

Эмили Бронте | Emily Brontë

Грозовой перевал
Wuthering Heights



Бестселлер на все времена

Эмили Бронте

**Грозовой перевал /
Wuthering Heights**

«ЭКСМО»

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Эмили Бронте / Emily Bronte

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* * *

Читайте «Бестселлер на все времена» – погрузитесь в языковую среду с лучшими произведениями любимых авторов!

«Языковая компетенция – вещь капризная. Это как балет, как умение играть на музыкальном инструменте, как гимнастика, как любое действие, которое требует навыка. Либо вы идете вперед, либо начинаете сползать назад.

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*Н. А. Бонк, лингвист, педагог,
автор наиболее популярных в России
учебников английского языка*

Chapter I

1801. I have just returned from a visit to my landlord the solitary neighbour that I shall be troubled with. This is certainly a beautiful country! In all England, I do not believe that I could have fixed on a situation so completely removed from the stir of society. A perfect misanthropist's heaven: and Mr. Heathcliff and I are such a suitable pair to divide the desolation between us. A capital fellow! He little imagined how my heart warmed towards him when I beheld his black eyes withdraw so suspiciously under their brows, as I rode up, and when his fingers sheltered themselves, with a jealous resolution, still further in his waistcoat, as I announced my name.

'Mr. Heathcliff?' I said.

A nod was the answer.

'Mr. Lockwood, your new tenant, sir. I do myself the honour of calling as soon as possible after my arrival, to express the hope that I have not inconvenienced you by my perseverance in soliciting the occupation of Thrushcross Grange: I heard yesterday you had had some thoughts.'

'Thrushcross Grange is my own, sir,' he interrupted, wincing. 'I should not allow any one to inconvenience me, if I could hinder it walk in!'

The 'walk in' was uttered with closed teeth, and expressed the sentiment, 'Go to the Deuce:' even the gate over which he leant manifested no sympathising movement to the words; and I think that circumstance determined me to accept the invitation: I felt interested in a man who seemed more exaggeratedly reserved than myself.

When he saw my horse's breast fairly pushing the barrier, he did put out his hand to unchain it, and then sullenly preceded me up the causeway, calling, as we entered the court, 'Joseph, take Mr. Lockwood's horse; and bring up some wine.'

'Here we have the whole establishment of domestics, I suppose,' was the reflection suggested by this compound order. 'No wonder the grass grows up between the flags,¹ and cattle are the only hedgecutters.'

Joseph was an elderly, nay, an old man: very old, perhaps, though hale and sinewy. 'The Lord help us!' he soliloquised in an undertone of peevish displeasure, while relieving me of my horse: looking, meantime, in my face so sourly that I charitably conjectured he must have need of divine aid to digest his dinner, and his pious ejaculation had no reference to my unexpected advent.

Wuthering Heights is the name of Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling. 'Wuthering' being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there at all times, indeed: one may guess the power of the north wind blowing over the edge, by the excessive 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. Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones.

Before passing the threshold, I paused to admire a quantity of grotesque carving lavished over the front, and especially about the principal door; above which, among a wilderness of crumbling griffins and shameless little boys, I detected the date '1500,' and the name 'Hareton Earnshaw.' I would have made a few comments, and requested a short history of the place from the surly owner; but his attitude at the door appeared to demand my speedy entrance, or complete departure, and I had no desire to aggravate his impatience previous to inspecting the penetralium.²

One stop brought us into the family sitting-room, without any introductory lobby or passage: they call it here 'the house' preeminently. It includes kitchen and parlour, generally; but I believe

¹ Flags – плиты, которыми мостят дорогу.

² Penetralium – святилище, внутренняя или секретная часть дома.

at Wuthering Heights the kitchen is forced to retreat altogether into another quarter: at least I distinguished a chatter of tongues, and a clatter of culinary utensils, deep within; and I observed no signs of roasting, boiling, or baking, about the huge fireplace; nor any glitter of copper saucepans and tin cullenders on the walls. One end, indeed, reflected splendidly both light and heat from ranks of immense pewter dishes, interspersed with silver jugs and tankards, towering row after row, on a vast oak dresser, to the very roof. The latter had never been underdrawn: its entire anatomy lay bare to an inquiring eye, except where a frame of wood laden with oatcakes and clusters of legs of beef, mutton, and ham, concealed it. Above the chimney were sundry villainous old guns, and a couple of horse-pistols: and, by way of ornament, three gaudily-painted canisters disposed along its ledge. The floor was of smooth, white stone; the chairs, high-backed, primitive structures, painted green: one or two heavy black ones lurking in the shade. In an arch under the dresser reposed a huge, liver-coloured bitch pointer, surrounded by a swarm of squealing puppies; and other dogs haunted other recesses.

The apartment and furniture would have been nothing extraordinary as belonging to a homely, northern farmer, with a stubborn countenance, and stalwart limbs set out to advantage in kneebreeches and gaiters. Such an individual seated in his arm-chair, his mug of ale frothing on the round table before him, is to be seen in any circuit of five or six miles among these hills, if you go at the right time after dinner. But Mr. Heathcliff forms a singular contrast to his abode and style of living. He is a darkskinned gipsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman: that is, as much a gentleman as many a country squire: rather slovenly, perhaps, yet not looking amiss with his negligence, because he has an erect and handsome figure; and rather morose. Possibly, some people might suspect him of a degree of under-bred pride; I have a sympathetic chord within that tells me it is nothing of the sort: I know, by instinct, his reserve springs from an aversion to showy displays of feeling to manifestations of mutual kindness. He'll love and hate equally under cover, and esteem it a species of impertinence to be loved or hated again. No, I'm running on too fast: I bestow my own attributes over-liberally on him.

Mr. Heathcliff may have entirely dissimilar reasons for keeping his hand out of the way when he meets a would-be acquaintance, to those which actuate me. Let me hope my constitution is almost peculiar: my dear mother used to say I should never have a comfortable home; and only last summer I proved myself perfectly unworthy of one.

While enjoying a month of fine weather at the sea-coast, I was thrown into the company of a most fascinating creature: a real goddess in my eyes, as long as she took no notice of me. I 'never told my love' vocally; still, if looks have language, the merest idiot might have guessed I was over head and ears: she understood me at last, and looked a return the sweetest of all imaginable 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 decamp. By this curious turn of disposition I have gained the reputation of deliberate heartlessness; how undeserved, I alone can appreciate.

I took a seat at the end of the hearthstone opposite that towards which my landlord advanced, and filled up an interval of silence by attempting to caress the canine mother, who had left her nursery, and was sneaking wolfishly to the back of my legs, her lip curled up, and her white teeth watering for a snatch. My caress provoked a long, guttural gnarl.

'You'd better let the dog alone,' growled Mr. Heathcliff in unison, checking fiercer demonstrations with a punch of his foot. 'She's not accustomed to be spoiled not kept for a pet.'

Then, striding to a side door, he shouted again, 'Joseph!'

Joseph mumbled indistinctly in the depths of the cellar, but gave no intimation of ascending; so his master dived down to him, leaving me VIS-A-VIS the ruffianly bitch and a pair of grim shaggy sheep-dogs, who shared with her a jealous guardianship over all my movements. Not

anxious to come in contact with their fangs, I sat still; but, imagining they would scarcely understand tacit insults, I unfortunately indulged in winking and making faces at the trio, and some turn of my physiognomy so irritated madam, that she suddenly broke into a fury and leapt on my knees. I flung her back, and hastened to interpose the table between us. This proceeding aroused the whole hive: half-a-dozen four-footed fiends, of various sizes and ages, issued from hidden dens to the common centre. I felt my heels and coat-laps peculiar subjects of assault; and parrying off the larger combatants as effectually as I could with the poker, I was constrained to demand, aloud, assistance from some of the household in re-establishing peace.

Mr. Heathcliff and his man climbed the cellar steps with vexatious phlegm: 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 despatch: a lusty dame, with tucked-up gown, bare arms, and fire-flushed cheeks, rushed into the midst of us flourishing a frying-pan: and used that weapon, and her tongue, to such purpose, that the storm subsided magically, and she only remained, heaving like a sea after a high wind, when her master entered on the scene.

'What the devil is the matter?' he asked, eyeing me in a manner that I could ill endure, after this inhospitable treatment.

'What the devil, indeed!' I muttered. 'The herd of possessed swine could have had no worse spirits in them than those animals of yours, sir.³ You might as well leave a stranger with a brood of tigers!'

'They won't meddle with persons who touch nothing,' he remarked, putting the bottle before me, and restoring the displaced table. 'The dogs do right to be vigilant. Take a glass of wine?'

'No, thank you.'

'Not bitten, are you?'

'If I had been, I would have set my signet on the biter.' Heathcliff's countenance relaxed into a grin.

'Come, come,' he said, 'you are flurried, Mr. Lockwood. Here, take a little wine. Guests are so exceedingly rare in this house that I and my dogs, I am willing to own, hardly know how to receive them. Your health, sir?'

I bowed and returned the pledge; beginning to perceive that it would be foolish to sit sulking for the misbehaviour of a pack of curs; besides, I felt loth to yield the fellow further amusement at my expense; since his humour took that turn. He probably swayed by prudential consideration of the folly of offending a good tenant relaxed a little in the laconic style of chipping off his pronouns and auxiliary verbs, and introduced what he supposed would be a subject of interest to me, a discourse on the advantages and disadvantages of my present place of retirement. I found him very intelligent on the topics we touched; and before I went home, I was encouraged so far as to volunteer another visit to-morrow. He evidently wished no repetition of my intrusion. I shall go, notwithstanding. It is astonishing how sociable I feel myself compared with him.

³ Это аллюзия на известный библейский сюжет: когда демоны были вынуждены покинуть человеческое тело, они вселились в свиней.

Chapter II

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. On coming up from dinner, however, (N.B.⁴ I dine between twelve and one o'clock; the housekeeper, a matronly lady, taken as a fixture along with the house, could not, or would not, comprehend my request that I might be served at five) on mounting the stairs with this lazy intention, and stepping into the room, I saw a servant-girl on her knees surrounded by brushes and coal-scuttles, and raising an infernal dust as she extinguished the flames with heaps of cinders. This spectacle drove me back immediately; 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 snowshower.

On that bleak hill-top the earth was hard with a black frost, and the air made me shiver through every limb. Being unable to remove the chain, I jumped over, and, running up the flagged causeway bordered with straggling gooseberry-bushes, knocked vainly for admittance, till my knuckles tingled and the dogs howled.

'Wretched inmates!' I ejaculated, mentally, 'you deserve perpetual isolation from your species for your churlish inhospitality. At least, I would not keep my doors barred in the day-time. I don't care I will get in!' So resolved, I grasped the latch and shook it vehemently. Vinegar-faced Joseph projected his head from a round window of the barn.

'What are ye for?' he shouted. 'T' maister's down i' t' fowld. Go round by th' end o' t' laith, if ye went to spake to him.'⁵

'Is there nobody inside to open the door?' I hallooed, responsively.

'There's nobbut t' missis; and shoo'll not open 't an ye mak' yer flaysome dins till neeght.'⁶

'Why? Cannot you tell her whom I am, eh, Joseph?'

'Nor – ne me! I'll hae no hend wi't,'⁷ muttered the head, vanishing.

The snow began to drive thickly. I seized the handle to essay another trial; when a young man without coat, and shouldering a pitchfork, appeared in the yard behind. He hailed me to follow him, and, after marching through a wash-house, and a paved area containing a coal-shed, pump, and pigeon-cot, we at length arrived in the huge, warm, cheerful apartment where I was formerly received. It glowed delightfully in the radiance of an immense fire, compounded of coal, peat, and wood; and near the table, laid for a plentiful evening meal, I was pleased to observe the 'missis,' an individual whose existence I had never previously suspected. I bowed and waited, thinking she would bid me take a seat. She looked at me, leaning back in her chair, and remained motionless and mute.

'Rough weather!' I remarked. 'I'm afraid, Mrs. Heathcliff, the door must bear the consequence of your servants' leisure attendance: I had hard work to make them hear me.'

She never opened her mouth. I stared she stared also: at any rate, she kept her eyes on me in a cool, regardless manner, exceedingly embarrassing and disagreeable.

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

I obeyed; and hemmed, and called the villain Juno, who deigned, at this second interview, to move the extreme tip of her tail, in token of owning my acquaintance.

⁴ N.B. – сокращение от Nota bene – обрати внимание (*лат.*).

⁵ Что вам нужно? Хозяин в загоне для овец. Идите до конца сарая, если хотите поговорить с ним. (Здесь и далее Джозеф использует архаичные и диалектные слова.)

⁶ Здесь нет никого, кроме госпожи, а она не откроет, даже если вы будете шуметь до ночи.

⁷ Нет, только не я. Я не буду в это ввязываться.

‘A beautiful animal!’ I commenced again. ‘Do you intend parting with the little ones, madam?’

‘They are not mine,’ said the amiable hostess, more repellingly than Heathcliff himself could have replied.

‘Ah, your favourites are among these?’ I continued, turning to an obscure cushion full of something like cats.

‘A strange choice of favourites!’ she observed scornfully.

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

‘You should not have come out,’ she said, rising and reaching from the chimney-piece two of the painted canisters.

Her position before was sheltered from the light; now, I had a distinct view of her whole figure and countenance. She was slender, and apparently scarcely past girlhood: an admirable form, and the most exquisite little face that I have ever had the pleasure of beholding; small features, very fair; flaxen ringlets, or rather golden, hanging loose on her delicate neck; and eyes, had they been agreeable in expression, that would have been irresistible: fortunately for my susceptible heart, the only sentiment they evinced hovered between scorn and a kind of desperation, singularly unnatural to be detected there. The canisters were almost out of her reach; I made a motion to aid her; she turned upon me as a miser might turn if any one attempted to assist him in counting his gold.

‘I don’t want your help,’ she snapped; ‘I can get them for myself.’

‘I beg your pardon!’ I hastened to reply.

‘Were you asked to tea?’ she demanded, tying an apron over her neat black frock, and standing with a spoonful of the leaf 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 resumed her chair in a pet; her forehead corrugated, and her red underlip pushed out, like a child’s ready to cry.

Meanwhile, the young man had slung on to his person a decidedly shabby upper garment, and, erecting himself before the blaze, looked down on me from the corner of his eyes, for all the world as if there were some mortal feud unavenged between us. I began to doubt whether he were a servant or not: his dress and speech were both rude, entirely devoid of the superiority observable in Mr. and Mrs. Heathcliff; his thick brown curls were rough and uncultivated, his whiskers encroached bearishly over his cheeks, and his hands were embrowned like those of a common labourer: still his bearing was free, almost haughty, and he showed none of a domestic’s assiduity in attending on the lady of the house. In the absence of clear proofs of his condition, I deemed it best to abstain from noticing his curious conduct; and, five minutes afterwards, the entrance of Heathcliff relieved me, in some measure, from my uncomfortable state.

