

Why did Mr Rochester allow this woman in his home?
I could not understand it.

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I did not see Mr Rochester all day. That evening I had tea with Mrs Fairfax.

'You did not eat much dinner,' said Mrs Fairfax. 'I hope you are not ill.'

'Oh, I have never felt better,' I said.

She looked out of the window. 'Mr Rochester has had good weather for his ride.'

'I did not know he was out.'

'Oh, he left after breakfast. He has gone to Mr Eshton's house party, near Millcote. There is a large party of people there, I believe. Mr Rochester is very popular with the fine families around Millcote – and the ladies of course. He is so funny and clever when he speaks. He is not perhaps the most handsome man ... but of course he has a large fortune and good blood.'

'Are there ladies at Mr Eshton's?' I asked.

'There is Mrs Eshton and her three daughters. There will be Lady Ingram, with her two lovely girls – Mary and Blanche. Blanche is very beautiful. And she sings and plays the piano very well.'

'And she is not married?'

'No. The Ingrams are a very old family, but Mary and Blanche do not have large fortunes. All their father's money went to the brother, I believe.'

'Does Mr Rochester like her?'

'Well, there is a big difference in age – she is only twenty-five, and he is nearly forty. Please eat something.'

'I am not hungry,' I replied.

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That night I laughed at myself. There was never a more stupid person than Jane Eyre.

'You?' I said. 'A favourite of Mr Rochester? He is a man of fine family and a man of the world. He is your master. You are a governess! You are no one.'

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Two weeks later, a letter came for Mrs Fairfax while we were at breakfast.



'It is from the master,' she said. I drank my coffee. Why was my face suddenly hot?

'Well,' she said, 'sometimes we are too quiet. Now we will be too busy. He is coming back in three days. And all the fine people are coming with him! Leah! John! Hurry!'

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Three days later, the house shone. There were clean bedclothes on every bed and wonderful smells in the kitchen. Adèle was madly excited.

They arrived on Thursday evening. Adèle and I ran to the window to look at the horses and carriages. Mr Rochester was on his black horse. Miss Ingram was on a fine white horse. Adèle wanted to run down.

'Mr Rochester will be very angry,' I told her. 'You must stay upstairs with me.'

I allowed her to watch from the top of the stairs.

'What beautiful ladies!' she said. 'Will Mr Rochester