

Becoming Brontë
A stage play in two acts

By Emily Cicchini
© 2008
www.emilycicchini.com

Creative Commons
Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works
3.0 Unported License
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: SOME RIGHTS RESERVED

This play is being released royalty free under a Creative Commons license: you can read, download, copy, distribute, and perform this play in educational or non-profit settings, but you must credit the author by name in all program and publicity materials.

Additionally, if you use this material, you must post information here on this website about your experiences (photos, videos, reviews, comments, questions, suggestions). This includes responses to simply reading the text itself, as well as productions.

In production, you may use fragments, selected scenes, or excerpts, and may cut or rearrange material suit your particular performance needs. You may record, film, or videotape this material, as long as the distribution of these recordings is only for non-commercial and/or non-profit theatrical publicity purposes. You may double and/or non-traditionally cast this play. However, you may not add any material to the play.

This play is in progress, and the author will continue to develop existing and new material on an ongoing basis. You may check for updated material from www.emilycicchini.com. You are not required to use the most current version, and may mix material from any current or past version as you see fit.

Finally, the author reserves the right to revoke this license on particular works with 120 days notice at any time. As such, if you are planning a major production, it would be wise to notify the author as soon as possible, and check the site frequently for updates. If you are in the process of production and material which you are using is removed, every effort will be made by the author to allow your performance to continue as planned. If you are interested in commercial licenses for any of this material, you must contact the author prior to use and negotiate a separate agreement via the website.

CHARACTERS

EMILY JANE BRONTË– Poet, at age 21, and soon-to-be author of a single novel, *Wuthering Heights*. Tall. Brooding. Insecure.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË– The oldest sister, author of *Jane Eyre*. Most popular of the three sisters. Practical. Plain. Responsible.

ANNE BRONTË– The youngest sister. Religious. She eventually wrote two novels, *Agnes Gray* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Not acclaimed, but still in print.

WILLIAM WEIGHTMAN– A young curate who came to study with the Reverend Patrick Brontë, their father, unseen in this play, in the Summer of 1839. Between 25-35. Sometimes described with red hair.

SETTINGS

The courtyard/graveyard of Haworth Parsonage, The Brontë's living room, a lecture hall, and the ever-present Yorkshire moors.

TIME

1839-1842, collapsed. A very specific incident at an early point in their development. The scenes are continuous in two acts.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The setting dissolved quickly from place to place with simple lighting, exits and entrances, like a piece of chamber music. In fact, the liberal use of music is encouraged. Type, either classical or contemporary, should be determined in relation to the total production design, which may be selected realism or simply abstract. Costuming best be iconic: the women keep the same high-waisted period dresses throughout: Weightman might have a fancy vest and a darker one. Anne might sport a parasol, Charlotte and Emily aprons and shawls that they take on and off. The pace should be lively and precise. The dialect need not be severe nor Irish in any respect, just a good solid standard British, easy on the audience's ear.

ACT ONE

AT RISE: Music. In the background, a suggestion of the shadowy landscape of Yorkshire, England -- scrubby hills and pastures marred by rocky outcrops. This is the dominant scenic element. Even when scenes are set inside and around various locations, this mystical countryside fills in for walls and doors.

(Fade up on the graveyard next to the living quarters of Haworth Parsonage. We see the edge of a short, stone wall and a number of slab-like gravestones. EMILY BRONTË lies on the ground, knees bent, feet slicing the air, with a paper and a pen, writing. She wears a simple dress of the 1830's. Music fades. Her rosewood writing desk is open beside her)

EMILY: July the 30th, 1839. A secret diary paper to be opened four years in the future--that is, if all be well. It is Wednesday morning, about nine o'clock. The weather is wild and rainy, but I don't mind. I have a good many books on hand, but I make small progress with any. I mean to do great things. (more dogs bark in the distance) And now I close, sending from far an exhortation of courage...

CHARLOTTE: (offstage) Where are you...birthday girl?

EMILY: Ex-her-ta-tion?

CHARLOTTE: (offstage) Twenty-one can still have fun...

EMILY: Exhortation of courage. (makes the 'e' into an 'o') Courage to the exiled and harassed Anne. For her eyes only. Emily Jane Brontë.

(EMILY gathers up her writing desk, sits up on a gravestone. CHARLOTTE BRONTË enters. She is more controlled and serene than her sister, but romantic, with a touch of frill. She wears spectacles and walks in little steps. She carries a basket of damp laundry, which she will lay out to dry)

CHARLOTTE: There you are, odd thing. What shall we do for your special day?

EMILY: Looks as though we'll do the wash.

CHARLOTTE: (pulls something out of pile of clothes) Here's a present. Couldn't afford the wrap...

EMILY: A book of Shelley?

CHARLOTTE: Did you think that I'd forgot?

EMILY: I don't remember celebrating yours.

CHARLOTTE: Did you tend to Papa this morning?

EMILY: I put out his cakes and tea...

CHARLOTTE: What were you writing? About the land of Gondal?

EMILY: Give me the laundry.

CHARLOTTE: Let me see.

EMILY: It's private.

CHARLOTTE: Please? Pretty please....

EMILY: (as she tucks the letter in her apron) No, I told you.

CHARLOTTE: You never let me look anymore. Our imagination is dead. I worry that mine is, anyway. (beat) Darling. You make me fret. Why won't you be more loving?

EMILY: I am invulnerable to love. (pause) What are we going to do about Anne? We can't leave her in that terrible place to rot.

CHARLOTTE: Blake Hall is an excellent position. The Inghams pay quite handsomely...

EMILY: But she can't abide working as a governess!

CHARLOTTE: Neither can I.

EMILY: But, she's suffering...

CHARLOTTE: Nonsense. It will give her character. Would you wish to replace her?

EMILY: Don't be daft. I won't leave Papa.

CHARLOTTE: It's a terrible fact. Some must work, and some must run the household...

EMILY: I couldn't live in with strangers. You know how I am--

CHARLOTTE: Perhaps I don't know you at all. How is anyone to know you when you constantly cloister yourself away? You're always hiding out-of-doors...