‘You see, sir, I am come, according to promise!’ I exclaimed, assuming the cheerful; ‘and I fear I shall be weather-bound for half an hour, if you can afford me shelter during that space.’

‘Half an hour?’ he said, shaking the white flakes from his clothes; ‘I wonder you should select the thick of a snowstorm to ramble about in. Do you know that you run a risk of being lost in the marshes? People familiar with these moors often miss their road on such evenings; and I can tell you there is no chance of a change at present.’

‘Perhaps I can get a guide among your lads, and he might stay at the Grange till morning could you spare me one?’

‘No, I could not.’

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

‘Umph!’

‘Are you going to mak’ 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?’ was the answer, uttered so savagely that I started. The tone in which the words were said revealed a genuine bad nature. I no longer felt inclined to call Heathcliff a capital fellow. When the preparations were finished, he invited me with ‘Now, sir, bring forward your chair.’ And we all, including the rustic youth, drew round the table: an austere silence prevailing while we discussed our meal.

I thought, if I had caused the cloud, it was my duty to make an effort to dispel it. They could not every day sit so grim and taciturn; and it was impossible, however ill-tempered they might be, that the universal scowl they wore was their every-day countenance.

‘It is strange,’ I began, in the interval of swallowing one cup of tea and receiving another ‘it is strange how custom can mould our tastes and ideas: many could not imagine the existence of happiness in a life of such complete exile from the world as you spend, Mr. Heathcliff; yet, I’ll venture to say, that, surrounded by your family, and with your amiable lady as the presiding genius over your home and heart —’

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

‘Mrs. Heathcliff, your wife, I mean.’

‘Well, yes oh, you would intimate that her spirit has taken the post of ministering angel, and guards the fortunes of Wuthering Heights, even when her body is gone. Is that it?’

Perceiving myself in a blunder, I attempted to correct it. I might have seen there was too great a disparity between the ages of the parties to make it likely that they were man and wife. One was about forty: a period of mental vigour at which men seldom cherish the delusion of being married for love by girls: that dream is reserved for the solace of our declining years. The other did not look seventeen.

Then it flashed on me ‘The clown at my elbow, who is drinking his tea out of a basin and eating his bread with unwashed hands, 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 individuals 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 bordering on repulsive; I knew, through experience, that I was tolerably attractive.

‘Mrs. Heathcliff is my daughter-in-law,’ said Heathcliff, corroborating my surmise. He turned, as he spoke, a peculiar look in her direction: a look of hatred; unless he has a most perverse set of facial muscles that will not, like those of other people, interpret the language of his soul.

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

This was worse than before: the youth grew crimson, and clenched his fist, with every appearance of a meditated assault. But he seemed to recollect himself presently, and smothered the storm in a brutal curse, muttered on my behalf: which, however, I took care not to notice.

‘Unhappy in your conjectures, sir,’ observed my host; ‘we neither of us have the privilege of owning 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, as if it were rather too bold a jest to attribute the paternity of that bear to him.

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

‘I’ve shown no disrespect,’ was my reply, laughing internally at the dignity with which he announced himself.

He fixed his eye on me longer than I cared to return the stare, for fear I might be tempted either to box his ears or render my hilarity audible. I began to feel unmistakably out of place in that pleasant family circle. The dismal spiritual atmosphere overcame, and more than neutralised, the glowing physical comforts round me; and I resolved to be cautious how I ventured under those rafters a third time.

The business of eating being concluded, and no one uttering a word of sociable conversation, I approached a window to examine the weather. A sorrowful sight I saw: dark night coming down prematurely, and sky and hills mingled in one bitter whirl of wind and suffocating snow.

‘I don’t think it possible for me to get home now without a guide,’ I could not help exclaiming. ‘The roads will be buried already; and, if they were bare, I could scarcely distinguish a foot in advance.’

‘Hareton, drive those dozen sheep into the barn porch. They’ll be covered if left in the fold all night: and put a plank before them,’ said Heathcliff.

‘How must I do?’ I continued, with rising irritation.

There was no reply to my question; 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 a bundle of matches which had fallen from the chimney-piece as she restored the tea-canister to its place. The former, when he had deposited his burden, took a critical survey of the room, and in cracked tones grated out ‘Aw wonder how yah can faishion to stand thear i’ idleness un war, when all on ‘ems goan out! Bud yah’re a nowt, and it’s no use talking yah’ll niver mend o’yer ill ways, but goa raight to t’ divil, like yer mother afore ye!’⁸

I imagined, for a moment, that this piece of eloquence was addressed to me; and, sufficiently enraged, stepped towards the aged rascal with an intention of kicking him out of the door. Mrs. Heathcliff, however, checked me by her answer.

‘You scandalous old hypocrite!’ she replied. ‘Are you not afraid of being carried away bodily, whenever you mention the devil’s name? I warn you to refrain from provoking me, or I’ll ask your abduction as a special favour! Stop! 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: I shall soon be competent to make a clear house of it. The red cow didn’t die by chance; and your rheumatism can hardly be reckoned among providential visitations!’

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

‘No, reprobate! you are a castaway be off, or I’ll hurt you seriously! I’ll have you all modelled in wax and clay! and the first who passes the limits I fix shall I’ll not say what he shall be done to 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 sincere horror, hurried out, praying, and ejaculating ‘wicked’ as he went. I thought her conduct must be prompted by a species of dreary fun; and, now that we were alone, I endeavoured to interest her in my distress.

‘Mrs. Heathcliff,’ I said earnestly, ‘you must excuse me for troubling you. I presume, because, 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: I have no more idea how to get there than you would have how to get to London!’

⁸ Не представляю, как вы можете пребывать в праздности, когда все остальные заняты делом. Но вы никто, и нет смысла говорить об этом – вы никогда не избавитесь от пагубных привычек и прямой дорогой отправитесь к дьяволу, как и ваша мать до вас.

‘Take the road you came,’ she answered, ensconcing herself in a chair, with a candle, and the long book open before her. ‘It is brief advice, but as sound as I can give.’

‘Then, if you hear of me being discovered dead in a bog or a pit full of snow, your conscience won’t whisper that it is partly your fault?’

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

‘YOU! I should be sorry to ask you to cross the threshold, for my convenience, on such a night,’ I cried. ‘I want you to tell me my way, not to SHOW it: or else to persuade Mr. Heathcliff to give me a guide.’

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

‘Are there no boys at the farm?’

‘No; those are all.’

‘Then, it follows that I am compelled to stay.’

‘That you may settle with your host. 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 kitchen entrance. ‘As to staying here, I don’t keep accommodations for visitors: you must share a bed with Hareton or Joseph, if you do.’

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

‘No, no! A stranger is a stranger, be he rich or poor: it will not suit me to permit any one the range of the place while I am off guard!’ said the unmannerly wretch.

With this insult my patience was at an end. I uttered an expression of disgust, and pushed past him into the yard, running against Earnshaw in my haste. It was so dark that I could not see the means of exit; and, as I wandered round, I heard another specimen of their civil behaviour amongst each other. At first the young man appeared about to befriend me.

‘I’ll go with him as far as the park,’ he said.

‘You’ll go with him to hell!’ exclaimed his master, or whatever relation he bore. ‘And who is to look after the horses, eh?’

‘A man’s life is of more consequence 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. ‘If you set store on⁹ him, 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, shoo’s cursing on ’em!’ muttered Joseph, towards whom I had been steering.

He sat within earshot, milking the cows by the light of a lantern, which I seized unceremoniously, and, calling out that I would send it back on the morrow, rushed to the nearest postern.

‘Maister, maister, he’s staling t’ lantern!’ shouted the ancient, pursuing my retreat. ‘Hey, Gnasher! Hey, dog! Hey Wolf, holld him, holld him!’

On opening the little door, two hairy monsters flew at my throat, bearing me down, and extinguishing the light; while a mingled guffaw from Heathcliff and Hareton put the copestone on my rage and humiliation. Fortunately, the beasts seemed more bent on stretching their paws, and yawning, and flourishing their tails, than devouring me alive; but they would suffer no resurrection, and I was forced to lie till their malignant masters pleased to deliver me: then, hatless and trembling with wrath, I ordered the miscreants to let me out on their peril to keep me one minute longer with several incoherent threats of retaliation that, in their indefinite depth of virulency, smacked of King Lear.

⁹ Set store on – считать особенно важным.

The vehemence of my agitation brought on a copious bleeding at the nose, and still Heathcliff laughed, and still I scolded. I don't know what would have concluded the scene, had there not been one person at hand rather more rational than myself, and more benevolent than my entertainer. This was Zillah, the stout housewife; who at length issued forth to inquire into the nature of the uproar. She thought that some of them had been laying violent hands on me; and, not daring to attack her master, she turned her vocal artillery against the younger scoundrel.

'Well, Mr. Earnshaw,' she cried, 'I wonder what you'll have agait next? Are we going to murder folk on our very door-stones? I see this house will never do for me look at t' poor lad, he's fair choking! Wisht, wisht; you mun'n't go on so. Come in, and I'll cure that: there now, hold ye still.'

With these words she suddenly splashed a pint of icy water down my neck, and pulled me into the kitchen. Mr. Heathcliff followed, his accidental merriment expiring quickly in his habitual moroseness.

I was sick exceedingly, and dizzy, and faint; and thus compelled perforce 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 condoled with me on my sorry predicament, and having obeyed his orders, whereby I was somewhat revived, ushered me to bed.

Chapter III

While leading the way upstairs, she recommended that I should 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 lodge there willingly. I asked the reason. She did not know, she answered: she had only lived there a year or two; and they had so many queer goings on, she could not begin to be curious.

Too stupefied to be curious myself, I fastened my door and glanced round for the bed. The whole furniture consisted of a chair, a clothes-press, and a large oak case, with squares cut out near the top resembling coach windows. Having approached this structure, I looked inside, and perceived it to be a singular sort of old-fashioned couch, very conveniently designed to obviate the necessity for every member of the family having a room to himself. In fact, it formed a little closet, and the ledge of a window, which it enclosed, served as a table. I slid back the panelled sides, got in with my light, pulled them together again, and felt secure against the vigilance of Heathcliff, and every one else.

The ledge, where I placed my candle, 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 characters, large and small CATHERINE EARNSHAW, here and there varied to CATHERINE HEATHCLIFF, and then again to CATHERINE LINTON.

In vapid listlessness I leant my head against the window, and continued spelling over Catherine Earnshaw Heathcliff Linton, till my eyes closed; but they had not rested five minutes when a glare of white letters started from the dark, as vivid as spectres the air swarmed with Catherines; and rousing myself to dispel the obtrusive name, I discovered my candle-wick reclining on one of the antique volumes, and perfuming the place with an odour of roasted calf-skin. I snuffed it off, and, very ill at ease under the influence of cold and lingering nausea, sat up and spread open the injured tome on my knee. It was a Testament, in lean type, and 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 was select, and its state of dilapidation proved it to have been well used, though not altogether for a legitimate purpose: scarcely one chapter had escaped, a pen-and-ink commentary at least the appearance of one covering every morsel of blank that the printer had left. Some were detached sentences; other parts took the form of a regular diary, scrawled in an unformed, childish hand. At the top of an extra page (quite a treasure, probably, when first lighted on) I was greatly amused to behold an excellent caricature of my friend Joseph, rudely, yet powerfully sketched. An immediate interest kindled within me for the unknown Catherine, and I began forthwith to decipher her faded hieroglyphics.

'An awful Sunday,' commenced the paragraph beneath. 'I wish my father were back again. Hindley is a detestable substitute his conduct to Heathcliff is atrocious H. and I are going to rebel we took our initiatory step this evening.

'All day had been flooding with rain; we could not go to church, so Joseph must needs get up a congregation in the garret; and, while Hindley and his wife basked downstairs before a comfortable fire doing anything but reading their Bibles, I'll answer for it Heathcliff, myself, and the unhappy ploughboy were commanded to take our prayer-books, and mount: we were ranged in a row, on a sack of corn, groaning and shivering, and hoping that Joseph would shiver too, so that he might give us a short homily for his own sake. A vain idea! The service lasted precisely three hours; and yet my brother had the face to exclaim, when he saw us descending, "What, done already?" On Sunday evenings we used to be permitted to play, if we did not make much noise; now a mere titter is sufficient to send us into corners.

"You forget you have a master here," says the tyrant. "I'll demolish the first who puts me out of temper! I insist on perfect sobriety and silence. Oh, 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 seated herself on her husband’s knee, and there they were, like two babies, kissing and talking nonsense by the hour foolish palaver that we should be ashamed of. We made ourselves as snug as our means allowed in the arch of the dresser. I had just fastened our pinafores together, and hung them up for a curtain, when in comes Joseph, on an errand from the stables. He tears down my handiwork, boxes my ears, and croaks:

“‘T’ maister nobbut just buried, and Sabbath not o’ered, und t’ sound o’ t’ gospel still i’ yer lugs, and ye darr be laiking! Shame on ye! sit ye down, ill childer! there’s good books eneugh if ye’ll read ’em: sit ye down, and think o’ yer sowls!”

‘Saying this, he compelled us so to square our positions that we might receive from the far-off fire a dull ray to show us the text of the lumber he thrust upon us. I could not bear the employment. I took my dinky volume by the scroop, and hurled it into the dog-kennel, vowing I hated a good book. Heathcliff kicked his to the same place. Then there was a hubbub!

“‘Maister Hindley!’ shouted our chaplain. ‘Maister, coom hither! Miss Cathy’s riven th’ back off ‘Th’ Helmet o’ Salvation,’ un’ Heathcliff’s pawsed his fit into t’ first part o’ ‘T’ Brooad Way to Destruction!’ It’s fair flaysome that ye let ’em go on this gait. Ech! th’ owd man wad ha’ laced ’em properly but he’s goan!”¹⁰

‘Hindley hurried up from his paradise on the hearth, and seizing one of us by the collar, and the other by the arm, hurled both into the back-kitchen; where, Joseph asseverated, “owd Nick¹¹ would fetch us as sure as we were living”: and, so comforted, we each sought a separate nook to await his advent. I reached this book, and a pot of ink from a shelf, and pushed the house-door ajar to give me light, and I have got the time on with writing for twenty minutes; but my companion is impatient, and proposes that we should appropriate the dairywoman’s cloak, and have a scamper on the moors, under its shelter. A pleasant suggestion and then, if the surly old man come in, he may believe his prophecy verified we cannot be damper, or colder, in the rain than we are here.’

* * *

I suppose Catherine fulfilled her project, for the next sentence took up another subject: she waxed lachrymose.

