it blew bleak as winter – all round was solitary. Being alone, and conscious two yards of loose earth was the sole barrier between us, I said to myself— "I'll have her in my arms again! If she be cold, I'll think it is this north wind that chills me; and if she be motionless, it is sleep."

'I got a spade from the tool-house, and began to delve with all my might – it scraped the coffin; I fell to work with my hands; the wood began cracking about the screws. I was on the point of attaining my object, when it seemed that I heard a sigh from some one above, close at the edge of the grave. "If I can only get this off," I muttered, "I wish they may shovel in the earth over us both!" and I wrenched at it more desperately still.

'There was another sigh, close at my ear. I seemed to feel the warm breath of it displacing the sleet-laden wind. I knew no living thing was by; I felt that Cathy was

there: not under me, but on the earth. A sudden sense of relief flowed from my heart through every limb. I gave up my labour, and turned consoled at once: unspeakably consoled. Her presence was with me while I re-filled the grave; it led me home. You may laugh, if you will; but I was sure I should see her there. I was sure she was with me, and I could not help talking to her.

‘Having reached the Heights, I rushed eagerly to the door. It was fastened; and that accursed Earnshaw and my wife opposed my entrance. I remember stopping to kick the breath out of him, and then hurrying upstairs, to my room and hers. I looked round impatiently – I felt her by me – I could almost see her, and yet I could not! I ought to have sweated blood then, from the anguish of my yearning, as I prayed fervently to have but one glimpse! I had not one. She showed herself, as she often was in life, a devil to me!

‘And, since then, I’ve been the sport of that intolerable torture! Infernal! keeping my nerves at an agonising stretch. When I sat in the house with Hareton, it seemed that on going out I should meet her; when I walked on the moors I should meet her coming in. When I went from home I hastened to return; she must be somewhere at the Heights, I was certain!

‘And when I tried to sleep in her chamber, I was beaten back; for the moment I closed my eyes, she was either outside the window, or sliding back the panels, or entering the room, or even resting her darling head on the pillow; and I must open my lids to see. And so I opened and closed them a hundred times a night – to be always disappointed! It racked me! I groaned aloud, till that old rascal Joseph no doubt believed that my conscience was playing the fiend. Now, since I’ve seen her, I’m pacified – a little. It was a strange way of killing: not by inches, but by fractions of hairbreadths, to beguile me with the spectre of a hope through eighteen years!’

Mr. Heathcliff paused and wiped his forehead; his hair clung to it, wet with perspiration. His eyes were fixed on the red embers of the fire, the brows raised, giving him a peculiar look of trouble, and a painful appearance of mental tension. He only half addressed me, and I kept silence. I didn’t like to hear him talk! After a short time he took the picture down and leant it against the sofa to study it better.

Meanwhile Catherine entered, announcing that she was ready, as soon as her pony should be saddled.

‘Send that over tomorrow,’ said Heathcliff to me; then turning to her, he added: ‘You’ll need no ponies at Wuthering Heights; your own feet will serve you. Come along.’

‘Good-bye, Ellen!’ whispered my dear little mistress. As she kissed me, her lips felt like ice. ‘Come and see me, Ellen; don’t forget.’

‘Do no such thing, Mrs. Dean!’ said her new father. ‘When I wish to speak to you I’ll come here. I want none of your prying at my house!’

As she left, she cast back a look that cut my heart. From the window I watched them walk down the garden into the alley, where trees concealed them.

CHAPTER 30

I have not seen her since she left: when I called at the Heights to ask after her, Joseph wouldn't let me pass. He said Mrs. Linton was busy, and the master was not in. Zillah has told me how they go on, otherwise I should hardly know who was dead and who living. She thinks Catherine haughty. My young lady asked some aid of her when she first came; but Mr. Heathcliff told Zillah to let his daughter-in-law look after herself; and she willingly did so, being a narrow-minded, selfish woman. Catherine, annoyed, repaid this neglect with contempt, and thus made an enemy of Zillah.

I had a long talk with Zillah about six weeks ago, before you came, and this is what she told me.

'The first thing Mrs. Linton did,' she said, 'on her arrival at the Heights, was to run upstairs, without even wishing good evening to me and Joseph; she shut herself in Linton's room, and remained till morning. Then, while the master and Earnshaw were at breakfast, she came down and asked all in a quiver if the doctor might be sent for? her cousin was very ill.

"We know that!" answered Heathcliff; "but his life is not worth a farthing, and I won't spend a farthing on him."

"But I cannot tell what to do," she said; "and if nobody will help me, he'll die!"

"Leave the room," cried the master, "and let me never hear a word more about him! No-one cares what becomes of him. If *you* do, nurse him; if not, lock him up and leave him."

'Then she began to bother me, but I said it was her task to wait on Linton.

'How they managed together, I can't tell. I fancy he fretted, and moaned night and day; and she had precious little rest: one could guess by her white face and heavy eyes. She sometimes came into the kitchen all bewildered like, and looked as if she would beg assistance; but I did not dare disobey the master. Though I thought it wrong that Dr. Kenneth should not be sent for, it was no concern of mine. Once or twice, I've seen her sitting crying on the stairs; and I did pity her then, I'm sure: still I didn't wish to lose my place, you know.

'At last, one night she came boldly into my chamber, and frightened me out of my wits, by saying, "Tell Mr. Heathcliff that his son is dying – I'm sure he is, this time. Get up, instantly, and tell him."

'Then she vanished again. I lay a quarter of an hour listening and trembling. Nothing stirred – the house was quiet.

'She's mistaken,' I said to myself. 'He's got over it. I needn't disturb them;' and I began to doze. But there was a sharp ringing of the bell; and the master called to me to see what was the matter.

'I delivered Catherine's message. He cursed, and went to their room. I followed him. Mrs. Heathcliff was seated by the bedside, with her hands folded on her knees. Her father-in-law held the light to Linton's face, looked at him and touched him; and turned to her.

"Now – Catherine," he said, "how do you feel?"

"He's safe, and I'm free," she answered: "I should feel well – but," she continued bitterly, "you have left me so long to struggle against death alone, that I feel and see only death! I feel like death!"

'And she looked like it, too! I gave her a little wine. Hareton and Joseph, who had been wakened by the ringing, now entered. Hareton seemed bothered: though he was

more taken up with staring at Catherine than thinking of Linton. But the master bid him get off to bed again, and made Joseph remove the body to his chamber. I returned to my room, and Catherine remained by herself.

‘In the morning, Mr. Heathcliff sent me to tell her she must come down to breakfast. She said she was ill; so I informed Mr. Heathcliff. He replied, “Well, leave her be till after the funeral; and get her what she needs. As soon as she seems better, tell me.”’

Cathy stayed upstairs a fortnight, according to Zillah; who visited her twice a day, and would have been more friendly, but her attempts at kindness were proudly repelled.

Heathcliff went up once, to show her Linton’s will. He had bequeathed the whole of his moveable property to his father: the poor boy was threatened into that act during her week’s absence, when his uncle died. The lands, being a minor, he could not meddle with. However, Mr. Heathcliff has claimed and kept them in his wife’s right and his also: I suppose legally. At any rate, Catherine, without cash or friends, cannot disturb his possession.

‘Nobody else,’ said Zillah, ‘ever approached her door, except I; and nobody asked about her. The first time she came down was on a Sunday afternoon. I had told her the master was going to Thrushcross Grange; so as soon as she heard Heathcliff’s horse trot off, she appeared dressed in black, with her yellow curls combed back as plain as a Quaker.’