EMILY: I don't mean to hurt you, Charlotte. Honestly, I don't. It's merely that I long to be free.

CHARLOTTE: Free from what?

EMILY: Free from common existence. From earthy wants and needs. I cannot tolerate the petty details.

CHARLOTTE: But it's the petty details that are most important. Until you understand that, you'll never truly be free--

EMILY: I heard a pack of wild dogs morning.

CHARLOTTE: There are not any wild dogs in all Yorkshire.

(EMILY jumps up and darts around the gravestones)

CHARLOTTE: (cont.) Where are you going?

EMILY: La-lala-lala-la. Catch me if you can.

CHARLOTTE: Honestly, Em. Show some respect--

EMILY: What respect. You lay the laundry here to dry.

CHARLOTTE: What if Papa sees?

EMILY: He won't. He's going blind! (beat) Come now. It's my birthday.

CHARLOTTE: All right then. I'll play! What are we doing?

EMILY: Why -- looking for a husband, of course. Here's one. Father. Born 1801. Ohh, he's a chipper chap...

(While CHARLOTTE lays out the laundry, EMILY hides herself from CHARLOTTE's view)

CHARLOTTE: Uh. This yard completely unsettles me. It's so awfully Gothic! Have you finished that story by Mary Shelley? To think, bringing life back from the dead. And that pitiful Creature, so -- misunderstood. Why can't novels end happily? Shouldn't the reader have some hope for beauty and a proper redemption -- Emmy? Oh, you! Come out, slowly, and I promise I won't have a fit. Emmy? Emily!

EMILY: (finally popping out behind CHARLOTTE, sheet around her head) Arrrggghhh!

CHARLOTTE: Oh, I hate you! You know I do!

EMILY: (with scary voice) I am the ghost of romantic love, come to chain down your heart!

CHARLOTTE: The way I see it, marriage should be a rational choice. A woman should never fall in love before her vows, and then, only six-months-to-a-year after.

EMILY: Charlotte! Let's take on the characters of the dead and haunt the weary Earth!

WEIGHTMAN: (off) Hallo? Is anyone about?

EMILY: What now?

CHARLOTTE: Sounds like a man.

EMILY: We don't know any men.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, that's right. Papa said something about a visitor...

EMILY: Why didn't you tell me?

CHARLOTTE: Didn't want to trouble you with petty details...

WEIGHTMAN: (off) You there! Can you take my horse...

(EMILY grabs her writing desk and heads off)

EMILY: I have to beat the rugs.

CHARLOTTE: (Stopping her) Be sociable for a change. (pulling at EMILY's dress) Straighten up!

EMILY: Spikes and nails!

CHARLOTTE: (rubbing her own cheeks) How do I look?

EMILY: Like you always look.

CHARLOTTE: Be nice. He'll be here and gone in a moment. (looks off-whispers) Oh, look. He's the picture of "Mr. Darcy!"

EMILY: I hate Jane Austen.

(WILLIAM WEIGHTMAN enters. He is in his early twenties, bright, handsome, but also slightly to eager or clumsy, but his fashionable clothes are somewhat disheveled from his ride. He carries a large bag. CHARLOTTE stands boldly forward. EMILY shrinks away) WEIGHTMAN Pardon me, Misses.

CHARLOTTE: Good morning, may we help you?

WEIGHTMAN: Perhaps. I'm looking for the Reverend Brontë?

CHARLOTTE: And why, may I ask?

WEIGHTMAN: Th-that is a question I hope he can answer...

CHARLOTTE: Hmm. Mysterious. Where do you hail from?

WEIGHTMAN: Well, I--I'm originally from Appleby, but I've just finished at Dunham University--

CHARLOTTE: Indeed. And what was your subject?

WEIGHTMAN: The Classics, mainly. And of course, Theology.

CHARLOTTE: My, my. A learned man. (To EMILY) Well now, sis. What do you say? (EMILY drops her writing desk and scrambles to pick it up. WEIGHTMAN notices, continues to keep an eye on her) Forgive my sister. She's "a mind forever voyaging through strange seas of thought alone."

WEIGHTMAN: That's Wordsworth.

CHARLOTTE: Ooh. You're quick!

WEIGHTMAN: I had the good fortune to hear him speak recently.

CHARLOTTE: How thrilling. I find his poems the pinnacle of wisdom and beauty.

WEIGHTMAN: He even signed my book.

CHARLOTTE: How refreshing to meet someone with whom to discuss belles lettres!

WEIGHTMAN: Would you like to see? I think I have it with me, somewhere...

(WEIGHTMAN searches through his bag. EMILY is burning with discomfort)

CHARLOTTE: This is a day, this is a special day indeed....

WEIGHTMAN: This is the right place? I stopped for directions... but...

CHARLOTTE: The Haworth dialect's rather hard to muddle through.

WEIGHTMAN: You're not from here, then...do I detect an Irish lilt?

CHARLOTTE: No, no. Papa's taught us well, we're not Irish, really, born in Bradford...

WEIGHTMAN: Bradford, eh? (gives up on bag) Oh, well. Sorry. I cannot seem to find it.

CHARLOTTE: Pity.

WEIGHTMAN: Hmm. Perhaps it is in my trunk. It should be arriving here in just a few days...

CHARLOTTE: No matter. So what exactly is the purpose of your vi--your trunk?

WEIGHTMAN: Why, it holds my possessions...

CHARLOTTE: Pardon me, I'm -- confused...

WEIGHTMAN: I believe the Reverend Brontë is expecting me...

CHARLOTTE: Yes, yes, he said we'd have a visit...Oh. I see. (aside, To EMILY) He must be Papa's new curate from the church!

EMILY: (mouthing the words only) Oh no!

WEIGHTMAN: If you say so, I must be. But you couldn't possibly be The Reverend's daughters--

CHARLOTTE: Certainly we are.