‘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; and still I can’t give over. Poor Heathcliff! Hindley calls him a vagabond, and won’t let him sit with us, nor eat with us any more; and, he says, he and I must not play together, and threatens to turn him out of the house if we break his orders. He has been blaming our father (how dared he?) for treating H. too liberally; and swears he will reduce him to his right place.’

* * *

I began to nod drowsily over the dim page: my eye wandered from manuscript to print. 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, in the Chapel of Gimmerden Sough.’ And while I was, half-consciously, worrying my brain to guess what Jabez Branderham would make of his subject, I sank back in bed, and fell asleep. Alas, for the effects of bad tea and bad temper! What

¹⁰ Хозяин, идите сюда! Мисс Кэти оторвала корешок у «Шлема Спасения», а Хитклиф встал ногой на первую часть «Торного пути к погибели». Это просто ужасно, что вы позволяете идти им по этой дорожке. Ох, прежний хозяин выпорол бы их как следует, если бы был жив!

¹¹ Owd Nick = old Nick – в германском фольклоре имя дьявола или черта.

else could it be that made me pass such a terrible night? I don't remember another that I can at all compare with it since I was capable of suffering.

I began to dream, almost before I ceased to be sensible of my locality. I thought it was morning; and I had set out on my way home, with Joseph for a guide. The snow lay yards deep in our road; and, as we floundered on, my companion wearied me with constant reproaches that I had not brought a pilgrim's staff:¹² telling me that I could never get into the house without one, and boastfully flourishing a heavy-headed cudgel, which I understood to be so denominated. For a moment I considered it absurd that I should need such a weapon to gain admittance into my own residence. Then a new idea flashed across me. I was not going there: we were journeying to hear the famous Jabez Branderham preach, from the text 'Seventy Times Seven;' and either Joseph, the preacher, or I had committed the 'First of the Seventy-First,' and were to be publicly exposed and excommunicated.

We came to the chapel. I have passed it really in my walks, twice or thrice; it lies in a hollow, between two hills: an elevated hollow, near a swamp, whose peaty moisture is said to answer all the purposes of embalming on the few corpses deposited there. The roof has been kept whole hitherto; but as the clergyman's stipend is only twenty pounds per annum, and a house with two rooms, threatening speedily to determine into one, no clergyman will undertake the duties of pastor: especially as it is currently reported that his flock would rather let him starve than increase the living by one penny from their own pockets. However, in my dream, Jabez had a full and attentive congregation; and he preached good God! what a sermon; divided into FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY parts, each fully equal to an ordinary address from the pulpit, and each discussing a separate sin! Where he searched for them, I cannot tell. He had his private manner of interpreting the phrase, and it seemed necessary the brother should sin different sins on every occasion. They were of the most curious character: odd transgressions that I never imagined previously.

Oh, how weary I grow. How I writhed, and yawned, and nodded, and revived! How I pinched and pricked myself, and rubbed my eyes, and stood up, and sat down again, and nudged Joseph to inform me if he would EVER have done. I was condemned to hear all out: finally, he reached the 'FIRST OF THE SEVENTY-FIRST.' At that crisis, a sudden inspiration descended on me; I was moved to rise and denounce Jabez Branderham as the sinner of the sin that no Christian need pardon.

'Sir,' I exclaimed, 'sitting here within these four walls, at one stretch, I have endured and forgiven the four hundred and ninety heads of your discourse. Seventy times seven times have I plucked up my hat and been about to depart Seventy times seven times have you preposterously forced me to resume my seat. The four hundred and ninety-first is too much. Fellow-martyrs, have at him! Drag him down, and crush him to atoms, that the place which knows him may know him no more!'

'THOU ART¹³ THE MAN!' cried Jabez, after a solemn pause, leaning over his cushion. 'Seventy times seven times didst thou¹⁴ gapingly contort thy¹⁵ visage seventy times seven did I take counsel with my soul. Lo,¹⁶ this is human weakness: this also may be absolved! The First of the Seventy-First is come. Brethren,¹⁷ execute upon him the judgment written. Such honour have all His saints!'

¹² Pilgrim's staff – посох пилигрима.

¹³ Thou art – you are (уст.).

¹⁴ Didst thou – did you (уст.).

¹⁵ Thy – your (уст.).

¹⁶ Lo – Lord (Господь).

¹⁷ Brethren – братья (уст.).

With that concluding word, the whole assembly, exalting their pilgrim's staves, rushed round me in a body; and I, having no weapon to raise in self-defence, commenced grappling with Joseph, my nearest and most ferocious assailant, for his. In the confluence of the multitude, several clubs crossed; blows, aimed at me, fell on other sconces. Presently the whole chapel resounded with rappings and counter rappings: every man's hand was against his neighbour; and Branderham, unwilling to remain idle, poured forth his zeal in a shower of loud taps on the boards of the pulpit, which responded so smartly that, at last, to my unspeakable relief, they woke me. And what was it that had suggested the tremendous tumult? What had played Jabez's part in the row? Merely the branch of a fir-tree that touched my lattice as the blast wailed by, and rattled its dry cones against the panes! I listened doubtingly an instant; detected the disturber, 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 repeat its teasing sound, and ascribed it to the right cause: but it annoyed me so much, that I resolved to silence it, if possible; and, I thought, I rose and endeavoured to unhasp the casement. The hook was soldered into the staple: a circumstance observed by me when awake, but forgotten. 'I must stop it, nevertheless!' I muttered, knocking my knuckles through the glass, and stretching an arm out to seize the importunate 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, meanwhile, to disengage 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 it useless to attempt shaking 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 maintained its tenacious gripe, almost maddening me with fear. 'How can I!' I said at length. 'Let ME go, if you want me to let you in!' The fingers relaxed, I snatched mine through the hole, hurriedly piled the books up in a pyramid against it, and stopped my ears to exclude 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: 'twenty years. I've been a waif for twenty years!' Thereat began a feeble scratching outside, and the pile of books moved as if thrust forward. I tried to jump up; but could not stir a limb; and so yelled aloud, in a frenzy of fright. To my confusion, I discovered the yell was not ideal: hasty footsteps approached my chamber door; somebody pushed it open, with a vigorous hand, and a light glimmered through the squares at the top of the bed. I sat shuddering yet, and wiping the perspiration from my forehead: the intruder appeared to hesitate, and muttered to himself. At last, he said, in a half-whisper, plainly not expecting an answer, 'Is any one here?' I considered it best to confess my presence; for I knew Heathcliff's accents, and feared he might search further, if I kept quiet. With this intention, I turned and opened the panels. I shall not soon forget the effect my action produced.

Heathcliff stood near the entrance, 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 startled him like an electric shock: the light leaped from his hold to a distance of some feet, and his agitation was so extreme, that he could hardly pick it up.

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

'Oh, God confound you, Mr. Lockwood! I wish you were at the – ' commenced my host, setting the candle on a chair, because he found it impossible to hold it steady. 'And who showed

you up into this room?’ he continued, crushing his nails into his palms, and grinding his teeth to subdue the maxillary convulsions. ‘Who was it? I’ve a good mind to turn them out of the house this moment.’

‘It was your servant Zillah,’ I replied, flinging myself on to the floor, and rapidly resuming my garments. ‘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, at my expense. Well, it is swarming with ghosts and goblins! You have reason in shutting it up, I assure you. No one will thank you for a doze in such a den!’

‘What do you mean?’ asked Heathcliff, ‘and what are you doing? Lie down and finish out the night, 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. ‘I’m not going to endure the persecutions of your hospitable ancestors again. Was not the Reverend Jabez Branderham akin to you on the mother’s side? And 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 mortal transgressions, I’ve no doubt!’

Scarcely were these words uttered when I recollected the association of Heathcliff’s with Catherine’s name in the book, which had completely slipped from my memory, till thus awakened. I blushed at my inconsideration: but, without showing further consciousness of the offence, I hastened to add ‘The truth is, sir, I passed the first part of the night in – ’ Here I stopped afresh I was about to say ‘perusing those old volumes,’ then it would have revealed my knowledge of their written, as well as their printed, contents; so, correcting myself, I went on ‘in spelling over the name scratched on that window-ledge. A monotonous occupation, calculated to set me asleep, like counting, or – ’

‘What CAN you mean by talking in this way to ME!’ thundered Heathcliff with savage vehemence. ‘How – how DARE you, under my roof? God! he’s mad to speak so!’ And he struck his forehead with rage.

I did not know whether to resent this language or pursue my explanation; but he seemed so powerfully affected that I took pity and proceeded with my dreams; affirming I had never heard the appellation of ‘Catherine Linton’ before, but reading it often over produced an impression which personified itself when I had no longer my imagination under control. 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 and intercepted breathing, that he struggled to vanquish an excess of violent emotion. Not liking to show him that I had heard the conflict, I continued my toilette rather noisily, looked at my watch, and soliloquised on the length of the night: ‘Not three o’clock yet! I could have taken oath it had been six. Time stagnates here: we must surely have retired to rest at eight!’

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

‘And for me, too,’ I replied. ‘I’ll walk in the yard till daylight, and then I’ll be off; and you need not dread a repetition of my intrusion. I’m now quite cured of seeking pleasure in society, be it country or town. A sensible man ought to find sufficient company in himself.’

‘Delightful company!’ muttered Heathcliff. ‘Take the candle, and go where you please. I shall join you directly. Keep out of the yard, though, the dogs are unchained; and the house Juno mounts sentinel there, and nay, you can only ramble about the steps and passages. But, away with you! I’ll come in two minutes!’

I obeyed, so far as to quit the chamber; when, ignorant where the narrow lobbies led, I stood still, and was witness, involuntarily, to 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 lattice, 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 showed a spectre's ordinary caprice: it gave no sign of being; but the snow and wind whirled wildly through, even reaching my station, and blowing out the light.

There was such anguish in the gush of grief that accompanied this raving, that my compassion made me overlook its folly, and I drew off, half angry to have listened at all, and vexed at having related my ridiculous nightmare, since it produced that agony; though WHY was beyond my comprehension. I descended cautiously to the lower regions, and landed in the back-kitchen, where a gleam of fire, raked compactly together, enabled me to rekindle my candle. Nothing was stirring except a brindled, grey cat, which crept from the ashes, and saluted me with a querulous mew.

Two benches, shaped in sections of a circle, nearly enclosed the hearth; on one of these I stretched myself, and Grimalkin¹⁸ mounted the other. We were both of us nodding ere any one invaded our retreat, and then it was Joseph, shuffling down a wooden ladder that vanished in the roof, through a trap: the ascent to his garret, I suppose. He cast a sinister look at the little flame which I had enticed to play between the ribs, swept the cat from its elevation, and bestowing himself in the vacancy, commenced the operation of stuffing a three-inch pipe with tobacco. My presence in his sanctum was evidently esteemed a piece of impudence too shameful for remark: he silently applied the tube to his lips, folded his arms, and puffed away. I let him enjoy the luxury unannoyed; and after sucking out his last wreath, and heaving a profound sigh, he got up, and departed as solemnly as he came.

A more elastic footstep entered next; and now I opened my mouth for a 'good-morning,' but closed it again, the salutation unachieved; for Hareton Earnshaw was performing his orison SOTTO VOCE,¹⁹ in a series of curses directed against every object he touched, while he rummaged a corner for a spade or shovel to dig through the drifts. He glanced over the back of the bench, dilating his nostrils, and thought as little of exchanging civilities with me as with my companion the cat. I guessed, by his preparations, that egress was allowed, and, leaving my hard couch, made a movement to follow him. He noticed this, and thrust at an inner door with the end of his spade, intimating by an inarticulate sound that there was the place where I must go, if I changed my locality.

It opened into the house, where the females were already astir; Zillah urging flakes of flame up the chimney with a colossal bellows; and Mrs. Heathcliff, kneeling on the hearth, reading a book by the aid of the blaze. She held her hand interposed between the furnace-heat and her eyes, and seemed absorbed in her occupation; desisting from it only to chide the servant for covering her with sparks, or to push away a dog, now and then, that snoozled its nose overforwardly 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; who ever and anon interrupted her labour to pluck up the corner of her apron, and heave an indignant groan.

'And you, you worthless – ' he broke out as I entered, turning to his daughter-in-law, and employing an epithet as harmless as duck, or sheep, but generally represented by a dash. 'There you are, at your idle tricks again! The rest of them do 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?'

¹⁸ Grimalkin – старая кошка; нередко ее отождествляли с нечистой силой.

¹⁹ Sotto voce – тихо (*um.*).

‘I’ll put my trash away, because you can make me if I refuse,’ answered the young lady, closing her book, and throwing it on a chair. ‘But I’ll not do anything, though you should swear your tongue out, except what I please!’

Heathcliff lifted his hand, and the speaker sprang to a safer distance, obviously acquainted with its weight. Having no desire to be entertained by a cat-and-dog combat, I stepped forward briskly, as if eager to partake the warmth of the hearth, and innocent of any knowledge of the interrupted dispute. Each had enough decorum to suspend further hostilities: Heathcliff placed his fists, out of temptation, in his pockets; Mrs. Heathcliff curled her lip, and walked to a seat far off, where she kept her word by playing the part of a statue during the remainder of my stay. That was not long. I declined joining their breakfast, and, at the first gleam of dawn, took an opportunity of escaping into the free air, now clear, and still, and cold as impalpable ice.

My landlord halloed for me to stop ere I reached the bottom of the garden, and offered to accompany me across the moor. It was well he did, for the whole hill-back was one billowy, white ocean; the swells and falls not indicating corresponding rises and depressions in the ground: many pits, at least, were filled to a level; and entire ranges of mounds, the refuse of the quarries, blotted from the chart which my yesterday’s walk left pictured in my mind. I had remarked on one side of the road, at intervals of six or seven yards, a line of upright stones, continued through the whole length of the barren: these were erected and daubed with lime on purpose to serve as guides in the dark, and also when a fall, like the present, confounded the deep swamps on either hand with the firmer path: but, excepting a dirty dot pointing up here and there, all traces of their existence had vanished: and my companion found it necessary to warn me frequently to steer to the right or left, when I imagined I was following, correctly, the windings of the road.

We exchanged little conversation, and he halted at the entrance of Thrushcross Park, saying, I could make no error there. Our adieux were limited to a hasty bow, and then I pushed forward, trusting to my own resources; for the porter’s lodge is untenanted as yet. 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: a predicament which only those who have experienced it can appreciate. At any rate, whatever were my wanderings, the clock chimed twelve as I entered the house; and that gave exactly an hour for every mile of the usual way from Wuthering Heights.

My human fixture and her satellites rushed to welcome me; exclaiming, tumultuously, they had completely given me up: everybody conjectured that I perished last night; and they were wondering how they must set about the search for my remains. I bid them be quiet, now that they saw me returned, and, benumbed to my very heart, I dragged upstairs; whence, after putting on dry clothes, and pacing to and fro thirty or forty minutes, to restore the animal heat, I adjourned to my study, feeble as a kitten: almost too much so to enjoy the cheerful fire and smoking coffee which the servant had prepared for my refreshment.