‘Joseph had gone to chapel,’ Zillah continued, ‘but I thought it proper to bide at home and oversee the young folks. Hareton, with all his bashfulness, isn’t a model of good behaviour. I told him that his cousin would very likely sit with us, and she had been used to see the Sabbath respected; so he had better leave his guns alone, and stop his work. He coloured up at the news, and cast his eyes over his hands and clothes. I guessed he wanted to be presentable; so, laughing, I offered to help him, and joked at his confusion. He grew sullen, and began to swear.’

‘Now, Mrs. Dean,’ Zillah went on, seeing me not pleased by her manner, ‘you may think your young lady too fine for Mr. Hareton; but I own I should love to bring her pride a peg lower. And what will all her learning and her daintiness do for her, now? She’s as poor as you or I: poorer, I’ll be bound.’

Hareton allowed Zillah to help him; and when Catherine came, he tried to make himself agreeable.

‘Missis walked in,’ said Zillah, ‘as chill as an icicle, and as high as a princess. I offered her my seat in the arm-chair. No, she turned up her nose at it. Earnshaw bid her sit close by the fire: he was sure she was cold.’

“‘I’ve been cold a month and more,” she answered, as scornfully as she could.

‘She got a chair for herself, and placed it at a distance from both of us. Then she began to look round, and discovered some books on the dresser; she was instantly upon her feet again, stretching to reach them: but they were too high up. Her cousin summoned courage to help her.’

‘That was a great advance for the lad. She didn’t thank him; still, he felt gratified that she had accepted his aid, and he stood behind her as she examined the books, even pointing out what struck his fancy in their pictures. Nor was he daunted by the saucy style in which she jerked the page from his finger: he moved farther back and looked at her as she read. He studied her thick silky curls: her face he couldn’t see.’

‘And perhaps not quite awake to what he did, but attracted like a child to a candle, at last he put out his hand and gently stroked one curl. He might have stuck a knife into her neck, she started round in such a taking.

“Get away this moment! How dare you touch me?” she cried, in a tone of disgust. “I can’t endure you! I’ll go upstairs again, if you come near me.”

‘Mr. Hareton recoiled, looking foolish; he sat down very quiet, and she continued turning over her volumes another half hour. Finally, Earnshaw crossed over, and whispered to me.

“Will you ask her to read to us, Zillah? I’d like to hear her! Don’t say I wanted it, but ask for yourself.”

“Mr. Hareton wishes you would read to us, ma’am,” I said, immediately.

‘She frowned; and answered:

“Mr. Hareton, and the whole set of you, will be good enough to understand that I reject your pretence at kindness! I despise you, and have nothing to say to you! When I would have given my life for one kind word, you all kept off. But I won’t complain to you! I’m driven down here by the cold; not to enjoy your society.”

“What could I ha’ done?” began Earnshaw. “How was I to blame? I offered more than once. I asked Mr. Heathcliff to let me stay up for you—”

“Be silent! I’ll go out of doors, or anywhere, rather than have your disagreeable voice in my ear!” said my lady.

‘Hareton muttered she might go to hell, for him! and unslinging his gun, restrained himself no longer, but talked freely.

‘Soon she retreated to her solitude: but the frost had set in, and, in spite of her pride, she was forced to join us, more and more. However, she has no lover or liker among us: and she does not deserve one; for, let them say the least word to her, and she’ll lash back. She’ll snap at the master himself, and as good as dares him to thrash her; and the more hurt she gets, the more venomous she grows.’

At first, on hearing this account from Zillah, I determined to leave my situation, take a cottage, and get Catherine to come and live with me: but Mr. Heathcliff would never permit that. I can see no remedy, at present, unless she could marry again; and that I cannot arrange.

Thus ended Mrs. Dean’s story. I am rapidly recovering strength; and though it is only the second week in January, I propose getting out on horseback, and riding over to Wuthering Heights, to inform my landlord that I shall spend the next six months in London. I would not pass another winter here for much.

CHAPTER 31

Yesterday was bright, calm, and frosty. I went to the Heights as I proposed: my housekeeper entreated me to take a note from her to her young lady, and I agreed.

The front door stood open, but the gate was fastened. I called Earnshaw from the garden-beds; he unchained it, and I entered. The fellow is a handsome rustic. I took more notice of him this time; but he makes little of his advantages.

I asked if Mr. Heathcliff were at home? He answered, No; but he would be in at dinner-time. It was eleven o'clock, and I announced that I would go in and wait. He flung down his tools and accompanied me, in the office of watchdog.

We entered together. Catherine was preparing some vegetables; she looked more sulky and less spirited than when I had seen her first. She hardly raised her eyes, and never returned my bow and good-morning.

'She does not seem so amiable as Mrs. Dean says,' I thought. 'She's a beauty, but not an angel.'

Earnshaw surlily bid her remove her things to the kitchen. 'Remove them yourself,' she said, going to a stool by the window, where she began to carve figures of birds and beasts out of the turnip-parings in her lap. I approached her, and, as I fancied, adroitly dropped Mrs. Dean's note on to her knee, unnoticed by Hareton – but she asked aloud, 'What is that?' and chucked it off.

'A letter from the housekeeper at the Grange,' I answered; annoyed, and fearful lest it should be imagined a message of my own. She would gladly have gathered it up then, but Hareton seized it, saying Mr. Heathcliff should look at it first.

Catherine silently turned her face from us, and stealthily drew out her handkerchief and put it to her eyes. Her cousin, after struggling awhile to keep down his softer feelings, pulled out the letter and flung it on the floor beside her. Catherine caught and read it eagerly; then she asked me about the inmates of her former home; and murmured:

'I should like to be riding down there! Oh! I'm tired – I'm *stalled*, Hareton!' And she leant her pretty head against the sill, with half a yawn and half a sigh.

'Mrs. Heathcliff,' I said, 'are you not aware that I am an acquaintance of yours? My housekeeper never wearies of talking about and praising you; and she'll be greatly disappointed if I return with no news from you!'

She appeared to wonder at this speech, and asked, 'Does Ellen like you?'

'Yes, very well,' I replied.

'You must tell her that I would answer her letter, but I have nothing to write on: not even a book from which I might tear a leaf.'

'No books!' I exclaimed. 'How do you contrive to live here without them? Without my books, I should be desperate!'

'I was always reading, when I had them,' said Catherine; 'and Mr. Heathcliff never reads; so he took it into his head to destroy my books. I have not had a glimpse of one for weeks, except when I searched through Joseph's store of theology, to his great irritation; and once, Hareton, I came upon a secret stock in your room – some Latin and Greek, and tales and poetry: all old friends that I brought here. You gathered them, as a magpie gathers silver spoons! They are of no use to you; or else you decided that, as you cannot enjoy them, nobody else shall. But I've most of them written on my brain and printed in my heart, and you cannot deprive me of those!'

Earnshaw blushed crimson, and stammered an indignant denial of her accusations.

‘Mr. Hareton wishes to increase his knowledge,’ I said, coming to his rescue. ‘He’ll be a clever scholar in a few years.’

‘And he wants me to sink into a dunce, meantime,’ answered Catherine. ‘Yes, I hear him trying to read to himself, and pretty blunders he makes! I heard you reading Chevy Chase, Hareton: it was extremely funny. And I heard you turning over the dictionary to seek out the hard words, and then cursing because you couldn’t read their explanations!’