WEIGHTMAN: But clergymen's daughters are notoriously plain.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, a flatterer, have we? (quite un-amused now) Papa did not tell me the true nature of your business. I'm Miss Brontë. And this also is Miss Brontë. Welcome to Haworth Parsonage. Mr.--

WEIGHTMAN: Weightman. William Weightman.

CHARLOTTE: Weightman. A substantial name. Curates stay in the cottage by the chapel. Laundry is due Friday for delivery before the Sunday service...

WEIGHTMAN: Do I detect a shift in tone--

CHARLOTTE: Over there is the pantry and the kitchen. Come and get your plate from the window when you hear the bell. Papa's study is the only room of the house in which you are allowed. This, of course, is our residence...

EMILY: And this -- our graveyard.

WEIGHTMAN: Ah! She speaks!

CHARLOTTE: Don't quote Shakespeare. It will only encourage her...Shame on us. You must pardon my behavior. Father's curates are usually unbearably thick and self-seeking.

WEIGHTMAN: What a legacy. I hope you will not find me so.

CHARLOTTE: No. I believe you are something else entirely.

EMILY: Father is in his study. He will not come out till high noon.

CHARLOTTE: Now, darling. I imagine he might make an exception...

EMILY: He is contemplating matters of extreme importance and must not be disturbed.

CHARLOTTE: Nonsense. I'm sure Mr. Weightman's very anxious to see him--I'll just run and knock on his door.

EMILY: Tallie!

CHARLOTTE: Emmy.

EMILY: I'll go with you.

CHARLOTTE: Stay and entertain the young man.

EMILY: But it's not proper...I don't even know him...

CHARLOTTE: I'm sure we can bend propriety a bit. Don't you think, Mr. Weightman? Besides, it is my sister's birthday, and a little entertainment couldn't do her harm...

WEIGHTMAN: Certainly. I strive to accommodate nearly everyone, particularly on their birthdays.

CHARLOTTE: Excellent. I'll just be a moment, then.

(CHARLOTTE leaves. A long, long pause) WEIGHTMAN I had a very fine journey in today. Yes I did. A bit foggy at first, but things soon cleared up.

(pause) EMILY: You didn't see a pack of wild dogs, did you?

WEIGHTMAN: No, I can't say that I did.

EMILY: Did you gallop all the way?

WEIGHTMAN: Had to.

EMILY: You shouldn't gallop over these roads. They're full of stones.

WEIGHTMAN: My horse was limping a bit...

EMILY: (attempting to escape) Did you warn the groundskeep? He may have thrown a shoe...

WEIGHTMAN: (stopping her) Let it be. Listen. I used to be very nervous meeting new people. I was afraid they were thinking how simple I was. Until I realized they probably felt the same way.

EMILY: I never feel simple.

WEIGHTMAN: That I believe.

EMILY: Shall you keep him here? During your stay?

WEIGHTMAN: Who?

EMILY: Your horse, silly.

WEIGHTMAN: Oh, I think not. He belongs to my uncle. I'll have to send him back in a few days.

EMILY: Don't you have a horse of your own?

WEIGHTMAN: Don't you?

EMILY: Just an old cart horse. He's no good to ride.

WEIGHTMAN: Oh, I see. Do you like to ride?

EMILY: I would if we had a decent horse. It's not because we're poor, you know. We don't need them. People around here come to us, you know. To come to church.

WEIGHTMAN: Say you wanted to go to Leeds...

EMILY: We walk.

WEIGHTMAN: Across those hills?

EMILY: It's good for the soul. Being out there. The smell of the moss, the slap of the bog under your boots...

WEIGHTMAN: Sounds -- strenuous. Haven't you another remedy to ease your soul?

EMILY: No, I don't. Do you like to go on walks?

WEIGHTMAN: Only when it cannot be avoided.

EMILY: Maybe I shall force you to, sometime.

WEIGHTMAN: Maybe you should. What's that line, "True beauty dwells in deep retreats..."

EMILY: Curses on Wordsworth.

WEIGHTMAN: Don't you enjoy his poetry?

EMILY: He has the originality of sealing wax.

(CHARLOTTE enters)

CHARLOTTE: Good news. Father will see you now. But please: don't be put off by his squint. He's going blind, but his pride won't admit it. And, don't ask to see a written sermon. He never writes them down -- he preaches ad extempore.

WEIGHTMAN: Fascinating. I depend upon my notes.

CHARLOTTE: Mr. Weightman--Do you, perhaps, compose...?

WEIGHTMAN: Prose, you mean? Not I.

CHARLOTTE: Pity.

WEIGHTMAN: No, I'm afraid I'm like the rude Peter Bell:

"A primrose by the river's brim,

A yellow primrose was to him,

And it was nothing more."

EMILY: It seems to me you do see the beauty in a poem.

WEIGHTMAN: Perhaps. I find Wordsworth a trifle insincere. (winks to Emily) Well, young ladies. Adieu, for now.

(WEIGHTMAN exits, CHARLOTTE hesitates)

CHARLOTTE: My, my, my. What do you think?

EMILY: He might be -- amusing.

CHARLOTTE: What a day, what a day!

(CHARLOTTE flounces off. Music. Fade down on the graveyard and up on the moors.
EMILY wanders out on her own)

EMILY: An old poem. By me.

(chanting her poem like a schoolgirl's verse)

“When days of beauty deck the vale,

Or stormy nights descend,

How well my spirit knows the path

on which it ought to wend!

“It seeks the consecrated spot,

Beloved in childhood's years:

The space between is all forgot,

It's sufferings and it's tears....”

WEIGHTMAN: (offstage) “The meeting of the waters...”

EMILY: (sighs, takes in the view) Perfect!

WEIGHTMAN: (offstage) Is it really a waterfall?

EMILY: It's just a trickle, really.

(WEIGHTMAN arrives, a little out of breath)

WEIGHTMAN: I rather thought I might I join you. (beat) Ugh! This is a barren place!
The sky, it's always gray...

EMILY: If you don't like the country, then why study here?

WEIGHTMAN: Your father's sermons sound like poetry. Slow down for a moment,
can't you?