Chapter IV

What vain weathercocks we are! I, who had determined to hold myself independent of all social intercourse, and thanked my stars that, at length, I had lighted on a spot where it was next to impracticable I, weak wretch, after maintaining till dusk a struggle with low spirits and solitude, was finally compelled to strike my colours;²⁰ and under pretence of gaining information concerning the necessities of my establishment, I desired Mrs. Dean, when she brought in supper, to sit down while I ate it; hoping sincerely she would prove a regular gossip, and either rouse me to animation or lull me to sleep by her talk.

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

‘Eighteen, sir: I came when the mistress was married, to wait on²¹ her; after she died, the master retained me for his housekeeper.’

‘Indeed.’

There ensued a pause. She was not a gossip, I feared; unless about her own affairs, and those could hardly interest me. However, having studied for an interval, with a fist on either knee, and a cloud of meditation over her ruddy countenance, she ejaculated ‘Ah, times are greatly changed since then!’

‘Yes,’ I remarked, ‘you’ve seen a good many alterations, I suppose?’

‘I have: and troubles too,’ she said.

‘Oh, I’ll turn the talk on my landlord’s family!’ I thought to myself. ‘A good subject to start! And that pretty girl-widow, I should like to know her history: whether she be a native of the country, or, as is more probable, an exotic that the surly INDIGENAE²² will not recognise for kin.’ With this intention I asked Mrs. Dean why Heathcliff let Thrushcross Grange, and preferred living in a situation and residence so much inferior. ‘Is he not rich enough to keep the estate in good order?’ I inquired.

‘Rich, sir!’ she returned. ‘He has nobody knows what money, and every year it increases. Yes, yes, he’s rich enough to live in a finer house than this: but he’s very near close-handed; and, if he had meant to flit to Thrushcross Grange, as soon as he heard of a good tenant he could not have borne to miss the chance of getting a few hundreds more. It is strange people should be so greedy, when they are alone in the world!’

‘He had a son, it seems?’

‘Yes, he had one, he is dead.’

‘And that young lady, Mrs. Heathcliff, is his widow?’

‘Yes.’

‘Where did she come from originally?’

‘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 remove 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 Earnshaw: Hareton Earnshaw, who lives with Mr. Heathcliff? Are they relations?’

²⁰ To strike one’s colours – сдаваться. Выражение пришло из сленга моряков – colours обозначает флаг, под которым сражался корабль, а to strike – «тянуть вниз, спускать».

²¹ To wait on – прислуживать.

²² Indigenae – женский род, мн. число в именительном падеже от indigenus – местный (лат.).

‘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 us – I mean, 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? 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, rather, Mrs. Dean. Is not that his character?’

‘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 such a churl. Do you know anything of his history?’

‘It’s a cuckoo’s, sir I know all about it: except where he was born, and who were his parents, and how he got his money at first. And Hareton has been cast out like an unfledged dunnoek!²³ The unfortunate lad is the only one in all this parish that does not guess how he has been cheated.’

‘Well, Mrs. Dean, it will be a charitable deed to tell me something of my neighbours: I feel I shall not rest if I go to bed; so be good enough to sit and chat an hour.’

‘Oh, certainly, sir! I’ll just fetch a little sewing, and then I’ll sit as long as you please. But you’ve caught cold: I saw you shivering, and you 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 chill: moreover, I was excited, almost to a pitch of foolishness, through my nerves and brain. This caused me to feel, not uncomfortable, but rather fearful (as I am still) of serious effects from the incidents of to-day and yesterday. She returned presently, bringing a smoking basin and a basket of work; and, having placed the former on the hob, drew in her seat, evidently pleased to find me so companionable.

Before I came to live here, she commenced waiting no farther invitation to her story I was almost always at Wuthering Heights; because my mother had nursed Mr. Hindley Earnshaw, that was Hareton’s father, and I got used to playing with the children: I ran errands too, and helped to make hay, and hung about the farm ready for anything that anybody would set me to. One fine summer morning it was the beginning of harvest, I remember Mr. Earnshaw, the old master, came down-stairs, dressed for a journey; and, after he had told Joseph what was to be done during the day, he turned to Hindley, and Cathy, and me for I sat eating my porridge with them and he said, speaking to his son, ‘Now, my bonny man, I’m going to Liverpool to-day, what shall I bring you? You may choose what you like: only let it be little, for I shall walk there and back: sixty miles each way, that is a long spell!’ 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.

It seemed a long while to us all the three days of his absence and often did little Cathy ask when he would be home. Mrs. Earnshaw expected him by supper-time on the third evening, and she put the meal off hour after hour; there were no signs of his coming, however, and at last the children got tired of running down to the gate to look. Then it grew dark; she would have had them to bed, but they begged sadly to be allowed to stay up; and, just about eleven o’clock, the door-latch was raised quietly, and in stepped the master. He threw himself into a chair, laughing and

²³ An unfledged dunnoek – молодая лесная птица.

groaning, and bid them all stand off, for he was nearly killed, he would not have such another walk for the three kingdoms.

‘And at the end of it to be flighted to death!’ he said, opening his great-coat, which he held bundled up in his arms. ‘See here, wife! I was never so beaten with anything in my life: but you must e’en 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 both to walk and talk: indeed, its face looked older than Catherine’s; yet when it was set on its feet, it only stared round, and repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand. I was frightened, and Mrs. Earnshaw was ready to fling it out of doors: she did fly up, asking how he could fashion to bring that gipsy brat into the house, when they had their own bairns to feed and fend for? What he meant to do with it, and whether he were mad? The master tried to explain the matter; but he was really half dead with fatigue, and all that I could make out, amongst her scolding, was a tale of his seeing it starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb, 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 his money and time being both limited, he thought it better to take it home with him at once, than run into vain expenses there: because he was determined he would not 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 contented themselves with looking and listening till peace was restored: then, both began searching their father’s pockets for the presents he had promised them. The former was a boy of fourteen, but when he drew out what had been a fiddle, crushed to morsels in the great-coat, he blubbered aloud; and Cathy, when she learned the master had lost her whip in attending on the stranger, showed her humour by grinning and spitting at the stupid little thing; earning for her pains a sound blow from her father, to teach her cleaner manners. They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room; and I had no more sense, so I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it might be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr. Earnshaw’s door, and there he found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got there; I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity was sent out of the house.

This was Heathcliff’s first introduction to the family. On coming back a few days afterwards (for I did not consider my banishment perpetual), I found they had christened him ‘Heathcliff’: it was the name of a son who died in childhood, and it has served him ever since, both for Christian and surname. Miss Cathy and he were now very thick;²⁴ but Hindley hated him: and to say the truth I did the same; and we plagued and went on with him shamefully: for I wasn’t reasonable enough to feel my injustice, and the mistress never put in a word on his behalf when she saw him wronged.

He seemed a sullen, patient child; hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment: he would stand Hindley’s blows without winking or shedding a tear, and my pinches moved him only to draw in a breath and open his eyes, as if he had hurt himself by accident, and nobody was to blame. This endurance made old Earnshaw furious, when he discovered his son persecuting the poor fatherless child, as he called him. He took to Heathcliff strangely, believing all he said (for that matter, he said precious little, and generally the truth), and petting him up far above Cathy, who was too mischievous and wayward for a favourite.

So, from the very beginning, he bred bad feeling in the house; and at Mrs. Earnshaw’s death, which happened in less than two years after, the young master had learned to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent’s affections and his privileges; and he grew bitter with brooding over these injuries. I sympathised a while; but when the children fell ill of the measles, and I had to tend them, and take on me the cares of a woman at

²⁴ Thick – близкий.

once, I changed my idea. Heathcliff was dangerously sick; and while he lay at the worst he would have me constantly by his pillow: I suppose he felt I did a good deal for him, and he hadn't wit to guess that I was compelled to do it. However, I will say this, he was the quietest child that ever nurse watched over. The difference between him and the others forced me to be less partial. Cathy and her brother harassed me terribly: he was as uncomplaining as a lamb; though hardness, not gentleness, made him give little trouble.

He got through, and the doctor affirmed it was in a great measure owing to me, and praised me for my care. I was vain of his commendations, and softened towards the being by whose means I earned them, and thus Hindley lost his last ally: still I couldn't dote on Heathcliff, and I wondered often what my master saw to admire so much in the sullen boy; who never, to my recollection, repaid his indulgence by any sign of gratitude. He was not insolent to his benefactor, he was simply insensible; though knowing perfectly the hold he had on his heart, and conscious he had only to speak and all the house would be obliged to bend to his wishes. As an instance, I remember Mr. Earnshaw once bought a couple of colts at the parish fair, and gave the lads each one. Heathcliff took the handsomest, but it soon fell lame, and when he discovered it, he said to Hindley – 'You must exchange horses with me: I don't like mine; and if you won't I shall tell your father of the three thrashings you've given me this week, and show him my arm, which is black to the shoulder.' Hindley put out his tongue, and cuffed him over the ears. 'You'd better do it at once,' he persisted, escaping to the porch (they were in the stable): 'you will have to: and if I speak of these blows, you'll get them again with interest.' 'Off, dog!' cried Hindley, threatening him with an iron weight used for weighing potatoes and hay. 'Throw it,' he replied, standing still, 'and then I'll tell how you boasted that you would turn me out of doors as soon as he died, and see whether he will not turn you out directly.' 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 just so to the master, and got full revenge by letting his condition plead for him, intimating who had caused it. 'Take my colt, Gipsy, then!' said young Earnshaw. 'And I pray that he may break your neck: take him, and be damned, you beggarly interloper! and wheedle my father out of all he has: only afterwards show him what you are, imp of Satan. And take that, I hope he'll kick out your brains!'

Heathcliff had gone to loose the beast, and shift it to his own stall; he was passing behind it, when Hindley finished his speech by knocking him under its feet, and without stopping to examine whether his hopes were fulfilled, ran away as fast as he could. I was surprised to witness how coolly the child gathered himself up, and went on with his intention; exchanging saddles and all, and then sitting down on a bundle of hay to overcome the qualm which the violent blow occasioned, before he entered the house. I persuaded him easily to let me lay the blame of his bruises on the horse: he minded little what tale was told since he had what he wanted. He complained so seldom, indeed, of such stirs as these, that I really thought him not vindictive: I was deceived completely, as you will hear.

Chapter V

In the course of time Mr. Earnshaw began to fail. He had been active and healthy, yet his strength left him suddenly; and when he was confined to the chimney-corner²⁵ he grew grievously irritable. A nothing vexed him; and suspected slights of his authority nearly threw him into fits. This was especially to be remarked if any one attempted to impose upon, or domineer over, his favourite: he was painfully jealous lest a word should be spoken amiss to him; seeming to have got into his head the notion that, because he liked Heathcliff, all hated, and longed to do him an ill-turn. It was a disadvantage to the lad; for the kinder among us did not wish to fret the master, so we humoured his partiality; and that humouring was rich nourishment to the child's pride and black tempers. Still it became in a manner necessary; twice, or thrice, Hindley's manifestation of scorn, while his father was near, roused the old man to a fury: he seized his stick to strike him, and shook with rage that he could not do it.

At last, our curate (we had a curate then who made the living answer by teaching the little Lintons and Earnshaws, and farming his bit of land himself) advised that the young man should be sent to college; and Mr. Earnshaw agreed, though with a heavy spirit, for he said 'Hindley was nought, and would never thrive as where he wandered.'

I hoped heartily we should have peace now. It hurt me to think the master should be made uncomfortable by his own good deed. I fancied the discontent of age and disease arose from his family disagreements; as he would have it that it did: really, you know, sir, it was in his sinking frame. We might have got on tolerably, notwithstanding, but for two people – Miss Cathy, and Joseph, the servant: you saw him, I daresay, up yonder. He was, and is yet most likely, the wearisomest self-righteous Pharisee that ever ransacked a Bible to rake the promises to himself and fling the curses to his neighbours. By his knack of sermonising and pious discoursing, he contrived to make a great impression on Mr. Earnshaw; and the more feeble the master became, the more influence he gained. He was relentless in worrying him about his soul's concerns, and about ruling his children rigidly. He encouraged him to regard Hindley as a reprobate; and, night after night, he regularly grumbled out a long string of tales against Heathcliff and Catherine: always minding to flatter Earnshaw's weakness by heaping the heaviest blame on the latter.

Certainly she had ways with her such as I never saw a child take up before; and she put all of us past our patience fifty times and oftener in a day: from the hour she came down-stairs till the hour she went to bed, we had not a minute's security that she wouldn't be in mischief. Her spirits were always at high-water mark,²⁶ her tongue always going singing, laughing, and plaguing everybody who would not do the same. 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 once she made you cry in good earnest, it seldom happened that she would not keep you company, and oblige you to be quiet that you might comfort her. She was much too fond of Heathcliff. The greatest punishment we could invent for her was to keep her separate from him: yet she got chided more than any of us on his account. In play, she liked exceedingly to act the little mistress; using her hands freely, and commanding her companions: she did so to me, but I would not bear slapping and ordering; and so I let her know.

Now, Mr. Earnshaw did not understand jokes from his children: he had always been strict and grave with them; and Catherine, on her part, had no idea why her father should be crosser and less patient in his ailing condition than he was in his prime. His peevish reproofs awakened in her a naughty delight to provoke him: she was never so happy as when we were all scolding

²⁵ Confined to the chimney-corner – ограниченный местом у большого открытого камина.

²⁶ At high-water mark – в наивысшей степени.

her at once, and she defying us with her bold, saucy look, and her ready words; turning Joseph's religious curses into ridicule, baiting me, and doing just what her father hated most showing how her pretended insolence, which he thought real, had more power over Heathcliff than his kindness: how the boy would do HER bidding in anything, and HIS only when it suited his own inclination. After behaving as badly as possible all day, she sometimes came fondling to make it up 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. I doubt thy mother and I must rue that we ever reared thee!' That made her cry, at first; and then being repulsed continually hardened her, and she laughed if I told her to say she was sorry for her faults, and beg to be forgiven.

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: it sounded wild and stormy, yet it was not cold, and we were all together I, a little removed from the hearth, busy at my knitting, and Joseph reading his Bible near the table (for the servants generally sat in the house then, after their work was done). 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, before he fell into a doze, stroking her bonny hair it pleased him rarely to see her gentle 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 as soon as 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, and should have done so longer, only Joseph, having finished his chapter, got up and said that he must rouse the master for prayers and bed. He stepped forward, and 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 each by an arm, whispered them to 'frame upstairs, and make little din they might pray alone that evening he had summut to do.'