The young man evidently thought it too bad that he should be laughed at for his ignorance, and then laughed at for trying to remove it. I felt the same, and observed, ‘But, Mrs. Heathcliff, we have each had to begin learning, and each stumbled on the threshold; had our teachers scorned us, we should be stumbling still.’

‘Oh!’ she replied, ‘I don’t wish to stop him; but he has no right to take what is mine, and make it ridiculous to me with his vile mistakes! Those books have sacred memories for me; and I hate to have them debased in his mouth! Besides, he has selected my favourite pieces to repeat, as if out of malice.’

Hareton’s chest heaved in silence a minute: he laboured to suppress his mortification and anger. I rose, and to relieve his embarrassment, stood in the doorway, looking at the view. He left the room; but presently reappeared, carrying half a dozen volumes which he threw into Catherine’s lap, exclaiming, ‘Take them! I never want to read, or think of them again!’

‘I won’t have them now,’ she answered. ‘I shall connect them with you, and hate them.’

She opened one, and read a portion in the drawling tone of a beginner; then laughed, and threw it aside. ‘And listen,’ she continued provokingly, commencing a verse of an old ballad in the same fashion.

But his self-love would endure no further torment: I heard, and not altogether disapprovingly, a slap. The little wretch had done her utmost to hurt her cousin’s feelings, and a slap was the only reply he could make. He gathered the books and hurled them on the fire, with anguish in his face.

I guessed that he had been content with daily labour and rough enjoyments, till Catherine crossed his path. Hope of her approval had first prompted him to higher pursuits; but his endeavours had produced the contrary result.

‘Yes, that’s all a brute like you can do with them!’ cried Catherine.

‘You’d better hold your tongue,’ he answered fiercely, and he strode to the door. Mr. Heathcliff, coming up the path, laid hold of his shoulder and asked, ‘What’s to do now, my lad?’

‘Naught, naught,’ he said, and broke away to enjoy his grief and anger in solitude. Heathcliff gazed after him, and sighed.

‘It will be odd if I thwart myself,’ he muttered, unaware that I was behind him. ‘But when I look for his father in his face, I find *her* every day more! How the devil is he so like? I can hardly bear to see him.’

He walked moodily in. There was a restless, anxious expression in his face; and he looked thinner than before. His daughter-in-law immediately escaped to the kitchen, so that I was alone with him.

‘I’m glad to see you out of doors again, Mr. Lockwood,’ he said to me. ‘I’ve wondered more than once what brought you here to this desolation.’

‘An idle whim, I fear, sir,’ was my answer; ‘but I shall set out for London next week; and I must give you warning that I shall not keep Thrushcross Grange beyond the twelve months I agreed to. I believe I shall not live there any more.’

‘Oh, indeed; you’re tired of being banished from the world, are you?’ he said. ‘But if you’re coming to plead off paying your rent, your journey is useless.’

‘Nothing of the sort,’ I exclaimed, irritated. ‘I’ll settle with you now,’ and I drew my wallet from my pocket.

‘No, no,’ he replied, coolly; ‘I’m not in such a hurry. Sit down and take your dinner with us. Catherine! bring the things in.’

Catherine reappeared, bearing a tray of knives and forks.

‘Get your dinner with Joseph,’ muttered Heathcliff, ‘and stay in the kitchen till Mr. Lockwood is gone.’ She obeyed very punctually. Living among clowns and misanthropists, she probably cannot appreciate a better class of people when she meets them.

With Mr. Heathcliff, grim and saturnine, on the one hand, and Hareton, absolutely dumb, on the other, I made a cheerless meal, and said goodnight. I would have departed by the back way, to get a last glimpse of Catherine; but Hareton had orders to bring my horse, and my host himself escorted me to the door, so I could not fulfil my wish.

‘How dreary life gets in that house!’ I reflected, while riding down the road. ‘How romantic it would have been for Mrs. Linton Heathcliff, had she and I struck up an attachment, as her good nurse desired!’

CHAPTER 32

1802 – This September I was invited to shoot on the moors of a friend in the north, and on my journey to his home, I unexpectedly came within fifteen miles of Gimmerton.

A sudden impulse seized me to visit Thrushcross Grange. I decided that I might as well pass the night under my own roof as in an inn. Besides, I could spare a day to arrange matters with my landlord, and save myself the trouble of invading the neighbourhood again. I directed my servant to inquire the way to the village; and we managed the distance in some three hours.

I left him there, and went down the valley alone. The grey church looked greyer, and the lonely churchyard lonelier. I noticed a moor-sheep cropping the short turf on the graves. It was sweet, warm weather; in winter nothing more dreary, in summer nothing more divine, than those glens shut in by hills, and those bluff, bold swells of heath.

I reached the Grange before sunset, and knocked for admittance; but the family had retreated into the back, I judged by one thin, blue wreath curling from the kitchen chimney, and they did not hear. I rode into the courtyard. Under the porch sat a girl of nine or ten, and an old woman, smoking a pipe.

‘Is Mrs. Dean within?’ I demanded.

‘Mistress Dean? Nay!’ she answered, ‘she doesn’t live here: she’s up at th’ Heights.’

‘Are you the housekeeper, then?’ I continued. ‘I’m Mr. Lockwood, the master. Are there any rooms to lodge me in? I wish to stay all night.’

‘T’ master!’ she cried in astonishment. ‘Yah should have sent word. There’s nowt dry about t’ place!’

She bustled in, and I entered too; soon seeing that she spoke the truth. I told her I would go out for a walk; and meantime she must try to prepare a corner of a sitting-room for me to sup in, and a bedroom to sleep in. I proposed to go to Wuthering Heights.

‘All well at the Heights?’ I inquired of the woman.

‘Ee, for owt I know!’ she answered, scurrying away.

I would have asked why Mrs. Dean had deserted the Grange, but it was impossible; so I turned away, rambling leisurely along, with the glow of a sinking sun behind, and the mild glory of a rising moon in front. Before I arrived in sight of Mr. Heathcliff’s house, all that remained of day was a beamless amber light along the west: but I could see every pebble on the path, and every blade of grass, by that splendid moon.

The gate yielded to my hand. That is an improvement, I thought. And I noticed another; a fragrance of stocks and wallflowers wafted on the air.

Both doors and windows were open; and yet a fire illumined the chimney. But the main room of Wuthering Heights is so large that the inmates have plenty of space for withdrawing from the fire’s heat; and they sat not far from one of the windows. I could both see and hear them before I entered, and looked and listened in growing curiosity and envy.

‘Con-trary!’ said a voice as sweet as a silver bell. ‘That for the third time, you dunce! I’m not going to tell you again. Recollect, or I’ll pull your hair!’

‘Contrary, then,’ answered another, in deep but softened tones. ‘And now, kiss me, for minding so well.’

‘No, first read it without a single mistake.’

The male speaker began to read: he was a young man, respectably dressed and seated at a table, with a book before him. His handsome features glowed with pleasure, and his eyes kept wandering from the page to a small white hand over his shoulder, which recalled him by a smart slap on the cheek. Its owner stood behind; her light ringlets blending with his brown locks, as she bent to superintend his studies; and her face – I bit my lip, at having thrown away the chance I might have had of winning such beauty.