EMILY: You'll have to toughen up if you want to walk with me.

WEIGHTMAN: It's your legs, girl. They're far too long for any normal woman.

EMILY: Maybe I'm not a woman at all. Maybe I'm...a raven!

(She runs around, flapping her arms, crowing)

WEIGHTMAN: Blast it, girl!

EMILY: What's the matter, Your Highness? Afraid of a little black bird?

WEIGHTMAN: Don't be absurd. (grabs her) Are you frightened of me?

EMILY: No. Are you of me?

WEIGHTMAN: Perhaps.

EMILY: (breaking away) Good. Then, forward march!

WEIGHTMAN: Whatever you say, Major Em.

EMILY: What?

WEIGHTMAN: E-M. As in your name.

EMILY: Major Em. I like that.

WEIGHTMAN: Why do you spend so much time alone?

EMILY: I try very hard to do only things that please me.

WEIGHTMAN: What does your father think of that?

EMILY: Papa is his own man. He never speaks -- least of all to me.

WEIGHTMAN: Where's your mother?

EMILY: We lost her, you know, to consumption.

WEIGHTMAN: I'm sorry.

EMILY: Don't be. I hardly even remember her at all. (pause) Do you believe there are certain forces at work that we know nothing about--that despite the best efforts of science, some things will always remain a mystery to mankind--?

WEIGHTMAN: You mean, like, the supernatural?

EMILY: Exactly.

WEIGHTMAN: Someone's been filling your head with silly stories.

EMILY: They aren't stories!

WEIGHTMAN: You've been reading the Romantics, haven't you. Byron, Shelley...

EMILY: Shouldn't I?

WEIGHTMAN: Lord Byron seduced woman after woman. Even his own sister.

EMILY: Eww. I don't care so much for Byron. I like Percy Bysshe Shelley.

WEIGHTMAN: Shelley's no better. He and Mary bore a child out of wedlock.

EMILY: That's impossible...

WEIGHTMAN: Byron seduced Mary's sister. They were all raving hedonists.

EMILY: How do you know all this?

WEIGHTMAN: A chap from the University. Used to run around with the lot.

EMILY: My. I will never think of Shelley the same again.

WEIGHTMAN: His vision was not so wrong, I think, in terms of faith.

EMILY: What would you say if I told you there are spirits in our very midst?

WEIGHTMAN: What kind of spirits?

EMILY: Visible. Apparitions.

WEIGHTMAN: It could be heat lightning, a phenomenon of nature...

EMILY: Of course it's a phenomenon of nature! The manifestations of a human soul! We miss so much of our true existence. Sometimes when I am out here, alone, walking, after dark--I lose all track of time. The rhythm of my footsteps numbs my body, and I feel as if I've lost this shell completely. It's as if I'm rising, floating, flying really. My soul itself is free to go wherever it desires, tethered by a silver string...

WEIGHTMAN: That sounds frightening.

EMILY: Oh, no. It's magnificent.

WEIGHTMAN: Where do you think the soul dwells? In the body, or in the mind?

EMILY: In the mind, of course...

WEIGHTMAN: Funny. I've always thought of it as a dark shadow lurking deep within my -- elbow.

EMILY: (laughing) Then mine is here, on my neck.

(She points to her neck--he examines it, lightly touching her shoulder) WEIGHTMAN: When I was a child, playing near a farmhouse dairy, I fell into a nearly frozen river. Such a shock of cold, it made me too afraid to open my eyes. But when I did, it was as if I was looking down on the scene from above--as if my soul had somehow wandered. It was frightening, really, because I wasn't sure how to get back.

EMILY: What happened?

WEIGHTMAN: I don't know. The milkmaids came and pulled me from the water--they were screaming and wailing they were. Suddenly, I was choking, spitting out water, and these huge peasant women were hugging and pawing me for joy. But ever since then I have wondered--where was I when I wasn't in my body? And why wasn't God there to meet me...

EMILY: Perhaps God was there, but you did not notice.

(Squeals and laughter from offstage)

EMILY: (cont.) Is she here? Is she?

WEIGHTMAN: What is it?

EMILY: A surprise, Mr. Weightman. A most glorious arrival!

CHARLOTTE: (offstage) Come along now, dear.

ANNE: (offstage) But I'm muddying my dress!

WEIGHTMAN: But I don't understand--

EMILY: She has returned! She has returned!

(CHARLOTTE and ANNE BRONTË enter. ANNE is very pretty and somewhat given to great emotional extremes, but retains an honesty and innocence that is very appealing. ANNE and EMILY run to each other and embrace with squeals of excitement)

ANNE: Oh Emmy. I can hardly believe it!

EMILY: You're pale, and your hands are freezing cold....

ANNE: How is the icy Land of Gondal? Transport me there immediately!

EMILY: Listen, Rosina: "Gondal's shaken throne, Is now secure and free; And my King Julius reigns alone, Debtless, alas, to me."

ANNE: Praise be! The war is over! And how are you, my Queen?

EMILY: Still tearing through men like wasted sheets of paper!

CHARLOTTE: When will you two leave that child's game behind? Doesn't she look terrible?

ANNE: How kind of you, Tallie.

EMILY: What happened? Why did you leave your position?

CHARLOTTE: She wouldn't tell me a thing.

ANNE: It was nothing, really.

EMILY: Do tell! You said hardly anything in your letter.

CHARLOTTE: It's a miracle we knew you were coming at all.

ANNE: I'm loathe to say it. They let me go.

CHARLOTTE: They discharged you?

ANNE: I couldn't get anything done. The children were constantly hanging on me, riding me, never giving me a moment's peace. Whenever Mrs. Ingham appeared, they turned into little angels. I simply had to do something. So, one day, when the parents were off on a visit, I tied the little brats to the nursery room table.

CHARLOTTE: You what?

ANNE: With a rope. 'Round their legs. You should have seen the look on the parent's faces when they returned. It was glorious!

EMILY: Hurrah! Brave, resourceful Anne!

CHARLOTTE: Anne. What were you thinking! The Inghams were very important charges! We'll never find another situation like the one at Blake Hall.