'I shall bid father good-night first,' said Catherine, putting her arms round his neck, before we could hinder her. The poor thing discovered her loss directly 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, loud and bitter; but Joseph asked what we could be thinking of to roar in that way over a saint in heaven. He told me to put on my cloak and run to Gimmerton for the doctor and the parson. I could not guess the use that either would be of, then. However, I went, through wind and rain, and brought one, the doctor, back with me; the other said he would come in the morning. Leaving Joseph to explain matters, I ran to the children's room: their door was ajar, 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 VI

Mr. Hindley came home to the funeral; and a thing that amazed us, and set the neighbours gossiping right and left he 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 union from his father.

She was not one that would have disturbed the house much on her own account. Every object she saw, the moment she crossed the threshold, appeared to delight her; and every circumstance that took place about her: except the preparing for the burial, and the presence of the mourners. I thought she was half silly, from her behaviour while that went on: she ran into her chamber, and made me come with her, though I should have been dressing the children: and there she sat shivering and clasping her hands, and asking repeatedly 'Are they gone yet?' Then she began describing with hysterical emotion the effect it produced on her to see black; and started, and trembled, and, at last, fell a-weeping and when I asked what was the matter, 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 fresh-complexioned, and her eyes sparkled as bright as diamonds. I did remark, to be sure, that mounting the stairs made her breathe very quick; that the least sudden noise set her all in a quiver, and that she coughed troublesomely sometimes: but I knew nothing of what these symptoms portended, and had no impulse to sympathise with her. We don't in general take to foreigners here, Mr. Lockwood, unless they take to us first.

Young Earnshaw was altered considerably in the three years of his absence. He had grown sparer, and lost his colour, and spoke and dressed quite differently; and, on the very day of his return, he told Joseph and me we must thenceforth quarter ourselves in the back-kitchen, and leave the house for him. Indeed, he would have carpeted and papered a small spare room for a parlour; but his wife expressed such pleasure at the white floor and huge glowing fireplace, at the pewter dishes and delf-case, and dog-kennel, and the wide space there was to move about in where they usually sat, that he thought it unnecessary to her comfort, and so dropped the intention.

She expressed pleasure, too, at finding a sister among her new acquaintance; and she prattled to Catherine, and kissed her, and ran about with her, and gave her quantities of presents, at the beginning. Her affection tired very soon, however, and when she grew peevish, Hindley became tyrannical. A few words from her, evincing a dislike to Heathcliff, were enough to rouse in him all his old hatred of the boy. He drove him from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instructions of the curate, and insisted that he should labour out of doors instead; compelling him to do so as hard as any other lad on the farm.

Heathcliff bore his degradation pretty well at first, because Cathy taught him what she learnt, and worked or played with him in the fields. They both promised fair to grow up as rude as savages; the young master being entirely negligent how they behaved, and what they did, so they kept clear of him. He would not even have seen after their going to church on Sundays, only Joseph and the curate reprimanded his carelessness when they absented themselves; and that reminded him to order Heathcliff a flogging, and Catherine a fast from dinner or supper. But it was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day, and the after punishment grew a mere thing to laugh at. The curate might set as many chapters as he pleased for Catherine to get by heart, and Joseph might thrash Heathcliff till his arm ached; they forgot everything the minute they were together again: at least the minute they had contrived some naughty plan of revenge; and many a time I've cried to myself to watch them growing more reckless daily, and I not daring to speak a syllable, for fear of losing the small power I still retained over the unfriended creatures. One Sunday evening, it chanced that they were banished from the sitting-room, for making a noise, or a light offence of the kind; and when I went to call them to supper, I

could discover them nowhere. We searched the house, above and below, and the yard and stables; they were invisible: and, at last, Hindley in a passion told us to bolt the doors, and swore nobody should let them in that night. The household went to bed; and I, too, anxious to lie down, opened my lattice and put my head out to hearken, though it rained: determined to admit them in spite of the prohibition, should they return. In a while, I distinguished 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 hurriedly. ‘No accident, I hope?’ ‘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: ‘you’ll never be content till you’re sent about your business. What in the world led you wandering to Thrushcross Grange?’ ‘Let me get off my wet clothes, and I’ll tell you all about it, Nelly,’ he replied. I bid him beware of rousing the master, and while he undressed and I waited to put out the candle, he continued ‘Cathy and I escaped from the wash-house to have a ramble at liberty, and getting a glimpse of the Grange lights, we thought we would just go and see whether the Lintons passed their Sunday evenings standing shivering in corners, while their father and mother sat eating and drinking, and singing and laughing, and burning their eyes out before the fire. Do you think they do? Or reading sermons, and being catechised by their manservant, and set to learn a column of Scripture names, if they don’t answer properly?’ ‘Probably not,’ I responded. ‘They are good children, no doubt, and don’t deserve the treatment you receive, for your bad conduct.’ ‘Don’t cant, Nelly,’ he said: ‘nonsense! We ran from the top of the Heights to the park, without stopping Catherine completely beaten in the race, because she was barefoot. You’ll have to seek for her shoes in the bog to-morrow. We crept through a broken hedge, groped our way up the path, and planted ourselves on a flower-plot under the drawing-room window. The light came from thence; they had not put up the shutters, and the curtains were only half closed. Both of us were able to look in by standing on the basement, and clinging to the ledge, and we saw ah! it was beautiful a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers. Old Mr. and Mrs. Linton were not there; Edgar and his sisters had it entirely 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 farther end of the room, shrieking as if witches were running red-hot needles into her. Edgar stood on the hearth weeping silently, and in the middle of the table sat a little dog, shaking its paw and yelping; which, from their mutual accusations, we understood they had nearly pulled in two between them. The idiots! That was their pleasure! to quarrel who should hold a heap of warm hair, and each begin to cry because both, after struggling to get it, refused to take it. We laughed outright at the petted things; we did despise them! When would you catch me wishing to have what Catherine wanted? or find us by ourselves, seeking entertainment in yelling, and sobbing, and rolling on the ground, divided by the whole room? I’d not exchange, for a thousand lives, my condition here, for Edgar Linton’s at Thrushcross Grange not if I might have the privilege of flinging Joseph off the highest gable, and painting the housefront with Hindley’s blood!’

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

‘I told you we laughed,’ he answered. ‘The Lintons heard us, and with one accord they shot like arrows to the door; there was silence, and then a cry, “Oh, mamma, mamma! Oh, papa! Oh, mamma, come here. Oh, papa, oh!” They really did howl out something in that way. We made frightful noises to terrify them still more, and then we dropped off the ledge, because somebody was drawing the bars, and we felt we had better flee. I had Cathy by the hand, and was urging her on,

when all at once she fell down. "Run, Heathcliff, run!" she whispered. "They have let the bull-dog loose, and he holds me!" The devil had seized her ankle, Nelly: I heard his abominable snorting. She did not yell out – no! she would have scorned to do it, if she had been spitted on the horns of a mad cow. I did, though: I vociferated curses enough to annihilate any fiend in Christendom; and I got a stone and thrust it between his jaws, and tried with all my might to cram it down his throat. A beast of a servant came up with a lantern, at last, shouting "Keep fast, Skulker, keep fast!" He changed his note, however, when he saw Skulker's game. The dog was throttled off; his huge, purple tongue hanging half a foot out of his mouth, and his pendent lips streaming with bloody slaver. The man took Cathy up; she was sick: not from fear, I'm certain, but from pain. He carried her in; I followed, grumbling execrations and vengeance. "What prey, Robert?" hallooed Linton from the entrance. "Skulker has caught a little girl, sir," he replied; "and there's a lad here," he added, making a clutch at me, "who looks an out-and-outer!"²⁷ Very like the robbers were for putting them through the window to open the doors to the gang after all were asleep, that they might murder us at their ease. Hold your tongue, you foulmouthed thief, you! you shall go to the gallows for this. Mr. Linton, sir, don't lay by your gun." "No, no, Robert," said the old fool. "The rascals knew that yesterday was my rent-day: they thought to have me cleverly. Come in; I'll furnish them a reception. There, John, fasten the chain. Give Skulker some water, Jenny. To beard²⁸ a magistrate in his stronghold, and on the Sabbath, too! Where will their insolence stop? Oh, my dear Mary, look here! Don't be afraid, it is but a boy yet the villain scowls so plainly in his face; would it not be a kindness to the country to hang him at once, before he shows his nature in acts as well as features?" He pulled me under the chandelier, and Mrs. Linton placed her spectacles on her nose and raised her hands in horror. The cowardly children crept nearer also, Isabella lisping "Frightful thing! Put him in the cellar, papa. He's exactly like the son of the fortune-teller that stole my tame pheasant. Isn't he, Edgar?"

"While they examined me, Cathy came round; she heard the last speech, and laughed. Edgar Linton, after an inquisitive stare, collected sufficient wit to recognise her. They see us at church, you know, though we seldom meet them elsewhere. "That's Miss Earnshaw?" he whispered to his mother, "and look how Skulker has bitten her – how her foot bleeds!"

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

"What culpable carelessness in her brother!" exclaimed Mr. Linton, turning from me to Catherine. "I've understood from Shielders" (that was the curate, sir) "that he lets her grow up in absolute heathenism. But who is this? Where did she pick up this companion? Oho! I declare he is that strange acquisition my late neighbour made, in his journey to Liverpool a little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway."

"A wicked boy, at all events," remarked the old lady, "and quite unfit for a decent house! Did you notice his language, Linton? I'm shocked that my children should have heard it."

"I recommenced cursing – don't be angry, Nelly – and so Robert was ordered to take me off. I refused to go without Cathy; he dragged me into the garden, pushed the lantern into my hand, assured me that Mr. Earnshaw should be informed of my behaviour, and, bidding me march directly, secured the door again. The curtains were still looped up at one corner, and I resumed my station as spy; because, if Catherine had wished to return, I intended shattering their great glass panes to a million of fragments, unless they let her out. She sat on the sofa quietly. Mrs. Linton took off the grey cloak of the dairy-maid which we had borrowed for our excursion, shaking her head and expostulating with her, I suppose: she was a young lady, and they made a distinction between her treatment and mine. Then the woman-servant brought a basin of warm water, and washed her

²⁷ Out-and-outer – отпетый мошенник.

²⁸ To beard – наносить оскорбление.

feet; and Mr. Linton mixed a tumbler of negus,²⁹ and Isabella emptied a plateful of cakes into her lap, and Edgar stood gaping at a distance. Afterwards, they dried and combed her beautiful hair, and gave her a pair of enormous slippers, and wheeled her to the fire; and I left her, as merry as she could be, dividing her food between the little dog and Skulker, whose nose she pinched as he ate; and kindling a spark of spirit in the vacant blue eyes of the Lintons a dim reflection from her own enchanting face. I saw they were full of stupid admiration; she is so immeasurably superior to them to everybody on earth, is she not, Nelly?”

‘There will more come of this business than you reckon on,’ I answered, covering him up and extinguishing the light. ‘You are incurable, Heathcliff; and Mr. Hindley will have to proceed to extremities, see if he won’t.’ My words came truer than I desired. The luckless adventure made Earnshaw furious. And then Mr. Linton, to mend matters, paid us a visit himself on the morrow, and read the young master such a lecture on the road he guided his family, that he was stirred to look about him, in earnest. Heathcliff received no flogging, but he was told that the first word he spoke to Miss Catherine should ensure a dismissal; and Mrs. Earnshaw undertook to keep her sister-in-law in due restraint when she returned home; employing art, not force: with force she would have found it impossible.

²⁹ Negus – разновидность глинтвейна.

Chapter VII

Cathy stayed at Thrushcross Grange five weeks: till Christmas. By that time her ankle was thoroughly cured, and her manners much improved. The mistress visited her often in the interval, and commenced her plan of reform by trying to raise her self-respect with fine clothes and flattery, which she took readily; so that, instead of a wild, hatless little savage jumping into the house, and rushing to squeeze us all breathless, there 'lighted from a handsome black pony a very dignified person, with brown ringlets falling from the cover of a feathered beaver, and a long cloth habit, which she was obliged to hold up with both hands that she might sail in. Hindley lifted her from her horse, exclaiming delightedly, "Why, Cathy, you are quite a beauty! I should scarcely have known you: you look like a lady now. Isabella Linton is not to be compared with her, is she, Frances?" "Isabella has not her natural advantages," replied his wife: "but she must mind and not grow wild again here. Ellen, help Miss Catherine off with her things Stay, dear, you will disarrange your curls let me untie your hat."

I removed the habit, and there shone forth beneath a grand plaid silk frock, white trousers, and burnished shoes; and, while her eyes sparkled joyfully when the dogs came bounding up to welcome her, she dared hardly touch them lest they should fawn upon her splendid garments. She kissed me gently: I was all flour making the Christmas cake, and it would not have done to give me a hug; and then she looked round for Heathcliff. Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw watched anxiously their meeting; thinking it would enable them to judge, in some measure, what grounds they had for hoping to succeed in separating the two friends.

Heathcliff was hard to discover, at first. 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; and children of his age seldom have a natural pleasure in soap and water. Therefore, not to mention his clothes, which had seen three months' service in mire and dust, and his thick uncombed hair, the surface of his face and hands was dismally beclouded. He might well skulk behind the settle, on beholding such a bright, graceful damsel enter the house, instead of a rough-headed counterpart of himself, as he expected. 'Is Heathcliff not here?' she demanded, pulling off her gloves, and displaying fingers wonderfully whitened with doing nothing and staying indoors.

'Heathcliff, you may come forward,' cried Mr. Hindley, enjoying his discomfiture, and gratified to see what a forbidding young blackguard he would be compelled to present himself. 'You may come and wish Miss Catherine welcome, like the other servants.'

Cathy, catching a glimpse of her friend in his concealment, flew to embrace him; she bestowed seven or eight kisses on his cheek within the second, and then stopped, and drawing back, burst into a laugh, exclaiming, 'Why, how very black and cross you look! and how how funny and grim! But that's because I'm used to Edgar and Isabella Linton. Well, Heathcliff, have you forgotten me?'

She had some reason to put the question, for shame and pride threw double gloom over his countenance, and kept him immovable.

'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. I shall not bear it!' And he would have broken from the circle, but Miss Cathy seized him again.

'I did not mean to laugh at you,' she said; 'I could not hinder myself: Heathcliff, shake hands at least! What are you sulky for? It was only that you looked odd. If you wash your face and brush your hair, it will be all right: but you are so dirty!'

She gazed concernedly at the dusky fingers she held in her own, and also at her dress; which she feared had gained no embellishment from its contact with his.

‘You needn’t have touched me!’ he answered, following her eye and 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 headforemost out of the room, amid the merriment of the master and mistress, and to the serious disturbance of Catherine; who could not comprehend how her remarks should have produced such an exhibition of bad temper.