The task was done; the pupil claimed a reward, and received at least five kisses, which he generously returned. Then they talked about going out for a walk on the moors. I supposed I should be condemned by Hareton Earnshaw to the lowest pit of Hell if I showed myself just then; so I skulked round to seek refuge in the kitchen.

There at the door sat my old friend Nelly Dean, sewing and singing a song; which was interrupted from within by harsh words of scorn.

‘I’d rather have ’em swearing from morn to neeght!’ said Joseph. ‘I cannot open t’ blessed Book, but yah set up them glories to Satan!’

‘Hush, old man,’ retorted Mrs. Dean; ‘read your Bible, and never mind me.’

She was about to start singing again, when I advanced; and she jumped to her feet, crying, ‘Why, bless you, Mr. Lockwood! How could you think of returning in this way? You should have given us notice!’

‘I depart again tomorrow,’ I answered. ‘And why are you here, Mrs. Dean?’

‘Zillah left, and Mr. Heathcliff wished me to come. But, step in, pray! Have you walked from Gimmerton this evening?’

‘From the Grange,’ I replied; ‘I want to finish my business with your master.’

‘What business, sir?’ said Nelly. ‘He’s gone out at present, and won’t return soon.’

‘About the rent,’ I answered.

‘Oh! then it is with Mrs. Heathcliff you must settle,’ she observed; ‘or rather with me. She has not learnt to manage her affairs yet, and I act for her: there’s nobody else.’

I looked surprised.

‘Ah! you have not heard of Heathcliff’s death, I see,’ she continued.

‘Heathcliff dead!’ I exclaimed, astonished. ‘How long ago?’

‘Three months since: but sit down, and let me take your hat, and I’ll tell you all about it.’

‘I never dreamt of his dying! Let me hear how it came to pass. You say you don’t expect the young people back for some time?’

‘No – they like their late rambles. Have a drink of our old ale; it will do you good.’

She hastened to fetch it. I heard Joseph asking whether it ‘weren’t a crying shame that she should have fellers at her time of life?’ She did not retaliate, but re-entered bearing a foaming silver pint. Then she told me the sequel of Heathcliff’s history. He had a ‘queer’ end, as she expressed it.

Mrs. Dean said: I was summoned to Wuthering Heights within a fortnight of your leaving us, and I obeyed joyfully, for Catherine’s sake. I was shocked to see her; she had altered so much. Mr. Heathcliff did not explain why he wanted me; he only said

he was tired of seeing Catherine, and that I must make the little parlour my sitting-room, and keep her with me. She seemed pleased at this arrangement; and I smuggled over many books and other articles, thinking that we should get on in tolerable comfort.

This delusion did not last long. Catherine soon grew irritable and restless. For one thing, she was forbidden to move out of the garden, and fretted when confined to its narrow bounds; for another, I was forced to leave her frequently, and she complained of loneliness: she preferred quarrelling with Joseph in the kitchen to sitting in her solitude. I did not mind their skirmishes: but Hareton was often in the kitchen too, when the master wanted to be by himself.

To start with, she left at Hareton's approach, or was quiet – while he was sullen and silent – but then she changed, and would not let him alone: commenting on his stupidity and idleness; and wondering how he could sit a whole evening staring into the fire.

'He's just like a dog, is he not, Ellen?' she once observed, 'or a cart-horse? He does his work, eats his food, and sleeps eternally! What a blank, dreary mind he must have! Do you ever dream, Hareton? And, if you do, what about?'

He would neither speak nor look at her.

'He's dreaming now,' she continued. 'He twitched his shoulder as Juno does.'

He had not only twitched his shoulder but clenched his fist, as if tempted to use it.

'I know why Hareton never speaks, when I am in the kitchen,' she exclaimed. 'He is afraid I shall laugh at him. Ellen, he began to teach himself to read once; and, because I laughed, he burned his books, and stopped: was he not a fool?'

'Were not you naughty?' I said; 'answer me that.'

'Perhaps I was,' she went on; 'but I did not expect him to be so silly. Hareton, if I gave you a book, would you take it now? I'll try!'

She placed one she had been reading on his hand; he flung it off, and muttered that if she did not give over, he would break her neck.

'Well, I shall put it here,' she said. 'I'm going to bed.'

Then she whispered to me to watch whether he touched it, and departed. But he would not come near it; and so I informed her in the morning, to her great disappointment. I saw she was sorry, and ashamed of frightening him off improving himself.

But she set to work to remedy the injury: while I ironed, she would bring some pleasant book and read it aloud to me. She often paused in an interesting part, and left the book lying about: but Hareton was as obstinate as a mule, and, instead of snatching at her bait, he took to smoking with Joseph; and they sat on each side of the fire, the elder too deaf to understand her nonsense, and the younger doing his best to ignore it. On fine evenings Hareton went shooting, and Catherine yawned and sighed, and teased me, and cried, and said she was tired of living: her life was useless.

Mr. Heathcliff, who grew more and more disinclined to society, had almost banished Earnshaw from his apartment. Owing to an accident in early March, Hareton became for some days a fixture in the kitchen. His gun burst while he was out on the hills; a splinter cut his arm, and he lost a good deal of blood before he could reach home. In consequence he was condemned to the fireside, till he recovered. It suited Catherine; at any rate, she spent more time there with me.

On Easter Monday, Joseph went to Gimmerton fair with some cattle; and I was busy sorting linen in the kitchen. Earnshaw sat, morose as usual, at the chimney corner, and my little mistress was idly drawing pictures on the window-panes, with

quick glances of impatience in the direction of her cousin, who steadfastly smoked, and looked into the fire. I did not pay her much attention, but presently, I heard her begin:

‘I’ve found out, Hareton, that I want – that I’m glad – that I should like you to be my cousin now, if you had not grown so cross to me, and so rough.’

Hareton returned no answer.

‘Hareton, Hareton! do you hear?’ she continued.

‘Get off wi’ ye!’ he growled gruffly.

‘Let me take that pipe,’ she said, ‘you must listen to me; and I can’t speak while those clouds are floating in my face.’

‘Will you go to the devil!’ he exclaimed, ferociously, ‘and let me be!’

‘No,’ she persisted, ‘I won’t: I don’t know how to make you talk to me; and you are determined not to understand. When I call you stupid, I don’t mean that I despise you. Come, you shall take notice of me, Hareton.’

‘I shall have naught to do wi’ you and your mucky pride, and your damned mocking tricks!’ he answered. ‘I’ll go to hell, before I look sideways after you again!’

Catherine frowned, and retreated to the window-seat chewing her lip, and trying to conceal a sob.

‘You should be friends with your cousin, Mr. Hareton,’ I interrupted, ‘since she repents of her sauciness. It would do you a great deal of good to have her for a companion.’

‘A companion!’ he cried; ‘when she hates me, and does not think me fit to wipe her shoes! Nay, I’ll not be scorned for seeking her good-will any more.’

‘It is not I who hate you, it is you who hate me!’ wept Cathy, no longer disguising her tears. ‘You hate me as much as Mr. Heathcliff does, and more.’

‘You’re a damned liar,’ began Earnshaw: ‘why have I made him angry, by taking your part, then, a hundred times? and then you despised me!’

‘I didn’t know you took my part,’ she answered, drying her eyes; ‘and I was miserable and bitter at everybody; but now I thank you, and beg you to forgive me. What can I do besides?’