ANNE: Hallo. Who's this?

EMILY: Anne, this is Mr. Weightman. He's come to study with Papa.

ANNE: Oh, then never mind.

CHARLOTTE: Mr. Weightman's been a genuine breath of Spring around here. This is our sister, Anne.

WEIGHTMAN: It is a pleasure, Miss Brontë. I assume you're familiar with the poet Wordsworth... (pause) "She was a phantom of delight

When first she gleamed upon my sight:

A lovely apparition sent

To be a moment's ornament..."

(WEIGHTMAN kisses ANNE's hand. ANNE smiles, then faints. CHARLOTTE and EMILY quickly move to help her) CHARLOTTE: Oh dear Lord!

EMILY: Annie!

CHARLOTTE: Look at what you've done!

WEIGHTMAN: But I--

EMILY: (helping ANNE) Wake up sister.

WEIGHTMAN: I really meant no harm...

EMILY: Breathe!

ANNE: Oh my. Opps.

EMILY: She'll be all right.

CHARLOTTE: Do you have some explanation?

WEIGHTMAN: I have kissed many a woman's hand, and never received such a reaction...

CHARLOTTE: Mr. Weightman. I believe you were looking upon my sister with wanton thoughts.

WEIGHTMAN: I'm terribly sorry. Please accept my apologies. I must have been-- momentarily inspired--by the perfection of her nose. (pause) It was a simple, aesthetic reaction, much like the experience of viewing a fine painting or a sculpture. In Plato's words, the "ideal" woman's nose shone clear in the form of Miss Brontë's actual face, but only for one brief, sublime instant. I assure you. Like all such experiences, it was in the end, quite fleeting.

ANNE: Please, Charlotte. It really is my fault. I haven't been eating well. I've hardly had a decent night's sleep for months. Please pardon my naïveté, sir. I've never had so much formal attention as even a single valentine...

WEIGHTMAN: I certainly didn't mean to upset you, Miss Brontë.

ANNE: I'm afraid God fashioned me with a delicate constitution.

WEIGHTMAN: Is there anything that I can do?

CHARLOTTE: Thank you. We can manage, Mr. Weightman, without you.

ANNE: I'll be fine. Really. Oh, Emmy. I can hardly wait to play and write with you again...

EMILY: On Gondal!

ANNE: Hail, Augusta!

CHARLOTTE: Not now, darlings. You must rest. Come. We must be getting home.

(CHARLOTTE hustles ANNE away. EMILY glares at WEIGHTMAN) WEIGHTMAN
What a reunion. You must be very glad to have her home. So, what was the topic...?

(EMILY hisses at WEIGHTMAN) WEIGHTMAN (cont.) What's that for? All I did was kiss a lady's hand.

EMILY: She's not a lady. She's my Anne.

WEIGHTMAN: It's a habit, from the city. I really meant no harm....

EMILY: The "ideal nose!?"

WEIGHTMAN: You're mocking me.

EMILY: No, Mr. Weightman. I understand. What man would not be swayed by her simple, joyful radiance?

WEIGHTMAN: I wouldn't say I was swayed.

EMILY: Leaning, perhaps?

WEIGHTMAN: You really are remarkable, you know?

EMILY: Not as remarkable as my sister.

WEIGHTMAN: I beg to differ--

EMILY: Listen, you. This lesson's over. Today, tomorrow, and forever.

WEIGHTMAN: Don't fabricate an untrue image of me in your mind...

EMILY: We were content here, living in our minds. But you've come and shattered all that.

WEIGHTMAN: Change is a wonderful thing, Miss Brontë...

EMILY: I want things to stay the way they are. Fly away, Mr. Weightman. I want to be alone. Do you hear me? Fly away!

WEIGHTMAN: As you wish...

(WEIGHTMAN stumbles away. EMILY composes spontaneously)

EMILY: "Love is like the wild rose-briar;

Friendship like the holly-tree:

The holly is dark when the rose briar blooms,

But which will bloom most constantly?

"The wild rose briar is sweet in spring,

It's summer blossoms scent the air;

Yet wait till winter comes again

And who will call the wild briar fair?

"Then, scorn the silly rose-wreath now,

And deck thee with the holly's sheen,
 That when December blights thy brow,
 He still may leave thy garland green."

(EMILY exits, calmed and comforted by her work. Music. CHARLOTTE: appears, in the graveyard, with a letter)

CHARLOTTE: There's no time like the present. Please, God, if you care at all for little, selfish me, let them like my work...(she opens the letter) "Dear Miss Brontë: we regretfully inform you..." Oh no! I can't... "without disrespect, we believe that a woman of your means and disposition might be better off engaging in more suitable tasks, such as cooking, or cleaning or mending..."

(Fade down on CHARLOTTE, shaking her head, and up on EMILY and ANNE inside the living room of Haworth Parsonage. There is some early Victorian furniture--perhaps a love seat and an end table. ANNE is reading from a book. EMILY is searching)

EMILY: Annie. Have you seen my writing desk? I've looked all over...

ANNE: Oh? Where did you see it last?

EMILY: If I knew that, I wouldn't be asking!

ANNE: Stop and listen to me. Percy Bysshe Shelley loves you!

EMILY: Oh, please.

ANNE: He does, he does! Listen to this: "Emily, I love thee, Would we two had been twins of the same mother!"

EMILY: That's nonsense. It was some other Emily.

ANNE: "I am not thine: I am part of thee!"

EMILY: Mr. Shelley, you are too forward!

ANNE: "Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death, One Heaven, one Hell, and one Immortality." (beat) I tell you, he wrote this poem for you, across the span of years!

EMILY: If that is the case, he wasted a tremendous amount of effort.

ANNE: I wish someone had written that way about me. Perhaps you two are joined somehow, in your spirits, in your souls.

EMILY: I would hate to think that weakling poet was my one eternal love. Wait a moment. That's not what Shelley wrote.

ANNE: Of course it is.

EMILY: I am familiar with that poem. It goes "One Immortality and..."