After playing lady’s-maid to the new-comer, and putting my cakes in the oven, and making the house and kitchen cheerful with great fires, befitting Christmas-eve, I prepared to sit down and amuse myself by singing carols, all alone; regardless of Joseph’s affirmations that he considered the merry tunes I chose as next door to songs. He had retired to private prayer in his chamber, and Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw were engaging Missy’s attention by sundry gay trifles bought for her to present to the little Lintons, as an acknowledgment of their kindness. They had invited them to spend the morrow 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.’

Under these circumstances I remained solitary. I smelt the rich scent of the heating spices; and admired the shining kitchen utensils, the polished clock, decked in holly, the silver mugs ranged on a tray ready to be filled with mulled ale for supper; and above all, the speckless purity of my particular care the scoured and well-swept floor. I gave due inward applause to every object, and then I remembered how old Earnshaw used to come in when all was tidied, and call me a cant lass, and slip a shilling into my hand as a Christmasbox; and from that I went on to think of his fondness for Heathcliff, and his dread lest he should suffer neglect after death had removed him: and that naturally led me to consider the poor lad’s situation now, and from singing I changed my mind to crying. It struck me soon, however, there would be more sense in endeavouring to repair some of his wrongs than shedding tears over them: I got up and walked into the court to seek him. He was not far; I found him smoothing the glossy coat of the new pony in the stable, and feeding the other beasts, according to custom.

‘Make haste, Heathcliff!’ I said, ‘the kitchen is so comfortable; and Joseph is up-stairs: make haste, and let me dress you smart before Miss Cathy comes out, and then you can sit together, with the whole hearth to yourselves, and have a long chatter till bedtime.’

He proceeded with his task, and never turned his head towards me.

‘Come – are you coming?’ I continued. ‘There’s a little cake for each of you, nearly enough; and you’ll need half-an-hour’s donning.’³⁰

I waited five minutes, but getting no answer left him. Catherine supped with her brother and sister-in-law: Joseph and I joined at an unsociable meal, seasoned with reproofs on one side and sauciness on the other. His cake and cheese remained on the table all night for the fairies. He managed to continue work till nine o’clock, and then marched dumb and dour to his chamber. Cathy sat up late, having a world of things to order for the reception of her new friends: she came into the kitchen once to speak to her old one; but he was gone, and she only stayed to ask what was the matter with him, and then went back. In the morning he rose early; and, as it was a holiday, carried his ill-humour on to the moors; not re-appearing till the family were departed for church. Fasting and reflection seemed to have brought him to a better spirit. He hung about me for a while, and having screwed up his courage, 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, because she is more thought of than you.’

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

³⁰ Donning – одевание.

‘Did she say she was grieved?’ he inquired, looking very serious.

‘She cried when I told her you were off again 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 sad sorrows for themselves. But, if you be ashamed of your touchiness, you must ask pardon, mind, when she comes in. You must go up and offer to kiss her, and say you know best what to say; only do it heartily, and not as if you thought her converted into a stranger by her grand dress. And now, though I have dinner to get ready, I’ll steal time to arrange you so that Edgar Linton shall look quite a doll beside you: and that he does. You are younger, and yet, I’ll be bound, you are taller and twice as broad across the shoulders; you could knock him down in a twinkling; don’t you feel that you could?’

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 dressed and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be!’

‘And cried for mamma at every turn,’ I added, ‘and trembled if a country lad heaved his fist against you, and sat at home all day for a shower of rain. Oh, Heathcliff, you are showing a poor spirit! Come to the glass, and I’ll let you see what you should wish. Do you mark those two lines between your eyes; and those thick brows, that, instead of rising arched, sink in the middle; and that couple of black fiends, so deeply buried, who never open their windows boldly, but lurk glinting under them, like devil’s spies? Wish and learn to smooth away the surly wrinkles, to raise your lids frankly, and change the fiends to confident, innocent angels, suspecting and doubting nothing, and always seeing friends where they are not sure of foes. Don’t get the expression of a vicious cur that appears to know the kicks it gets are its desert, and yet hates all the world, as well as the kicker, for what it suffers.’

‘In other words, I must wish for Edgar Linton’s great blue eyes and even forehead,’ 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, ‘if you were a regular black; and a bad one will turn the bonniest into something worse than ugly. And now that we’ve done washing, and combing, and sulking tell me whether you don’t think yourself rather handsome? I’ll tell you, I do. You’re fit for a prince in disguise. Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week’s income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth; and the thoughts of what I was should give me courage and dignity to support the oppressions of a little farmer!’

So I chattered on; and Heathcliff gradually lost his frown and began to look quite pleasant, when all at once our conversation was interrupted by a rumbling sound moving up the road and entering the court. He ran to the window and I to the door, just in time to behold the two Lintons descend from the family carriage, smothered in cloaks and furs, and the Earnshaws dismount from their horses: they often rode to church in winter. Catherine took a hand of each of the children, and brought them into the house and set them before the fire, which quickly put colour into their white faces.

I urged my companion to hasten now and show his amiable humour, and he willingly obeyed; but ill luck would have it that, as he opened the door leading from the kitchen on one side, Hindley opened it on the other. They met, and the master, irritated at seeing him clean and cheerful, or, perhaps, eager to keep his promise to Mrs. Linton, shoved him back with a sudden thrust, 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 and stealing the fruit, if left alone with them a minute.’

‘Nay, sir,’ I could not avoid answering, ‘he’ll touch nothing, not he: and I suppose he must have his share of the dainties as well as we.’

‘He shall have his share of my hand, if I catch him downstairs till dark,’ 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; ‘I wonder they don’t make his head ache. It’s like a colt’s mane over his eyes!’

He ventured this remark without any intention to insult; but Heathcliff’s violent nature was not prepared to endure the appearance of impertinence from one whom he seemed to hate, even then, as a rival. He seized a tureen of hot apple sauce (the first thing that came under his gripe) and dashed it full against the speaker’s face and neck; who instantly commenced a lament that brought Isabella and Catherine hurrying to the place. Mr. Earnshaw snatched up the culprit directly and conveyed him to his chamber; where, doubtless, he administered a rough remedy to cool the fit of passion, for he appeared red and breathless. I got the dishcloth, and rather spitefully scrubbed Edgar’s nose and mouth, affirming it served him right for meddling. His sister began weeping to go home, and Cathy stood by confounded, blushing for all.

‘You should not have spoken to him!’ she expostulated with Master Linton. ‘He was in a bad temper, and now you’ve spoilt your visit; and 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, escaping from my hands, and finishing the remainder of the purification with his cambric pocket-handkerchief. ‘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. Don’t make more mischief; my brother is coming: be quiet! Hush, Isabella! Has anybody hurt you?’

‘There, there, children – to your seats!’ 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 its equanimity at sight of the fragrant feast. They were hungry after their ride, and easily consoled, since no real harm had befallen them. Mr. Earnshaw carved bountiful platefuls, and the mistress made them merry with lively talk. I waited behind her chair, and was pained to behold Catherine, with dry eyes and an indifferent air, commence cutting up the wing of a goose before her. ‘An unfeeling child,’ I thought to myself; ‘how lightly she dismisses her old playmate’s troubles. I could not have imagined her to be so selfish.’ She lifted a mouthful to her lips: then she set it down again: her cheeks flushed, and the tears gushed over them. She slipped her fork to the floor, and hastily dived under the cloth to conceal her emotion. I did not call her unfeeling long; for I perceived she was in purgatory throughout the day, and wearying to find an opportunity of getting by herself, or paying a visit to Heathcliff, who had been locked up by the master: as I discovered, on endeavouring to introduce to him a private mess of victuals.

In the evening we had a dance. Cathy begged that he might be liberated then, as Isabella Linton had no partner: her entreaties were vain, and I was appointed to supply the deficiency. We got rid of all gloom in the excitement of the exercise, and our pleasure was increased by the arrival of the Gimmerton band, mustering fifteen strong: a trumpet, a trombone, clarionets, bassoons, French horns, and a bass viol, besides singers. They go the rounds of all the respectable houses, and receive contributions every Christmas, and we esteemed it a first-rate treat to hear them. After the usual carols had been sung, we set them to songs and glees. Mrs. Earnshaw loved the music, and so they gave us plenty.

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 shut the house door below, never noting our absence, it was so full of people. She made no stay at the stairs’-head, but mounted farther, to the garret where Heathcliff

was confined, and called him. He stubbornly declined answering for a while: she persevered, and finally persuaded him to hold communion with her through the boards. I let the poor things converse unmolested, till I supposed the songs were going to cease, and the singers to get some refreshment: then I clambered up the ladder to warn her. Instead of finding her outside, I heard her voice within. The little monkey had crept by the skylight of one garret, along the roof, into the skylight of the other, and it was with the utmost difficulty I could coax her out again. When she did come, Heathcliff came with her, and she insisted that I should take him into the kitchen, as my fellow-servant had gone to a neighbour's, to be removed from the sound of our 'devil's psalmody,' as it pleased him to call it. I told them I intended by no means to encourage their tricks: but as the prisoner had never broken his fast since yesterday's dinner, I would wink at his cheating Mr. Hindley that once. He went down: I set him a stool by the fire, and offered him a quantity of good things: but he was sick and could eat little, and my attempts to entertain him were thrown away. He leant his two elbows on his knees, and his chin on his hands and remained rapt in dumb 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 before I do!'

'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 out: while I'm thinking of that I don't feel pain.'

'But, Mr. Lockwood, I forget these tales cannot divert you. I'm annoyed how I should dream of chattering on at such a rate; and your gruel cold, and you nodding for bed! I could have told Heathcliff's history, all that you need hear, in half a dozen words.'

Thus interrupting herself, the housekeeper rose, and proceeded to lay aside her sewing; but I felt incapable of moving from the hearth, and I was very far from nodding. 'Sit still, Mrs. Dean,' I cried; 'do sit still another half-hour. You've done just right to tell the story leisurely. That is the method I like; and you must finish it in the same style. I am interested in every character you have mentioned, more or less.'

'The clock is on the stroke of eleven, sir.'

'No matter. I'm not accustomed to go to bed in the long hours. One or two is early enough for a person who lies till ten.'

'You shouldn't lie till ten. There's the very prime of the morning gone long before that time. A person who has not done one-half his day's work by ten o'clock, runs a chance of leaving the other half undone.'

'Nevertheless, Mrs. Dean, resume your chair; because to-morrow I intend lengthening the night till afternoon. I prognosticate for myself an obstinate cold, at least.'

'I hope not, sir. Well, you must allow me to leap over some three years; during that space Mrs. Earnshaw —'

'No, no, I'll allow nothing of the sort! Are you acquainted with the mood of mind in which, if you were seated alone, and the cat licking its kitten on the rug before you, you would watch the operation so intently that puss's neglect of one ear would put you seriously out of temper?'

'A terribly lazy mood, I should say.'

'On the contrary, a tiresomely active one. It is mine, at present; and, therefore, continue minutely. I perceive that people in these regions acquire over people in towns the value that a spider in a dungeon does over a spider in a cottage, to their various occupants; and yet the deepened attraction is not entirely owing to the situation of the looker-on. They DO live more in earnest, more in themselves, and less in surface, change, and frivolous external things. I could fancy a love for life here almost possible; and I was a fixed unbeliever in any love of a year's standing. One state resembles setting a hungry man down to a single dish, on which he may concentrate his entire

appetite and do it justice; the other, introducing him to a table laid out by French cooks: he can perhaps extract as much enjoyment from the whole; but each part is a mere atom in his regard and remembrance.'

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

'Excuse me,' I responded; 'you, my good friend, are a striking evidence against that assertion. Excepting a few provincialisms of slight consequence, you have no marks of the manners which I am habituated to consider as peculiar to your class. I am sure you have thought a great deal more than the generality of servants think. You have been compelled to cultivate your reflective faculties for want of occasions for frittering your life away in silly trifles.'

Mrs. Dean laughed.

'I certainly esteem myself a steady, reasonable kind of body,' she said; 'not exactly from living among the hills and seeing one set of faces, and one series of actions, from year's end to year's end; but I have undergone sharp discipline, which has taught me wisdom; and then, 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, and got something out of also: unless it be that range of Greek and Latin, and that of French; and those I know one from another: it is as much as you can expect of a poor man's daughter. However, if I am to follow my story in true gossip's fashion, I had better go on; and instead of leaping three years, I will be content to pass to the next summer the summer of 1778, that is nearly twenty-three years ago.'

Chapter VIII

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 in a far-away field, when the girl that usually brought our breakfasts came running an hour too soon across the meadow and up the lane, calling me as she ran.

‘Oh, such a grand bairn!’ she panted out. ‘The finest lad that ever breathed! But the doctor says missis must go: he says she’s 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, and take care of it day and night. 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; yet she looks bravely,’ replied the girl, ‘and 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’m certain I should not die: I should get better at the bare sight of it, in spite of Kenneth. I was fairly mad at him. Dame Archer brought the cherub down to master, in the house, and his face just began to light up, when the old croaker steps forward, and says he “Earnshaw, it’s a blessing your wife has been spared to leave you this son. When she came, I felt convinced we shouldn’t keep her long; and now, I must tell you, the winter will probably finish her. Don’t take on, and fret about it too much: it can’t be helped. And besides, you should have known better than to choose such a rush of a lass!”’

‘And what did the master answer?’ I inquired.

‘I think he swore: but I didn’t mind him, I was straining to see the bairn,’ and she began again to describe it rapturously. I, as zealous as herself, hurried eagerly home to admire, on my part; though I was very sad for Hindley’s sake. He had room in his heart only for two idols – his wife and himself: he doted on both, and adored one, and I couldn’t conceive how he would bear the loss.

When we got to Wuthering Heights, there he stood at the front door; and, as I passed in, I asked, ‘how was the baby?’

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

‘And the mistress?’ I ventured to inquire; ‘the doctor says she’s —’

‘Damn the doctor!’ he interrupted, reddening. ‘Frances is quite right: she’ll be perfectly well by this time next week. Are you going up-stairs? will you tell her that I’ll come, if she’ll promise not to talk. I left her because she would not hold her tongue; and she must – tell her Mr. Kenneth says she must be quiet.’

I delivered this message to Mrs. Earnshaw; she seemed in flighty spirits, and replied merrily, ‘I hardly spoke a word, Ellen, and there he has gone out twice, crying. Well, say I promise I won’t speak: but that does not bind me not to laugh at him!’

Poor soul! Till within a week of her death that gay heart never failed her; and her husband persisted doggedly, nay, furiously, in affirming her health improved every day. When Kenneth warned him that his medicines were useless at that stage of the malady, and he needn’t put him to further expense by attending her, he retorted, ‘I know you need not she’s well she does not want any more attendance from you! She never was in a consumption. It was a fever; and it is gone: her pulse is as slow as mine now, and her cheek as cool.’

