

Charlotte BRONTË, *Jane Eyre*¹ (1847)

Extract from Chapter XV, the last one of Volume I

Employed as a governess by Mr. Rochester for his ward Adèle, Jane Eyre is awoken in the middle of the night by a demonic laughter right behind her door.

This was a demoniac laugh -- low, suppressed, and deep -- uttered, as it seemed, at the very keyhole of my chamber door. The head of my bed was near the door, and I thought at first the goblin-laughter stood at my bedside -- or rather, crouched² by my pillow: but I rose, looked round, and could see nothing; while, as I still gazed, the unnatural sound was reiterated: and I
5 knew it came from behind the panels. My first impulse was to rise and fasten the bolt;³ my next, again to cry out, "Who is there?"
Something gurgled and moaned.⁴ Ere long, steps retreated up the gallery towards the third-storey⁵ staircase: a door had lately been made to shut in that staircase;⁶ I heard it open and close, and all was still.⁷
10 "Was that Grace Poole?⁸ and is she possessed with a devil?" thought I. Impossible now to remain longer by myself: I must go to Mrs. Fairfax.⁹ I hurried on my frock and a shawl; I withdrew the bolt and opened the door with a trembling hand. There was a candle burning just outside, and on the matting in the gallery. I was surprised at this circumstance: but still more was I amazed to perceive the air quite dim, as if filled with smoke; and, while looking to the
15 right hand and left, to find whence these blue wreaths¹⁰ issued, I became further aware of a strong smell of burning.
Something creaked: it was a door ajar;¹¹ and that door was Mr. Rochester's, and the smoke rushed in a cloud from thence. I thought no more of Mrs. Fairfax; I thought no more of Grace Poole, or the laugh: in an instant, I was within the chamber. Tongues of flame darted round
20 the bed: the curtains¹² were on fire. In the midst of blaze and vapour, Mr. Rochester lay stretched¹³ motionless, in deep sleep.
"Wake! wake!" I cried. I shook him, but he only murmured and turned: the smoke had stupefied him. Not a moment could be lost: the very sheets¹⁴ were kindling, I rushed to his basin and ewer;¹⁵ fortunately, one was wide and the other deep, and both were filled with
25 water. I heaved¹⁶ them up, deluged the bed and its occupant, flew back to my own room, brought my own water-jug, baptized the couch afresh, and, by God's aid, succeeded in extinguishing the flames which were devouring it.

¹ Eyre is pronounced like « heir » (the "h" is not pronounced), which means "héritier".

² accroupie

³ verrouiller la porte

⁴ gazouiller et gémir

⁵ étage

⁶ cage d'escalier

⁷ calme, tranquille

⁸ One of the servants at Thornfield Hall, Mr. Rochester's home. Jane Eyre has already heard such strange, unnatural laughter coming from the third storey and she attributes it to Grace Poole. [Thorn: *épine*]

⁹ Mrs Fairfax is the housekeeper at Thornfield Hall.

¹⁰ volutes

¹¹ entre-ouverte

¹² rideaux

¹³ étendu

¹⁴ draps

¹⁵ broc, cruche

¹⁶ hisser ; ici, soulever

Le personnage, ses figures et ses avatars

30 The hiss of the quenched element,¹⁷ the breakage of a pitcher which I flung from my hand when I had emptied it, and, above all, the splash of the shower-bath I had liberally bestowed, roused¹⁸ Mr. Rochester at last. Though it was now dark, I knew he was awake; because I heard him fulminating strange anathemas at finding himself lying in a pool of water.

"Is there a flood?" he cried.

"No, sir," I answered; "but there has been a fire: get up, do; you are quenched¹⁹ now; I will fetch you a candle."

35 "In the name of all the elves in Christendom, is that Jane Eyre?" he demanded. "What have you done with me, witch, sorceress? Who is in the room besides you? Have you plotted to drown me?"

"I will fetch you a candle, sir; and, in Heaven's name, get up. Somebody has plotted²⁰ something: you cannot too soon find out who and what it is."

¹⁷ *Le sifflement quand le feu s'est éteint sous le déluge d'eau*

¹⁸ SYN. To wake up

¹⁹ *trempe*

²⁰ *comploter*