She returned to the hearth, and frankly extended her hand. He scowled like a thunder-cloud, and kept his fists resolutely clenched, and his gaze fixed on the ground. Catherine must have known it was stubbornness, and not dislike, that caused this conduct; for she stooped and gave his cheek a gentle kiss. The little rogue thought I had not seen her; but I shook my head reprovingly, and then she blushed and whispered:

‘Well! what should I have done, Ellen? He wouldn’t shake hands: I must show him some way that I like him – that I want to be friends.’

Whether the kiss convinced Hareton, I cannot tell: he was very careful, for some minutes, that his face should not be seen, and when he did raise it, he was sadly puzzled where to turn his eyes.

Catherine busied herself in wrapping a handsome book neatly in paper, and having tied it with a bit of ribbon, and addressed it to ‘Mr. Hareton Earnshaw,’ she asked me to give the present to him.

‘And tell him, if he’ll take it, I’ll come and teach him to read it right,’ she said; ‘and, if he refuses it, I’ll go upstairs, and never tease him again.’

I carried it, and repeated the message; anxiously watched by Catherine. Hareton would not open his fingers, so I laid it on his knee. He did not strike it off, either. Catherine leaned her head and arms on the table, till she heard the slight rustle of the

covering being removed; then she quietly seated herself beside her cousin. He trembled, and his face glowed: all his rudeness and surly harshness had deserted him. He could not utter a word, at first, in reply to her murmur.

‘Say you forgive me, Hareton, do. You can make me so happy by speaking that little word.’

He muttered something inaudible.

‘And you’ll be my friend?’ asked Catherine.

‘Nay, you’ll be ashamed of me every day of your life,’ he answered; ‘and I cannot abide it.’

‘So you won’t be my friend?’ she said, smiling as sweet as honey, and creeping close up.

I overheard no further talk, but, on looking round again, I perceived two such radiant countenances bent over the page of the book, that I did not doubt the enemies were now sworn friends.

When Joseph came home, he was perfectly aghast at the sight of Catherine seated next to Hareton, leaning her hand on his shoulder; and confounded at his favourite’s endurance of her closeness. With an immense sigh, he solemnly spread his large Bible on the table, overlaid it with dirty bank-notes from his transactions at the market, and summoned Hareton from his seat.

‘Take these in to t’ master, lad,’ he said, ‘and stay there. This room’s not seemly for us: we must go and seek another.’

‘Come, Catherine,’ I said, ‘we must go out too: I’ve done my ironing. Are you ready?’

She rose unwillingly. ‘Hareton, I’ll leave this book upon the chimney-piece, and I’ll bring some more tomorrow.’

‘Any books that yah leave, I shall take,’ said Joseph.

Cathy threatened that his library should pay for hers; and, smiling as she passed Hareton, went singing upstairs.

The intimacy thus begun grew rapidly. Earnshaw was not to be civilized with a wish, and my young lady was no paragon of patience; but with both their minds tending to the same point – one loving and desiring to esteem, and the other loving and desiring to be esteemed – they contrived in the end to reach it.

You see, Mr. Lockwood, it was easy enough to win Mrs. Heathcliff’s heart. But now, I’m glad you did not try. The crown of all my wishes will be the union of those two. I shall envy no one on their wedding day: there won’t be a happier woman than myself in England!

CHAPTER 33

On the next day, Catherine went out into the garden early with her cousin; and persuaded him to clear a large space of ground, so that they could bring in plants from the Grange.

I was terrified at the devastation which had been accomplished in a brief half-hour; the black-currant trees were the apple of Joseph's eye, and she had just fixed her choice of a flower-bed in the midst of them.

'What excuse have you for taking such liberties with the garden?' I exclaimed. 'We shall have a fine explosion over this: see if we don't! Mr. Hareton, I wonder you should have no more wit than to go and make that mess at her bidding!'

'I'd forgotten they were Joseph's bushes,' answered Earnshaw, rather puzzled; 'but I'll tell him I did it.'

We always ate our meals with Mr. Heathcliff. I made the tea, and Catherine usually sat by me, but today she stole nearer to Hareton. I saw she would have no more discretion in her friendship than she had in her hostility.

'Now, mind you don't talk with your cousin too much,' I whispered as we entered the room. 'It will annoy Mr. Heathcliff.'

'I'm not going to,' she answered.

The minute after, she had sidled to Hareton, and was sticking primroses in his porridge.

He dared not speak to her: he dared hardly look; and yet she went on teasing, till he twice almost laughed. I frowned, and she glanced towards the master. Heathcliff's mind was on other subjects, as his face showed; and she grew serious for an instant. But then she turned, and recommenced her nonsense; at last, Hareton uttered a smothered laugh.

Mr. Heathcliff started and surveyed us. Catherine met his gaze with her usual look of nervous defiance, which he abhorred.

'It is well you are out of my reach,' he exclaimed. 'What fiend possesses you to stare back at me with those infernal eyes? Don't remind me of your existence again. I thought I had cured you of laughing.'

'It was me,' muttered Hareton.

'What did you say?' demanded the master.

Hareton looked at his plate, and did not repeat the confession. Mr. Heathcliff looked at him, and then silently resumed his breakfast and his musing. We had nearly finished, when Joseph appeared at the door, revealing by his quivering lip that the outrage committed on his precious shrubs was detected.

'I must have my wage, and go! I had aimed to die where I'd served for sixty year. But now she's taken my garden fro' me, and I cannot stand it!'

'Now, now, idiot!' interrupted Heathcliff, 'cut it short! What's your grievance? I'll interfere in no quarrels between you and Nelly. She may thrust you into the coal-hole for anything I care.'

'It's noan Nelly!' answered Joseph. 'It's yon graceless queen, that's witched our lad, wi' her bold eyes and her forrard ways. It bursts my heart! He's forgotten all I've done for him, and gone and riven up a whole row o' t' grandest currant-trees in t' garden!'

'Is the fool drunk?' asked Mr. Heathcliff. 'Hareton, is it you he's finding fault with?'

‘I’ve pulled up two or three bushes,’ replied the young man; ‘but I’m going to set ’em again.’

‘And why have you pulled them up?’ said the master.

Catherine wisely put in her tongue.

‘We wanted to plant some flowers there,’ she cried. ‘I’m the person to blame, for I wished him to do it.’

‘And who the devil gave you leave to touch a stick about the place?’ demanded her father-in-law, much surprised. ‘And who ordered you to obey her?’ he added, turning to Hareton.

The latter was speechless. Catherine replied, ‘You shouldn’t grudge me a few yards of earth, when you have taken all my land!’

‘Your land, insolent slut! You never had any,’ said Heathcliff.

‘And my money,’ she continued, returning his angry glare.

‘Silence!’ he exclaimed. ‘Begone!’

‘And Hareton’s land, and his money,’ pursued the reckless thing. ‘Hareton and I are friends now; and I shall tell him all about you!’

The master seemed confounded: he grew pale, and rose up, eyeing her with an expression of hate.

‘If you strike me, Hareton will strike *you*,’ she said; ‘so you may as well sit down.’

‘If Hareton does not turn you out of the room, I’ll strike him to hell,’ thundered Heathcliff. ‘Damnable witch! dare you pretend to rouse him against me? Off with her! Do you hear? Fling her into the kitchen! I’ll kill her, Ellen Dean, if you let her come into my sight again!’

Hareton tried, under his breath, to persuade her to go.

‘Drag her away!’ cried Heathcliff, savagely.

‘He’ll not obey you any more, wicked man,’ said Catherine. ‘He’ll soon detest you as much as I do.’