He told his wife the same story, and she seemed to believe him; but one night, while leaning on his shoulder, in the act of saying she thought she should be able to get up to-morrow, a fit of coughing took her a very slight one he raised her in his arms; she put her two hands about his neck, her face changed, and she was dead.

As the girl had anticipated, the child Hareton fell wholly into my hands. Mr. Earnshaw, provided he saw him healthy and never heard him cry, was contented, as far as regarded him. For

himself, he grew desperate: his sorrow was of that kind that will not lament. He neither wept nor prayed; he cursed and defied: execrated God and man, and gave himself up to reckless dissipation. The servants could not bear his tyrannical and evil conduct long: Joseph and I were the only two that would stay. I had not the heart to leave my charge; and besides, you know, I had been his foster-sister, and excused his behaviour more readily than a stranger would. Joseph remained to hector over tenants and labourers; and because it was his vocation to be where he had plenty of wickedness to reprove.

The master's bad ways and bad companions formed a pretty example for Catherine and Heathcliff. His treatment of the latter was enough to make a fiend of a saint. And, truly, it appeared as if the lad WERE possessed of something diabolical at that period. He delighted to witness Hindley degrading himself past redemption; and became daily more notable for savage sullenness and ferocity. I could not half tell what an infernal house we had. The curate dropped calling, and nobody decent came near us, at last; unless Edgar Linton's visits to Miss Cathy might be an exception. At fifteen she was the queen of the country-side; she had no peer; and she did turn out a haughty, headstrong creature! I own I did not like her, after infancy was past; and I vexed her frequently by trying to bring down her arrogance: she never took an aversion to me, though. She had a wondrous constancy to old attachments: even Heathcliff kept his hold on her affections unalterably; and young Linton, with all his superiority, found it difficult to make an equally deep impression. He was my late master: that is his portrait over the fireplace. It used to hang on one side, and his wife's on the other; but hers has been removed, or else you might see something of what she was. Can you make that out?

Mrs. Dean raised the candle, and I discerned a soft-featured face, exceedingly resembling the young lady at the Heights, but more pensive and amiable in expression. It formed a sweet picture. The long light hair curled slightly on the temples; the eyes were large and serious; the figure almost too graceful. I did not marvel how Catherine Earnshaw could forget her first friend for such an individual. I marvelled much how he, with a mind to correspond with his person, could fancy my idea of Catherine Earnshaw.

'A very agreeable portrait,' I observed to the house-keeper. 'Is it like?'

'Yes,' she answered; 'but he looked better when he was animated; that is his everyday countenance: he wanted spirit in general.'

Catherine had kept up her acquaintance with the Lintons since her five-weeks' residence among them; and as she had no temptation to show her rough side in their company, and had the sense to be ashamed of being rude where she experienced such invariable courtesy, she imposed unwittingly on the old lady and gentleman by her ingenious cordiality; gained the admiration of Isabella, and the heart and soul of her brother: acquisitions that flattered her from the first for she was full of ambition and led her to adopt a double character without exactly intending to deceive any one. In the place where she heard Heathcliff termed a 'vulgar young ruffian,' and 'worse than a brute,' she took care not to act like him; but at home she had small inclination to practise politeness that would only be laughed at, and restrain an unruly nature when it would bring her neither credit nor praise.

Mr. Edgar seldom mustered courage to visit Wuthering Heights openly. He had a terror of Earnshaw's reputation, and shrunk from encountering him; and yet he was always received with our best attempts at civility: the master himself avoided offending him, knowing why he came; and if he could not be gracious, kept out of the way. I rather think his appearance there was distasteful to Catherine; she was not artful, never played the coquette, and had evidently an objection to her two friends meeting at all; for when Heathcliff expressed contempt of Linton in his presence, she could not half coincide, as she did in his absence; and when Linton evinced disgust and antipathy to Heathcliff, she dared not treat his sentiments with indifference, as if depreciation of her playmate were of scarcely any consequence to her. I've had many a laugh at her perplexities and untold

troubles, which she vainly strove to hide from my mockery. That sounds ill-natured: but she was so proud it became really impossible to pity her distresses, till she should be chastened into more humility. She did bring herself, finally, to confess, and to confide in me: there was not a soul else that she might fashion into an adviser.

Mr. Hindley had gone from home one afternoon, and Heathcliff presumed to give himself a holiday on the strength of it. He had reached the age of sixteen then, I think, and without having bad features, or being deficient in intellect, he contrived to convey an impression of inward and outward repulsiveness that his present aspect retains no traces of. In the first place, he had by that time lost the benefit of his early education: continual hard work, begun soon and concluded late, had extinguished any curiosity he once possessed in pursuit of knowledge, and any love for books or learning. His childhood's sense of superiority, instilled into him by the favours of old Mr. Earnshaw, was faded away. He struggled long to keep up an equality with Catherine in her studies, and yielded with poignant though silent regret: but he yielded completely; and there was no prevailing on him to take a step in the way of moving upward, when he found he must, necessarily, sink beneath his former level. Then personal appearance sympathised with mental deterioration: he acquired a slouching gait and ignoble look; his naturally reserved disposition was exaggerated into an almost idiotic excess of unsociable moroseness; and he took a grim pleasure, apparently, in exciting the aversion rather than the esteem of his few acquaintance.

Catherine and he were constant companions still at his seasons of respite from labour; but he had ceased to express his fondness for her in words, and recoiled with angry suspicion from her girlish caresses, as if conscious there could be no gratification in lavishing such marks of affection on him. On the before-named occasion he came into the house to announce his intention of doing nothing, while I was assisting Miss Cathy to arrange her dress: she had not reckoned on his taking it into his head to be idle; and imagining she would have the whole place to herself, she managed, by some means, to inform Mr. Edgar of her brother's absence, and was then preparing to receive him.

'Cathy, are you busy this afternoon?' asked Heathcliff. 'Are you going anywhere?'

'No, it is raining,' she answered.

'Why have you that silk frock on, then?' he said. '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,' observed the boy. 'I'll not work any more to-day: I'll stay with you.'

'Oh, but Joseph will tell,' she suggested; 'you'd better go!'

'Joseph is loading lime on the further side of Penistone Crag; it will take him till dark, and he'll never know.'

So, saying, he lounged to the fire, and sat down. Catherine reflected an instant, with knitted brows she found it needful to smooth the way for an intrusion. 'Isabella and Edgar Linton talked of calling this afternoon,' she said, at the conclusion of a minute's silence. 'As it rains, I hardly expect them; but they may come, and if they do, you run the risk of being scolded for no good.'

'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 – but I'll not —'

'That they what?' cried Catherine, gazing at him with a troubled countenance. 'Oh, Nelly!' she added petulantly, jerking her head away from my hands, 'you've combed my hair quite out of curl! That's enough; let me alone. What are you on the point of complaining about, Heathcliff?'

'Nothing – only look at the almanack on that wall,' he pointed to a framed sheet hanging near the window, and continued, 'The crosses are for the evenings you have spent with the Lintons, the dots for those spent with me. Do you see? I've marked every day.'

'Yes – very foolish: as if I took notice!' replied Catherine, in a peevish tone. 'And 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 more irritated. ‘What good do I get? What do you talk about? You might be dumb, or a baby, for anything you say to amuse me, or for anything you do, either!’

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

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

Her companion rose up, but he hadn’t time to express his feelings further, for a horse’s feet were heard on the flags, and having knocked gently, young Linton entered, his face brilliant with delight at the unexpected summon she had received. Doubtless Catherine marked the difference between her friends, as one came in and the other went out. The contrast resembled what you see in exchanging a bleak, hilly, coal country for a beautiful fertile valley; and his voice and greeting were as opposite as his aspect. He had a sweet, low manner of speaking, and pronounced his words as you do: that’s less gruff than we talk here, and softer.

‘I’m not come too soon, am I?’ he said, casting a look at me: I had begun to wipe the plate, and tidy some drawers at the far end in the dresser.

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

‘My work, Miss,’ I replied. (Mr. Hindley had given me directions to make a third party in any private visits Linton chose to pay.)

She stepped behind me and whispered crossly, ‘Take yourself and your dusters off; when company are in the house, servants don’t commence scouring and cleaning in the room where they are!’

‘It’s a good opportunity, now that master is away,’ I answered aloud: ‘he hates me to be fidgeting over these things in his presence. I’m sure Mr. Edgar will excuse me.’

‘I hate you to be fidgeting in MY presence,’ exclaimed the young lady imperiously, not allowing her guest time to speak: she had failed to recover her equanimity since the little dispute with Heathcliff.

‘I’m sorry for it, Miss Catherine,’ was my response; and I proceeded assiduously with my occupation.

She, supposing Edgar could not see her, snatched the cloth from my hand, and pinched me, with a prolonged wrench, very spitefully on the arm. I’ve said I did not love her, and rather relished mortifying her vanity now and then: besides, she hurt me extremely; so I started up from my knees, and screamed out, ‘Oh, Miss, that’s a nasty trick! You have no right to nip me, and I’m not going to bear it.’

‘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 had power to conceal her passion, it always set her whole complexion in a blaze.

‘What’s that, then?’ I retorted, showing a decided purple witness to refute her.

She stamped her foot, wavered a moment, and then, irresistibly impelled by the naughty spirit within her, slapped me on the cheek: a stinging blow that filled both eyes with water.

‘Catherine, love! Catherine!’ interposed Linton, greatly shocked at the double fault of falsehood and violence which his idol had committed.

‘Leave the room, Ellen!’ she repeated, trembling all over.

Little Hareton, who followed me everywhere, and was sitting near me on the floor, at seeing my tears commenced crying himself, and sobbed out complaints against ‘wicked aunt Cathy,’ which drew her fury on to his unlucky head: she seized his shoulders, and shook him till the poor child waxed livid, and Edgar thoughtlessly laid hold of her hands to deliver him. In an instant one was wrung free, and the astonished young man felt it applied over his own ear in a way that could not be mistaken for jest. He drew back in consternation. I lifted Hareton in my arms, and walked

off to the kitchen with him, leaving the door of communication open, for I was curious to watch how they would settle their disagreement. The insulted visitor moved to the spot where he had laid his hat, pale and with a quivering lip.

‘That’s right!’ I said to myself. ‘Take warning and begone! It’s a kindness to let you have a glimpse of her genuine disposition.’

‘Where are you going?’ demanded Catherine, advancing to the door.

He swerved aside, and attempted to pass.

‘You must not go!’ she exclaimed, energetically.

‘I must and shall!’ he replied in a subdued voice.

‘No,’ she persisted, grasping the handle; ‘not yet, Edgar Linton: sit down; 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.

Catherine was mute.

‘You’ve made me afraid and ashamed of you,’ he continued; ‘I’ll not come here again!’

Her eyes began to glisten and her lids to twinkle.

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

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

She dropped down on her knees by a chair, and set to weeping in serious earnest. Edgar persevered in his resolution as far as the court; there he lingered. I resolved to encourage him.

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

The soft thing looked askance through the window: he possessed the power to depart as much as a cat possesses the power to leave a mouse half killed, or a bird half eaten. Ah, I thought, there will be no saving him: he’s doomed, and flies to his fate! And so it was: he turned abruptly, hastened into the house again, shut the door behind him; and 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 (his ordinary frame of mind in that condition), I saw the quarrel had merely effected a closer intimacy had broken the outworks of youthful timidity, and enabled them to forsake the disguise of friendship, and confess themselves lovers.

Intelligence of Mr. Hindley’s arrival drove Linton speedily to his horse, and Catherine to her chamber. I went to hide little Hareton, and to take the shot out of the master’s fowling-piece, which he was fond of playing with in his insane excitement, to the hazard of the lives of any who provoked, or even attracted his notice too much; and I had hit upon the plan of removing it, that he might do less mischief if he did go the length of firing the gun.

Chapter IX

He entered, vociferating oaths dreadful to hear; and caught me in the act of stowing his son sway in the kitchen cupboard. Hareton was impressed with a wholesome terror of encountering either his wild beast's fondness or his madman's rage; for in one he ran a chance of being squeezed and kissed 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 chose to put him.

'There, I've found it out at last!' cried Hindley, pulling me back by the skin of my neck, like a dog. 'By heaven and hell, you've sworn between you to murder that child! I know how it is, now, that he is always out of my way. But, with the help of Satan, I shall make you swallow the carving-knife, Nelly! You needn't laugh; for I've just crammed Kenneth, head-downmost, in the Blackhorse marsh; and two is the same as one and I want to kill some of you: I shall have no rest till I do!'

'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. No law in England can hinder a man from keeping his house decent, and mine's abominable! Open your mouth.' He held the knife in his hand, and pushed its point between my teeth: but, for my part, I was never much afraid of his vagaries. I spat out, and affirmed it tasted detestably – 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 be, he deserves flaying alive for not running to welcome me, and for screaming as if I were a goblin. Unnatural cub, come hither! I'll teach thee to impose on a good-hearted, deluded father. Now, don't you think the lad would be handsomer cropped? It makes a dog fiercer, and I love something fierce – get me a scissors – something – fierce and trim! Besides, it's infernal affectation devilish conceit it is, to cherish our ears we're asses enough without them. Hush, child, hush! Well then, it is my darling! wisht, dry thy eyes there's a joy; kiss me. What! it won't? Kiss me, Hareton! Damn thee, kiss me! By God, as if I would rear such a monster! As sure as I'm living, I'll break the brat's neck.'

Poor Hareton was squalling and kicking in his father's arms with all his might, and redoubled his yells when he carried him upstairs and lifted him over the banister. I cried out that he would frighten the child into fits, and ran to rescue him. As I reached them, Hindley leant forward on the rails to listen to a noise below; almost forgetting what he had in his hands. 'Who is that?' he asked, hearing some one approaching the stairs'-foot. I leant forward also, for the purpose of signing to Heathcliff, whose step I recognised, not to come further; and, at the instant when my eye quitted Hareton, he gave a sudden spring, delivered himself from the careless grasp that held him, and fell.

There was scarcely time to experience a thrill of horror before we saw that the little wretch was safe. Heathcliff arrived underneath just at the critical moment; by a natural impulse he arrested his descent, and setting him on his feet, looked up to discover the author of the accident. A miser who has parted with a lucky lottery ticket for five shillings, and finds next day he has lost in the bargain five thousand pounds, could not show a blanker countenance than he did on beholding the figure of Mr. Earnshaw above. It expressed, plainer than words could do, the intensest anguish at having made himself the instrument of thwarting 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 witnessed his salvation; and I was presently below with my precious charge pressed to my heart. Hindley descended more leisurely, sobered and abashed.

'It is your fault, Ellen,' he said; 'you should have kept him out of sight: you should have taken him from me! Is he injured anywhere?'