ANNE: But it's so--depressing.

EMILY: "One Immortality and one..."

ANNE: Why must you spoil everything with your fascination with doom!

EMILY: Say it!

ANNE: "One Immortality and One--Annihilation." There. I said it. Annihilation. The end. Dead. Finis. I don't know why he wrote that part.

EMILY: Maybe he knew the ocean would steal away his youth.

ANNE: Or because all love dies with time. I don't care. It's beautiful anyway. (she puts the book away and bundles up in a coverlet) Two overshadowing souls. I want to write like that.

(EMILY puts down her desk, brushes ANNE's hair) EMILY: You just want to be in love.

ANNE: Oh, Emily. Don't be daft! Love is only good to think and write about. Not to actually practice.

EMILY: Annie. I was lost without you. Promise me you'll never leave again.

ANNE: All right...

EMILY: Kneel, Rosina.

ANNE: (kneeling) I am your servant, my Queen.

EMILY: Swear to me. You will never leave Gondal again.

ANNE: I swear by the cold, clear waters of Lake Werna...

EMILY: (with book of Shelley) Swear on the book of Percy!

ANNE: By the silvery star of Venus--I promise. I will not go. (pause) Does Mr. Weightman remind you of Hamlet?

EMILY: I beg your pardon?

ANNE: There is just something so--indecisive about him. There is tragedy in his eyes. (beat) Poor Mr. Shelley. To die by drowning.

EMILY: We must not shed tears for him. He lead a sinful life. He was vain, weak, false, proud, and has nothing to do with me.

ANNE: I think you're wrong. I think you and he are exactly alike.

EMILY: Now you've done it!

(EMILY pulls ANNE's hair, they begin a pillow fight) ANNE Ah!!! Stop it, Em!

EMILY: Does little orphan Rosina dare to mock her Queen?

ANNE: Augusta Geraldine Amelda!

EMILY: After all I've done for you, plucked you from the hopeless streets. You were nothing before I found you...

ANNE: Ah!! Stop it, Em. I take it back! I take it back!

(CHARLOTTE enters with a number of papers. EMILY continues to hit ANNE with the pillow. ANNE squeals and runs, EMILY goes after her, and in the process, CHARLOTTE is bumped. The papers are dropped) CHARLOTTE: You reckless...

ANNE: Sorry, Tallie...

CHARLOTTE: (picking up papers) The least you can do is help.

ANNE: If only the Queen weren't so cruel... Where have you been?

CHARLOTTE: Balancing Papa's account books. Someone has to keep track of the family finances. But Look. Something's arrived--very, very strange--

ANNE: We're lost heirs to a huge legacy! Let's take a trip down the Nile...

CHARLOTTE: Shush. One for each of us. The messenger said they came from Bradford...

EMILY: We don't know anyone there...

CHARLOTTE: Yes...I wonder who they're from?

(ANNE rips hers open) ANNE Oh! Lord!

EMILY: A valentine?

CHARLOTTE: What on earth?

ANNE: I can't believe it! All my life, I've pretended to myself. And now, oh, look, my hands are shaking...

EMILY: What does it say?

ANNE: I--can't, it's too...too...

EMILY: I'll read it.

CHARLOTTE: Let me! I want to see.

EMILY: "Fair Anne, Sweet Fair Anne...."

ANNE: Lord, someone loves me!

EMILY: Who! That's the question.

CHARLOTTE: Yes, who. It's not signed.

ANNE: Open yours.

CHARLOTTE: Mine says, "Fond Love, Go Away." Goodness.

ANNE: Is it signed?

CHARLOTTE: Luckily for the sender, no. Well. This is a fine prank Branwell must have played on us.

EMILY: Branny? It's possible, but it's really not his style. Death notices, warrants for arrest, but not valentines. Besides. He couldn't afford to travel to Bradford just to make the post.

ANNE: Who else is there?

CHARLOTTE: Mr. Weightman. At least, he probably sent yours.

ANNE: Who could have guessed?

CHARLOTTE: Don't play coy. We all know how he feels about you. You can see it painted on his face--on both your faces!

ANNE: What on earth are you talking about?!

CHARLOTTE: I see the way he looks at you in church...

EMILY: How do they look at each other?

CHARLOTTE: If you'd bother to come, like a proper clergy's daughter, you'd see for yourself. He sits opposite Anne, sighing softly and looking out of the corners of his eyes to win her attentions--and Anne is so quiet, her look so downcast--they are a picture...

ANNE: Do you think it's terribly noticeable?

CHARLOTTE: He's supposed to set an example. It's a wonder Papa doesn't drag him out by the ear.

EMILY: Is it true then? What Charlotte says?

ANNE: I've tried moving from pew to pew...

CHARLOTTE: Wait a moment. Emmy? What does yours say?

EMILY: It really isn't important.

ANNE: Oh, sister. Do tell us what it says.

EMILY: I'll read it later.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, come now. It can't be worse than mine.

ANNE: Emmy, don't you want to know what it says?

CHARLOTTE: Come on. We must find out the culprit. Give that thing to me. (She snatches the note away and reads) "Emily, my Soul Divine." Emily--

ANNE: That's beautiful.

EMILY: It doesn't mean a thing.

CHARLOTTE: Lord. Look at this handwriting! Almost identical.

ANNE: Wha--

CHARLOTTE: William Weightman must have written all three.

ANNE: Isn't it wonderful? He's pious and kind!

CHARLOTTE: I think it's very improper.

ANNE: They're just valentines!

CHARLOTTE: They are symbols of Romantic love! I, for one, am very concerned about Mr. Weightman's peculiar manners. "Fond Love, Go Away?" What kind of valentine is that? Besides, to all three? He must be very fickle, very fickle indeed. Annie. Come and help me set the table.

(CHARLOTTE exits)

ANNE: It seems the most profound remark was the one he made to you.

(ANNE exits. Music. Fade as EMILY returns to the moors)

EMILY: (clutching the valentine to her chest) My soul divine ...