‘Hush!’ muttered the young man reproachfully. ‘I will not hear you speak so to him.’

‘But you won’t let him strike me?’ she cried.

‘Come away, then,’ he whispered.

It was too late: Heathcliff had caught hold of her.

‘Now, you go!’ he said to Earnshaw. ‘Accursed witch! she has provoked me unbearably; and I’ll make her repent it for ever!’

He had his hand in her hair; Hareton attempted to release her, entreating him not to hurt her. Heathcliff’s black eyes flashed; he seemed ready to tear Catherine in pieces, when suddenly his fingers relaxed. He shifted his grasp, and gazed intently in her face.

Then he drew his hand over his eyes, stood a moment to collect himself, and turning to Catherine, said, with assumed calmness:

‘You must learn to avoid putting me in a passion, or I shall really murder you some time! Go with Mrs. Dean, and stay with her. As to Hareton Earnshaw, if I see him listen to you, I’ll make him an outcast and a beggar. Nelly, take her; and leave me, all of you! Leave me!’

I led my young lady out: Hareton followed, and Mr. Heathcliff had the room to himself till dinner. I had advised Catherine to dine upstairs; but, as soon as he perceived her vacant seat, he sent me to call her. He spoke to none of us, ate very

little, and went out directly afterwards, saying that he should not return before evening.

During his absence, I heard Hareton sternly stop his cousin from telling him about her father-in-law's conduct. He said he wouldn't suffer a word to be uttered against Heathcliff: if he were the devil, it didn't matter; he would stand by him. Catherine grew cross, until he asked if she would like him to speak ill of her father?

Then she comprehended that Earnshaw was attached to the master by ties stronger than reason could break – chains which it would be cruel to attempt to loosen. She showed a good heart in avoiding any further complaints about Heathcliff; and indeed, I don't believe she has breathed a syllable, in Hareton's hearing, against Heathcliff since.

After this they were friends again, and as busy as possible in their occupations of pupil and teacher. I came in to sit with them, after I had done my work; and I felt comforted to watch them, as if they had been my own children. Hareton's honest, warm, and intelligent nature shook off rapidly the clouds of ignorance; and Catherine's praise spurred him to industry. His features gained spirit and nobility: I hardly thought him the same person I had beheld on the day I discovered my little lady at Wuthering Heights.

Meanwhile dusk drew on, and with it returned the master. He entered unexpectedly, and had a full view of us before we could raise our heads. Well, I reflected, there was never a pleasanter, or more harmless sight: their faces showed the eager interest of children; for, though he was twenty-three and she eighteen, each had so much to feel and learn, that neither felt the disenchantment of maturity.

They lifted their eyes together: perhaps you have never noticed that their eyes are precisely similar, and they are those of Catherine Earnshaw. The present Catherine has no other likeness to her, except a breadth of forehead, and a certain haughty arch of the nostril. But with Hareton the resemblance is singular at all times, and just then it was particularly striking.

Mr. Heathcliff walked to the hearth in agitation. He took the book from Hareton, and glanced at the page, then returned it without any observation; merely signing Catherine away. Her companion followed her, and I was about to depart also, but he bid me sit still.

'It is a poor end, is it not, to my exertions?' he observed. 'I work like Hercules to demolish the two houses, and when everything is in my power, I can't take the trouble to raise my hand! It is not generosity that stops me: but I have lost the faculty of enjoying their destruction, and I am too idle to destroy for nothing.'

'Nelly, there is a strange change approaching; I'm in its shadow at present. I take so little interest in my daily life that I hardly remember to eat and drink. Those two who have left the room are the only objects which retain a distinct material appearance to me; and that appearance causes me pain, amounting to agony. About her I won't speak; but I earnestly wish she were invisible: her presence is maddening. He moves me differently: and yet if I could, I'd never see him again! You'll perhaps think me insane,' he added, making an effort to smile, 'if I try to describe the thousand ideas of the past he awakens.'

'Five minutes ago Hareton seemed a personification of my youth, not a human being. His startling likeness to Catherine connected him fearfully with her. But then, what does not connect her to me? and what does not recall her? I cannot look down to this floor without seeing her features in the flagstones! In every cloud, in every tree – filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object by day – I am

surrounded with her image! The most ordinary faces mock me with a resemblance. The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her! Well, Hareton's aspect was the ghost of my immortal love; of my degradation, my pride, my happiness, and my anguish—

'But it is frenzy to repeat these thoughts to you: only it will explain why his society is a torment to me. I do not care how he and his cousin go on together. I can give them no attention any more.'

'But what do you mean by a change, Mr. Heathcliff?' I said, alarmed at his manner, although I did not think he was in danger of losing his senses, nor of dying. He was quite strong and healthy; and, as to his reason, from childhood he had a delight in dwelling on dark things. He might have been obsessed with the dead Catherine; but on every other point his wits were as sound as mine.

'I shall not know that till it comes,' he said; 'I'm only half conscious of it now.'

'Do you feel ill?' I asked.

'No, Nelly.'

'Then you are not afraid of death?'

'Afraid? No!' he replied. 'I have neither fear nor hope of death. Why should I? With my hard constitution, I ought to remain above ground till there is scarcely a black hair on my head. And yet I cannot continue in this condition! I have to remind myself to breathe – almost to remind my heart to beat! It is by compulsion that I do the slightest act, or notice anything alive or dead, which is not associated with one universal idea. I have a single wish, and my whole being yearns to attain it. I have yearned towards it so long, and so unwaveringly, that I'm convinced it will be reached – and soon – because it has devoured my existence: I am swallowed up in the anticipation of its fulfilment. O God! It is a long fight; I wish it were over!'

He began to pace the room, muttering terrible things, till I was inclined to believe, as Joseph did, that conscience had turned his heart to an earthly hell. I wondered how it would end. Though he seldom before had revealed this state of mind, it was his habitual mood, I had no doubt; but nobody would have guessed it. You did not guess it when you saw him, Mr. Lockwood: for he appeared as usual, but more solitary and silent.

CHAPTER 34

For some days after that evening Mr. Heathcliff absented himself from meals; eating once in twenty-four hours seemed sufficient for him.

One night, after the family were in bed, I heard him go downstairs, and out at the front door. In the morning I found he was still away. It was April: the weather was sweet and warm, the grass as green as showers and sun could make it, and the dwarf apple-trees in full bloom. After breakfast, Catherine insisted on my bringing a chair and sitting with my work under the fir-trees at the end of the house; and she beguiled Hareton to dig her little garden.

I was comfortably enjoying the spring fragrance around, and the beautiful soft blue overhead, when my young lady, who had run down to the gate, informed us that Mr. Heathcliff was coming in. 'And he spoke to me,' she added, looking perplexed.

'What did he say?' asked Hareton.

'He told me to begone as fast as I could,' she answered. 'But he looked so different to usual that I stopped to stare at him.'

'Different? How?'

'Why, almost bright and cheerful. No, *almost* nothing – very much excited, and wild, and glad!' she replied.

'Night-walking amuses him, then,' I remarked, affecting a careless manner, but really as surprised as she was, for to see the master looking glad would not be an everyday sight.

I made an excuse to go in. Heathcliff stood at the door; he was pale, and he trembled: yet, certainly, he had a strange joyful glitter in his eyes, that altered the aspect of his whole face.

'Will you have some breakfast?' I said. 'You must be hungry, rambling about all night!' I did not like to ask directly where he had been.