'Injured!' I cried angrily; 'if he is not killed, he'll be an idiot! Oh! I wonder his mother does not rise from her grave to see how you use him. You're worse than a heathen treating your own

flesh and blood in that manner!’ He attempted to touch the child, who, on finding himself with me, sobbed off his terror directly. At the first finger his father laid on him, however, he shrieked again louder than before, and struggled as if he would go into convulsions.

‘You shall not meddle with him!’ I continued. ‘He hates you, they all hate you, that’s the truth! A happy family you have; and a pretty state you’re come to!’

‘I shall come to a prettier, yet, Nelly,’ laughed the misguided man, recovering his hardness. ‘At present, convey yourself and him away. And hark you, Heathcliff! clear you too quite from my reach and hearing. I wouldn’t murder you to-night; unless, perhaps, I set the house on fire: but that’s as my fancy goes.’

While saying this he took a pint bottle of brandy from the dresser, and poured some into a tumbler.

‘Nay, don’t!’ I entreated. ‘Mr. Hindley, do take warning. Have mercy on this unfortunate boy, if you care nothing for yourself!’

‘Any one will do better for him than I shall,’ he answered.

‘Have mercy on your own soul!’ I said, endeavouring to snatch the glass from his hand.

‘Not I! On the contrary, I shall have great pleasure in sending it to perdition to punish its Maker,’ exclaimed the blasphemer. ‘Here’s to its hearty damnation!’

He drank the spirits and impatiently bade us go; terminating his command with a sequel of horrid imprecations too bad to repeat or remember.

‘It’s a pity he cannot kill himself with drink,’ observed Heathcliff, muttering an echo of curses back when the door was shut. ‘He’s doing his very utmost; but his constitution defies him. Mr. Kenneth says he would wager his mare that he’ll outlive any man on this side Gimmerton, and go to the grave a hoary sinner; unless some happy chance out of the common course befall him.’

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 the settle, when he flung himself on a bench by the wall, removed from the fire and remained silent.

I was rocking Hareton on my knee, and humming a song that began, —

*It was far in the night, and the bairnies grat,
The mither beneath the mools heard that,³¹*

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 and approached the hearth. I, supposing she was going to say something, looked up. The expression of her face seemed disturbed and anxious. Her lips were half asunder, as if she meant to speak, and she drew a breath; but it escaped in a sigh instead of a sentence. I resumed my song; not having forgotten her recent behaviour.

‘Where’s Heathcliff?’ she said, interrupting me.

‘About his work 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 a drop or two trickle from Catherine’s cheek to the flags. Is she sorry for her shameful conduct? I asked myself. That will be a novelty: but she may come to the point as she will I sha’n’t help her! No, she felt small trouble regarding any subject, save her own concerns.

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

³¹ Цитата из поэмы Вальтера Скотта «Дева Озера» по мотивам шотландских баллад. Это история о возмездии с элементами волшебства.

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

‘Nelly, will you keep a secret for me?’ she pursued, kneeling down by me, and lifting her winsome eyes to my face with that sort of look which turns off bad temper, even when one has all the right in the world to indulge it.

‘Is it worth keeping?’ I inquired, less sulkily.

‘Yes, and it worries me, and I must let it out! I want to know what I should do. To-day, Edgar Linton has asked me to marry him, and I’ve given him an answer. Now, before I tell you whether it was a consent or denial, you tell me which it ought to have been.’

‘Really, Miss Catherine, how can I know?’ I replied. ‘To be sure, considering the exhibition you performed in his presence this afternoon, I might say it would be wise to refuse him: since he asked you after that, he must either be hopelessly stupid or a venturesome fool.’

‘If you talk so, I won’t tell you any more,’ she returned, peevishly rising to her feet. ‘I accepted him, Nelly. Be quick, and say whether I was wrong!’

‘You accepted him! Then what good is it discussing the matter? You have pledged your word, and cannot retract.’

‘But say whether I should have done so, do!’ she exclaimed in an irritated tone; chafing her hands together, and frowning.

‘There are many things to be considered before that question can be answered properly,’ I said, sententiously. ‘First and foremost, do you love Mr. Edgar?’

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

Then I put her through the following catechism: for a girl of twenty-two it was not injudicious.

‘Why do you love him, Miss Cathy?’

‘Nonsense, I do, that’s sufficient.’

‘By no means; you must say why?’

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

‘Bad!’ was my commentary.

‘And because he is young and cheerful.’

‘Bad, still.’

‘And because he loves me.’

‘Indifferent, coming there.’

‘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.’

‘Not at all. 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!’

‘And why?’

‘Nay; you are making a jest of it: it is exceedingly ill-natured! It’s no jest to me!’ said the young lady, scowling, and turning her face to the fire.

‘I’m very far from jesting, Miss Catherine,’ I replied. ‘You love Mr. Edgar because he is handsome, and young, and cheerful, and rich, and loves you. The last, however, goes for nothing: you would love him without that, probably; and with it you wouldn’t, unless he possessed the four former attractions.’

‘No, to be sure not: I should only pity him – hate him, perhaps, if he were ugly, and a clown.’

‘But there are several other handsome, rich young men in the world: handsomer, possibly, and richer than he is. What should hinder you from loving them?’

‘If there be any, they are out of my way: 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. I wish you would speak rationally.’

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

‘I don’t want your permission for that. 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; the old lady and gentleman will not object, I think; you will escape from a disorderly, comfortless 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 whichever place the soul lives. In my soul and in my heart, I’m convinced I’m wrong!’

‘That’s very strange! I cannot make it out.’

‘It’s my secret. But if you will not mock at me, I’ll explain it: I can’t do it distinctly; but I’ll give you a feeling of how I feel.’

She seated herself by me again: her countenance grew sadder and graver, and her clasped hands trembled.

‘Nelly, do you never dream queer dreams?’ she said, suddenly, after some minutes’ reflection.

‘Yes, now and then,’ I answered.

‘And so do I. I’ve dreamt in my life 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 at any part of it.’

‘Oh! don’t, Miss Catherine!’ I cried. ‘We’re dismal enough without conjuring up ghosts and visions to perplex us. Come, come, be merry and like yourself! Look at little Hareton! HE’S dreaming nothing dreary. How sweetly he smiles in his sleep!’

‘Yes; and how sweetly his father curses in his solitude! You remember him, I daresay, when he was just such another as that chubby thing: nearly as young and innocent. However, Nelly, I shall oblige you to listen: it’s not long; and I’ve no power to be merry to-night.’

‘I won’t hear it, I won’t hear it!’ I repeated, hastily.

I was superstitious about dreams then, and am still; and Catherine had an unusual gloom in her aspect, that made me dread something from which I might shape a prophecy, and foresee a fearful catastrophe. She was vexed, but she did not proceed. Apparently taking up another subject, she recommenced in a short time.

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

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

‘But it is not for that. I dreamt once that I was there.’

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

She laughed, and held me down; for I made a motion to leave my chair.

‘This is nothing,’ cried she: ‘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, as well as the other. I’ve no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there 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: and that 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.’

Ere this speech ended I became sensible of Heathcliff's presence. Having noticed a slight movement, I turned my head, and saw him rise from the bench, and 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. My companion, sitting on the ground, was prevented by the back of the settle from remarking his presence or departure; but I started, and bade her hush!

'Why?' she asked, gazing nervously round.

'Joseph is here,' I answered, catching opportunely the roll of his cartwheels up the road; 'and Heathcliff will come in with him. I'm not sure whether he were not at the door this moment.'

'Oh, he couldn't overhear me at the door!' said she. 'Give me Hareton, while you get the supper, and when it is ready ask me to sup with you. I want to cheat my uncomfortable conscience, and be convinced that Heathcliff has no notion of these things. He has not, 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! As soon as 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 quite deserted in the world? Because, Miss Catherine –'

'He quite deserted! we separated!' she exclaimed, with an accent of indignation. 'Who is to separate us, pray? They'll meet the fate of Milo!³² Not as long as I live, Ellen: for no mortal creature. Every Linton on the face of the earth might melt into nothing before I could consent to forsake Heathcliff. Oh, that's not what I intend, that's not what I mean! I shouldn't be Mrs. Linton were such a price demanded! He'll be as much to me as he has been all his lifetime. Edgar must shake off his antipathy, and tolerate him, at least. He will, when he learns my true feelings towards him. Nelly, I see now you think me a selfish wretch; but did it never strike you that if Heathcliff and I married, we should be beggars? whereas, if I marry Linton I can aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of my brother's power.'

'With your husband's money, Miss Catherine?' I asked. 'You'll find him not so pliable as you calculate upon: and, though I'm hardly a judge, I think that's the worst motive you've given yet for being the wife of young Linton.'

'It is not,' retorted she; 'it is the best! The others were the satisfaction of my whims: and for Edgar's sake, too, to satisfy him. This is for the sake of one who comprehends in his person my feelings to Edgar and myself. I cannot express it; but surely you and everybody have a notion that there is or should be an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of my creation, if I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning: 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: it is impracticable; and –'

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

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

'You'll keep that?' she asked, eagerly.

³² Milo – Милон Кротонский, древнегреческий борец и герой, который был съеден волками.

‘No, I’ll not promise,’ I repeated.

She was about to insist, when the entrance of Joseph finished our conversation; and Catherine removed her seat to a corner, and nursed Hareton, while I made the supper. After it was cooked, my fellow-servant and I began to quarrel who should carry some to Mr. Hindley; and we didn’t settle it till all was nearly cold. Then we came to the agreement that we would let him ask, if he wanted any; for we feared particularly to go into his presence when he had been some time alone.

‘And how isn’t that nowt comed in fro’ th’ field, be this time? What is he about? girt idle seeght!’³³ demanded the old man, looking round for Heathcliff.

‘I’ll call him,’ I replied. ‘He’s in the barn, I’ve no doubt.’

I went and called, but got no answer. On returning, I whispered to Catherine that he had heard a good part of what she said, I was sure; and told how I saw him quit the kitchen just as she complained of her brother’s conduct regarding him. She jumped up in a fine fright, flung Hareton on to the settle, and ran to seek for her friend herself; not taking leisure to consider why she was so flurried, or how her talk would have affected him. She was absent such a while that Joseph proposed we should wait no longer. He cunningly conjectured they were staying away in order to avoid hearing his protracted blessing. They were ‘ill enough for ony fahl manners,’ he affirmed. And on their behalf he added that night a special prayer to the usual quarter-of-an-hour’s supplication before meat, and would have tacked another to the end of the grace, had not his young mistress broken in upon him with a hurried command that he must run down the road, and, wherever Heathcliff had rambled, find and make him re-enter directly!

‘I want to speak to him, and I MUST, before I go upstairs,’ she said. ‘And the gate is open: he is somewhere out of hearing; for he would not reply, though I shouted at the top of the fold as loud as I could.’

Joseph objected at first; she was too much in earnest, however, to suffer contradiction; and at last he placed his hat on his head, and walked grumbling forth. Meantime, Catherine paced up and down the floor, exclaiming ‘I wonder where he is – I wonder where he can be! What did I say, Nelly? I’ve forgotten. Was he vexed at my bad humour this afternoon? Dear! tell me what I’ve said to grieve him? I do wish he’d come. I do wish he would!’

‘What a noise for nothing!’ I cried, though rather uneasy myself. ‘What a trifle scares you! It’s surely no great cause of alarm that Heathcliff should take a moonlight saunter on the moors, or even lie too sulky to speak to us in the hayloft. I’ll engage he’s lurking there. See if I don’t ferret him out!’

I departed to renew my search; its result was disappointment, and Joseph’s quest ended in the same.

‘Yon lad gets war und war!’ observed he on re-entering. ‘He’s left th’ gate at t’ full swing, and Miss’s pony has trodden dahn two rigs o’ corn, and plattered through, raight o’er into t’ meadow! Hahsomdiver, t’ maister ’ull play t’ devil to-morn, and he’ll do weel. He’s patience ittseeln wi’ sich careless, offald craters patience ittseeln he is! Bud he’ll not be soa allus yah’s see, all on ye! Yah mun’n’t drive him out of his heead for nowt!’³⁴

‘Have you found Heathcliff, you ass?’ interrupted Catherine. ‘Have you been looking for him, as I ordered?’

³³ Он еще не вернулся с поля к этому времени? Что это с ним? Что за зрелище!

³⁴ С этим парнем все хуже и хуже. Оставил ворота открытыми, и лошадка нашей мисс из конюшни на гумно, а оттуда на луг! Хозяин завтра будет зол как черт, и он будет прав. Он само терпение с этим беспечным созданием – терпение как оно есть! Только вот не всегда он будет так терпелив – вот увидите! Вы ни за что на свете не должны выводить из себя такого человека!

‘I sud more likker look for th’ horse,’ he replied. ‘It ’ud be to more sense. Bud I can look for norther horse nur man of a neeght loike this as black as t’ chimbley! und Heathcliff’s noan t’ chap to coom at MY whistle happen he’ll be less hard o’ hearing wi’ YE!³⁵’

It WAS a very dark evening for summer: the clouds appeared inclined to thunder, and I said we had better all sit down; the approaching rain would be certain to bring him home without further trouble. However, Catherine would not be persuaded into tranquillity. She kept wandering to and fro, from the gate to the door, in a state of agitation which permitted no repose; and at length took up a permanent situation on one side of the wall, near the road: where, heedless of my expostulations and the growling thunder, and the great drops that began to plash around her, she remained, calling at intervals, and then listening, and then crying outright. She beat Hareton, or any child, at a good passionate fit of crying.

About midnight, while we still sat up, the storm came rattling over the Heights in full fury. There was a violent wind, as well as thunder, and either one or the other split a tree off at the corner of the building: a huge bough fell across the roof, and knocked down a portion of the east chimney-stack, sending a clatter of stones and soot into the kitchen-fire. We thought a bolt had fallen in the middle of us; and Joseph swung on to his knees, beseeching the Lord to remember the patriarchs Noah and Lot, and, as in former times, spare the righteous, though he smote the ungodly. I felt some sentiment that it must be a judgment on us also. The Jonah, in my mind, was Mr. Earnshaw; and I shook the handle of his den that I might ascertain if he were yet living. He replied audibly enough, in a fashion which made my companion vociferate, more clamorously than before, that a wide distinction might be drawn between saints like himself and sinners like his master. But the uproar passed away in twenty minutes, leaving us all unharmed; excepting Cathy, who got thoroughly drenched for her obstinacy in refusing to take shelter, and standing bonnetless and shawlless to catch as much water as she could with her hair and clothes. She came in and lay down on the settle, all soaked as she was, turning her face to the back, and putting her hands before it.

³⁵ Я бы лучше поискал лошадь, было бы больше пользы. Но в такую ночь не найдешь ни лошади, ни человека. Черная, как дымовая труба! А Хитклиф не тот, кто прибежит на мой зов – а вот если вы позовете, то он придет.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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