"Sleep not, dream not; this bright day

Will not, cannot last..."

(During the following, CHARLOTTE enters the living room cautiously with a lit candle and EMILY's writing desk. She reverently opens it, thumbing tentatively through the pages)

EMILY: (cont.) "I love thee boy, for all divine,

All full of God thy features shine.

Darling enthusiast, holy child,

Too good for this world's warring wild..."

(EMILY spins and reels in reverie. CHARLOTTE reads quickly, nearly overlapping)

CHARLOTTE: "Oh, thy bright eyes must answer now, When

Reason, with a scornful brow, Is mocking at my overthrow..."

EMILY: "Why I have persevered to shun The common paths that others run..."

CHARLOTTE: "My darling pain that wounds and sears, And wrings a blessing out from tears..."

EMILY: “And am I wrong to worship where Faith cannot doubt, nor hope despair...”

CHARLOTTE: “Since my own soul can grant my prayer?”

EMILY: “Speak, God of visions, plead for me, And tell why I have chosen thee!”

(CHARLOTTE slams the desk closed, blows out the candle, and exits with the desk)

EMILY: (cont.) No, Spirit! I will not allow it! I will not allow myself to fall in love...

“Riches I hold in light esteem,

And love I laugh to scorn;

And lust of fame was but a dream,

That vanished with the morn:

“And if I pray, the only prayer

That moves my lips for me,

Is Leave the heart that now I bear,

And give me liberty!

“Yes, as my swift days near their goal

‘Tis all that I implore;--

In life and death a chainless soul,

With courage to endure.”

(EMILY exits. Shift to afternoon in the graveyard. ANNE brings in a bowl of potatoes and a knife. CHARLOTTE enters, with laundry)

CHARLOTTE: You don’t seem to realize the seriousness of our situation. We have no savings. We must plan ahead. I know its terrible to think about, but what will happen to us when he’s gone?

ANNE: Papa may be blind, but he isn’t dying!

CHARLOTTE: Of course not. I’m damned to even mentioned it.

ANNE: Shh. Don't worry so much.

CHARLOTTE: I'm resigned. I must put away my writing and look for work. Blast! I know I can do better...if only I had some time...

ANNE: We were talking about Emily's poems, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE: So am I, Anne. So am I. (beat) They're good, I tell you.

ANNE: How good?

CHARLOTTE: Better than mine.

ANNE: Oh, come now. You're an excellent poet.

CHARLOTTE: I know I am. But these--these are works of genius. They have a peculiar music--wild and melancholy, yet, elevating. She writes like a man. Better than a man, because they are hers...

ANNE: Charlotte. She didn't want us looking at them...

CHARLOTTE: She let you read them.

ANNE: Only Gondal poems. Not her private ones. Why couldn't you respect her wishes?

CHARLOTTE: Because. It's not right for her to keep them to herself. They need to be seen. Shared. With greater minds than either you or I.

ANNE: You know Emmy can't stand to be the center of attention...

CHARLOTTE: Emily has a talent. A gift.

ANNE: You really think so?

CHARLOTTE: My heart stirred like a trumpet when I read them.

ANNE: And what about mine. Have you read the ones I gave you yet?

CHARLOTTE: Darling, you are a very fine poet, too. All we girls are. Annie. I just had a thought. I've heard about a printing house in London, that will put books together for a fee...What if we could put together our savings and self-publish, just the three of us...

ANNE: Charlotte. A book of girl poems? No one will take it seriously.

CHARLOTTE: There are ways to get around our sex. Hidden identities, pseudonyms...

ANNE: Three gentlemen poets named not Brontë but --

(The dinner bell rings)

CHARLOTTE: What time...?

ANNE: A sign. A--Bell! The three gentlemen Bell!

CHARLOTTE: Imagine. How our lives would blossom...

(WEIGHTMAN enters)

WEIGHTMAN: Ladies. Pardon me--is it time for tea already?

CHARLOTTE: No, no. It must be some mistake.

ANNE: Good morning Mr. Weightman. How are your studies coming?

WEIGHTMAN: I've been reading Plato's Allegory of the Cave. What a relief to see the sun and not go blind! And where is the tall Miss Brontë at present?

CHARLOTTE: Baking bread for the orphanage.

WEIGHTMAN: How charitable of her. I believe she's been avoiding me.

CHARLOTTE: She has better sense than some. Oh, perhaps she rang for help. I'd better go...

ANNE: Did you hear? Some secret admirer sent us all valentines.

WEIGHTMAN: And you haven't any idea who?

CHARLOTTE: From the scrawl of the penmanship, we figured the groundskeep must have sent them.

WEIGHTMAN: The groundskeep!

CHARLOTTE: Only he could have been so crass.

ANNE: Charlotte!

WEIGHTMAN: I have often been complimented on my penmanship. (beat) I hope I have not overstepped my position. It's only, when you said, you never, I thought it such a crime...

CHARLOTTE: It was the postmark that threw me off...at least at first.

ANNE: Don't listen to her. Your little notes were much appreciated.

WEIGHTMAN: I hope you don't think I scatter my affections too wide...

CHARLOTTE: It just makes me wonder who's affection you're after.

ANNE: Tallie! (beat) How long have you wanted to be a priest, Mr. Weightman?

WEIGHTMAN: It was my uncle's idea, really. I keep waiting, you know, for that golden voice to say: (with thunder noises) "William Weightman. This is your calling. It is time to take your vows."

ANNE: Oh, you're terrible -- You know, I have wanted to be a priest myself.

WEIGHTMAN: Have you now? That would cause quite the stir...

ANNE: Yes. I often wonder why God made me a woman.

WEIGHTMAN: But I adore you as a woman. You're quite woman. 100 percent.

ANNE: I'm sure he has some plan. I must admit, I lust for male advantages...

WEIGHTMAN: Don't forget! There's burdens, too. I should say I might prefer to be lady...

CHARLOTTE: Oh, come now. We'll have no more talk of this. We are what we are and that's final. What do you really want from life, Mr. Weightman?

WEIGHTMAN: How does one answer a question like that!