'No, I'm not hungry,' he answered.

'I don't think it right to wander out of doors at night,' I advised him, 'it is not wise in this moist season. I daresay you'll catch a cold or a fever: you have something the matter with you now!'

'Nothing but what I can bear,' he replied. 'Get in, and don't annoy me.'

In passing him, I noticed he breathed as fast as a cat.

'Yes!' I reflected, 'we shall have a fit of illness. I cannot imagine what he has been doing.'

That noon Heathcliff sat down to dinner with us, and took a heaped-up plate from my hands, as if he intended to make up for his previous fasting.

'I've neither cold nor fever, Nelly,' he remarked, 'and I'm ready to do justice to your food.'

He took his knife and fork, and was about to begin eating, when he suddenly laid them on the table, looked eagerly towards the window, and then rose and went out. We saw him walking to and fro in the garden. Hareton said he'd go and ask why he would not dine: he thought we had grieved him in some way.

'Well, is he coming?' cried Catherine, when her cousin returned.

'Nay,' he answered; 'but he's not angry: he seemed pleased; only he bid me return to you: he wondered how I could want the company of anybody else.'

I set his plate to keep warm on the fender; and after an hour or two he re-entered, with the same unnatural appearance of joy under his black brows; the same bloodless

hue, and his teeth visible in a kind of smile. He was shivering, not as one shivers with chill or weakness, but as a tight-stretched cord vibrates – a strong thrilling, rather than trembling.

‘Have you heard any good news, Mr. Heathcliff?’ I exclaimed. ‘You look uncommonly animated.’

‘Where should good news come from to me?’ he said. ‘I’m animated with hunger; and, seemingly, I must not eat.’

‘Your dinner is here,’ I returned; ‘why won’t you get it?’

‘I don’t want it now,’ he muttered hastily: ‘I’ll wait till supper. And, Nelly, you warn Hareton and the other away from me. I wish to be troubled by nobody: I wish to have this place to myself.’

‘Why are you so strange, Mr. Heathcliff? Where were you last night? I’m not asking through idle curiosity, but—’

‘You are asking through very idle curiosity,’ he interrupted, with a laugh. ‘Yet I’ll answer. Last night I was on the threshold of hell. Today, I am within sight of my heaven. I have my eyes on it: hardly three feet away! Now you’d better go! And don’t pry any longer.’

Having swept the hearth, I departed, more perplexed than ever.

He did not leave the house again that afternoon, and no one intruded on his solitude; till, at eight o’clock, I carried a candle and his supper to him. He was leaning against the ledge of an open window, but not looking out: his face was turned to the interior gloom. The fire had smouldered to ashes; the room was filled with the damp, mild air of the cloudy evening; and it was so still, that the gurgling of the beck down to Gimmerton could be heard.

I exclaimed at seeing the dismal grate, and shut the casement windows, one after another, till I came to his.

‘Shall I close this?’ I asked, to rouse him; for he would not stir.

The light flashed on his features as I spoke. Oh, Mr. Lockwood, I cannot express what a terrible shock I had! Those deep black eyes! That smile, and ghastly paleness! It appeared to me, not Mr. Heathcliff, but a goblin; and, in my terror, I let the candle fall sideways and go out.

‘Yes, close it,’ he replied, in his familiar voice. ‘There, that is pure awkwardness! Why did you hold the candle horizontally? Be quick, and bring another.’

I hurried out in a foolish state of dread, and said to Joseph, ‘The master wishes you to take him a light and make the fire.’ For I dared not go in myself just then.

Joseph went: but he came back immediately, with the supper-tray, explaining that Mr. Heathcliff was going to bed, and he wanted nothing to eat till morning. We heard him mount the stairs; he did not go to his ordinary chamber, but turned into that with the panelled bed. Its window is wide enough for anybody to get through; and it struck me that he plotted another midnight excursion.

‘Is he a ghoul or a vampire?’ I mused. I had read of such hideous demons. And then I made myself reflect how I had tended him in infancy, and watched him grow to youth, and what absurd nonsense it was to yield to that sense of horror.

‘But where did he come from, that little, dark, baleful thing?’ muttered Superstition, as I dozed. And I began, half dreaming, to imagine his parentage; and I tracked his existence over again, at last picturing his death and funeral: of which all I can remember is, being vexed at having to decide on the inscription for his gravestone. As he had no surname, and we could not tell his age, we had to content

ourselves with the single word, 'Heathcliff.' That came true. If you enter the churchyard, you'll read, on his headstone, only that, and the date of his death.

Dawn restored me to common sense. I rose, and went into the garden, to see if there were any footmarks under his window. There were none.

'He has stayed at home,' I thought; 'he'll be all right today.' I prepared breakfast for the household, but told Hareton and Catherine to get theirs before the master came down, for he slept late. They chose to have it out of doors, under the trees.

On my re-entrance, I found Mr. Heathcliff. He and Joseph were talking about some farming business; he gave clear directions about the matter, but he spoke rapidly, and turned his head continually, and had the same excited expression. When Joseph left the room he sat in his usual place, and I put a basin of coffee before him. Heathcliff drew it nearer, and then looked at the opposite wall, surveying one particular portion up and down, with glittering, restless eyes, and with such eager interest that he stopped breathing for half a minute together.

'Come now,' I exclaimed, pushing some bread against his hand, 'eat and drink that, while it is hot.'

He didn't notice me, and yet he smiled. I'd rather have seen him gnash his teeth than smile so.

'Mr. Heathcliff! master!' I cried, 'don't, for God's sake, stare as if you saw an unearthly vision.'

'Don't, for God's sake, shout so loud,' he replied. 'Turn round, and tell me, are we by ourselves?'

'Of course we are!'

Still, I obeyed him, as if I was not quite sure. With a sweep of his hand he cleared a vacant space among the breakfast things, and leant forward to gaze.

Now, I saw he was not looking at the wall; but at something within two yards' distance. And whatever it was, it seemed to give him both pleasure and pain in exquisite extremes: at least his anguished, yet raptured, expression suggested that.

The fancied object moved, for his eyes followed it, even when he was speaking to me. I vainly reminded him that he needed to eat; but if he stretched his hand out to get a piece of bread, his fingers clenched before they reached it, and remained on the table, forgetful of their aim.

I patiently tried to attract his absorbed attention until he grew irritable, and got up, asking why I would not allow him to eat in his own time? and then saying that I needn't wait: I might set the things down and go. He left the house, slowly walked down the garden path, and disappeared through the gate.

The hours crept anxiously by: another evening came. I did not retire to rest till late, and when I did, I could not sleep. He returned after midnight, and, instead of going to bed, shut himself in the room beneath. I listened, and tossed about, and finally dressed and descended, my brain full of a hundred misgivings.

I heard Mr. Heathcliff's step, restlessly measuring the floor, and he frequently broke the silence by a deeply drawn breath, resembling a groan. He muttered words also; the only one I could catch was the name of Catherine, coupled with some wild term of endearment or suffering; and spoken as one would speak to a person present; low and earnest, and wrung from the depth of his soul.

I had not courage to walk straight into the room; but to divert him, I stirred the kitchen fire, and scraped the embers. He opened the door immediately, and said, 'Nelly – is it morning? Come in with your light.'

'It is striking four,' I answered. 'You want a candle to take upstairs.'

‘No, I don’t wish to go upstairs,’ he said. ‘Come in, and kindle me a fire.’

While I got the bellows, he roamed to and fro in a distracted state, sighing constantly and heavily.

‘When day breaks I’ll send for Green,’ he said; ‘I wish to make some legal inquiries while I can act calmly. I have not written my will yet; and I cannot decide how to leave my property. I wish I could annihilate it from the face of the earth.’

‘Do not talk so, Mr. Heathcliff,’ I said. ‘Leave your will be a while: you’ll be spared to repent of your injustices yet! Your nerves are disordered, and it is your own fault. The way you’ve passed these three last days might exhaust a Titan. Do take some food, and rest. Your cheeks are hollow, and your eyes blood-shot, like a person starving with hunger and going blind with loss of sleep.’

‘It is not my fault that I cannot eat or rest,’ he replied. ‘I’ll do both, as soon as I can. But you might as well bid a man struggling in the water to rest within arms’ length of the shore! I must reach it first, and then I’ll rest. Well, never mind Mr. Green: as to injustice, I’ve done none, and I repent of nothing. I’m too happy; and yet I’m not happy enough. My soul’s bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself.’

‘Happy, master?’ I cried. ‘Strange happiness! I might offer some advice that would make you happier.’

‘What is that?’ he asked.

‘You are aware, Mr. Heathcliff,’ I said, ‘that since you were thirteen years old you have lived a selfish, unchristian life; and hardly had a Bible in your hands during all that time. You must have forgotten the contents of that book. Could it hurt to send for a minister, who will show you how very far you have erred, and how unfit you will be for its heaven, unless a change takes place before you die?’

‘I’m obliged, Nelly,’ he said, ‘for you remind me of the manner in which I desire to be buried. It is to be carried to the churchyard in the evening. You and Hareton may, if you please, accompany me: and mind, particularly, to see that the sexton obeys my directions concerning the two coffins! No minister need come; nor need any words be said over me. I have nearly attained my heaven; and that of others is altogether unvalued and uncoveted by me.’

‘And supposing you died because of your obstinate fast, and they refused to bury you in the churchyard?’ I said, shocked at his godless indifference. ‘How would you like it?’

‘They won’t do that,’ he replied: ‘if they did, you must have me moved secretly, or I shall haunt you!’

On hearing other members of the family stirring, he retired to his den, and I breathed freer. But in the afternoon, he came into the kitchen again, and, with a wild look, bid me come and sit in the house: he wanted somebody with him. I declined; telling him plainly that he frightened me.

‘I believe you think me a fiend,’ he said, with his dismal laugh. Then turning to Catherine, who drew behind me, he added, half sneeringly, ‘Will you come? I’ll not hurt you. No! to you I’m worse than the devil. Well, there is one who won’t shrink from my company! By God! she’s relentless. Oh, damn it! It’s too much for flesh and blood to bear – even mine.’

He asked no more for company. At dusk he went into his chamber. Through the whole night, and far into the morning, we heard him groaning and murmuring to himself. Hareton was anxious to enter; but I bid him fetch Dr. Kenneth.

When he came, and I tried to open the door, I found it locked; and Heathcliff bid us be damned. He said he was better, and would be left alone; so the doctor went away.

The following evening was very wet: indeed, it poured down till dawn; and, as I took my morning walk round the house, I observed the master's window swinging open, and the rain driving straight in. He cannot be in bed, I thought: those showers would drench him through. He must either be up or out. I decided to go and look.

Having got in with another key, I ran to unclose the panels, for the chamber was vacant; quickly pushing them aside, I peeped in.

Mr. Heathcliff was there – laid on his back. His eyes met mine so keen and fierce, I started; and then he seemed to smile. I could not think him dead: but his face and throat were washed with rain; the bed-clothes dripped, and he was perfectly still. The lattice window, flapping to and fro, grazed one hand that rested on the sill. No blood trickled from the broken skin, and when I put my fingers to it, I could doubt no more: he was dead and stark!

I shut the window. I combed his black long hair from his forehead; I tried to close his eyes, to extinguish, if possible, that frightful gaze of exultation. They would not shut: they seemed to sneer at my attempts; and his parted lips and sharp white teeth sneered too! I cried out for Joseph, who shuffled up, but resolutely refused to meddle with him.

'Th' devil's harried off his soul,' he cried, 'and he may have his carcass too, for aught I care! Ech! what a wicked 'un he looks, girning at death!' and the old sinner grinned in mockery. Then, suddenly composing himself, he fell on his knees, and gave thanks that the lawful master was restored to his rights.

I felt stunned; and I remembered former times with a sort of oppressive sadness. But poor Hareton, the most wronged, was the only one who really suffered much. He sat by the corpse all night, weeping in bitter earnest. He pressed its hand, and kissed the sarcastic, savage face that everyone else shrank from contemplating; and bemoaned him with that strong grief which springs naturally from a generous heart, though it be tough as tempered steel.

Dr. Kenneth was perplexed to say what disorder the master died of. I concealed the fact of his having swallowed nothing for four days, fearing it might lead to trouble; in any case, it was the consequence of his strange illness, not the cause.

We buried him, to the scandal of the whole neighbourhood, as he wished. Hareton and I, the sexton, and six men accompanied the coffin. The six men departed when they had let it down into the grave. Hareton, with a streaming face, laid green sods over the brown soil. Now it is as smooth and verdant as its companion mounds – and I hope its tenant sleeps as soundly.

But the country folks would swear on the Bible that he walks: there are those who speak of having met him near the church, and on the moor, and even within this house. Idle tales – yet that old man in the kitchen affirms he has seen two of 'em looking out of Heathcliff's chamber window on every rainy night since his death.

And an odd thing happened to me about a month ago. I was going to the Grange one dark evening, and, near the Heights, I encountered a little boy with a sheep and two lambs. He was crying terribly.

'What is the matter, my little man?' I asked.

'There's Heathcliff and a woman yonder,' he blubbered, 'an' I daren't pass 'em.'

I saw nothing; but neither the sheep nor he would go on, so I bid him take the road lower down. He had probably been thinking of some nonsense he had heard his

parents repeat. Yet, still, I don't like being out in the dark now; and I don't like being left by myself in this grim house. I shall be glad when they leave it, and move to the Grange.

'They are going to Thrushcross Grange, then?' I said.

'Yes,' answered Mrs. Dean, 'as soon as they are married, and that will be on New Year's Day.'

'And who will live at Wuthering Heights then?'

'Why, Joseph will take care of the house, with perhaps, a lad to keep him company. They will live in the kitchen, and the rest will be shut up.'

'For the use of such ghosts as choose to inhabit it?' I observed.

'No, Mr. Lockwood,' said Nelly, shaking her head. 'I believe the dead are at peace.'

At that moment the garden gate swung to; the ramblers were returning. As they halted in the doorway to take a last look at the moon – or, more correctly, at each other – I felt impelled to escape them again; and, pressing the hand of Mrs. Dean, I vanished through the kitchen.

On my walk home I went past the church. Here, I perceived decay had made progress, even in seven months: many a window showed black gaps deprived of glass; and slates jutted from the roof, to be gradually worked off in coming autumn storms.

I soon discovered the three headstones on the slope next to the moor: the middle one grey, and half buried in the heath; Edgar Linton's with turf and moss creeping up its foot; Heathcliff's still bare.

I lingered round them, under that benign sky: watched the moths fluttering among the heath and harebells, listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass, and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth.

The End

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