CHARLOTTE: You seem very nervous, Mr. Weightman.

ANNE: Do I make you nervous? (beat) Oh, Mr. Weightman...

WEIGHTMAN: To be honest, I've been struggling a bit, about my place in the Church.

CHARLOTTE: And what about marriage, Mr. Weightman? Does this come into view?

WEIGHTMAN: I can't imagine growing old alone. Can you?

(EMILY enters, with an apron dusted with flour. She lurks and watches, unseen)

CHARLOTTE: How is it that you posted from Bradford, anyway?

WEIGHTMAN: What? Oh, yes. The valentines. I've been spending some time in Keighley, Bradford's just a step away...actually, I've been meaning to speak with you about this...

CHARLOTTE: What were you doing in Keighley?

WEIGHTMAN: Taking some classes, actually. Now, don't tell your Papa...

CHARLOTTE: Oh, no--I shan't...I didn't realize you were so adamant a student...

WEIGHTMAN: The ivory tower has its own appeal. And I have news. I've been asked to deliver a speech at the lecture hall there. You see, Miss Brontë, you are not the only one who dreams of greener pastures.

CHARLOTTE: Really! I've never been to a formal lecture. I'd imagine it's quite an affair.

WEIGHTMAN: It is. With a reception to follow. I hope you all find it in your hearts to come...

ANNE: Mr. Weightman, if I may ask--what is to be the subject of your speech?

WEIGHTMAN: Basically, I am questioning the laws of human and divine love.

ANNE: How sublime!

CHARLOTTE: Ye gads. Isn't that place a Mechanical Institute? What interest have scientists in matters of love?

WEIGHTMAN: It's called Metaphysics. It's an up-and-coming field. They speculate on the very essence of our being.

CHARLOTTE: I had no idea one could study such things. Are you saying, there are different ways of loving...

ANNE: Yes! Like the Holy Trinity...

WEIGHTMAN: Yes, well. I hadn't thought about it that way...perhaps there are three...

(WEIGHTMAN notices EMILY lingering, she sees him as well. ANNE and CHARLOTTE don't)

WEIGHTMAN: (cont.) Well. I'll have to visit my notes again. Blast it! I was hoping to make a name for myself with this event.

CHARLOTTE: Mr. Weightman. I understand. I have faced much rejection in my literary pursuits...

ANNE: Yes. Perhaps you could help us find a representative...

WEIGHTMAN: For what?

ANNE: We've a little book of poems...

CHARLOTTE: And I'm working on a novel...

ANNE: You are?

WEIGHTMAN: I'm impressed. But I doubt that my connections will help you much with fiction. Still...I do hope you can come...Could use some friendly faces in the crowd, you know... Ah, well. Back to the old routine...

(WEIGHTMAN exits)

ANNE: What novel! How dare you write a novel behind my back!

CHARLOTTE: Shh. It's nothing yet. I promise you I'll show you in a bit. But first, we must make it to that lecture.

ANNE: Let's go fix up our dresses!

CHARLOTTE: Imagine, sitting amongst all those educated people, watching Mr. Celia Amelia talk about love!

(CHARLOTTE and ANNE exit. EMILY steps forward, looks after her sisters)

EMILY: What are you. My sisters? How can your flesh and mine be the same?

(beat) "True to myself, and true to all

May I be healthful still,

And turn away from passion's call

And curb my own wild will."

(A few dogs bark. She sits up) Hallo? Is anyone there?

(pause. She stands) Spirit. Come. Reveal yourself!

(pause) If you won't, then be gone!

(pause) I must be mad to talk to ghosts.

(EMILY starts to go in again, but WEIGHTMAN sneaks up behind her)

WEIGHTMAN: Boo!

EMILY: Gads!

WEIGHTMAN: I saw you. Watching us.

EMILY: Blast Annie. I told her Papa's shirt needs mending. And Charlotte's supposed to take the loaves to town...Excuse me.

WEIGHTMAN: The heat must be unbearable. Stay here and have a rest. So. How did you like your Valentine...

EMILY: Mr. Weightman. In the future, I would appreciate your excluding me from your pathetic little escapades.

WEIGHTMAN: No worse than spying on your sisters, I suppose. You heard then, about Keighley? Will you come see me speak?

EMILY: Who wants to sit through some stuffy old lecture?

WEIGHTMAN: Don't you want to be cultured?

EMILY: Not particularly, no.

WEIGHTMAN: Please, come on. It will be good for you...

EMILY: Who are you to say what's good for me? We're too old to chase dreams, Mr. Weightman. And you are, too.

WEIGHTMAN: So easily defeated, Major Em?

EMILY: Don't call me that ever again.

WEIGHTMAN: I--I don't understand. Have I--embarrassed you?

EMILY: You. You are stupid and ridiculous.

WEIGHTMAN: Oh, you're so superior, are you?

EMILY: Yes. Yes I am. You don't know the first thing about real knowledge. I've read Milton, I've read a Thousand and One Arabian Nights...

WEIGHTMAN: Oh, have you now? Then how does a camel smell?

EMILY: Don't make me laugh...

WEIGHTMAN: I have been to the desert, and I tell you, they smell horrid!

EMILY: You have?

WEIGHTMAN: I wouldn't wish a trip to Egypt on anyone I know.

EMILY: Maybe I don't know the desert. But I know human nature. You go and speak your crazy ideas in front of all those people, and they won't understand. They'll laugh you down. Then where will you be? No priest, no scholar...you'd do well to remember your duty, to the orphans, like me!

(EMILY exits--WEIGHTMAN, under his breath)

WEIGHTMAN: I am an orphan, too.

(WEIGHTMAN leaves. ANNE appears in the graveyard. It is night)

ANNE: (wandering through the courtyard) What's come over me...

(praying) Dear God in Heaven. When I hear him, he awakens me. (pause, pulls out paper and pen to compose)

"That voice, the magic of whose tone

Can wake an echo in my breast,

Creating feelings that, alone,

Can make my tranced spirit blest.

"That laughing eye, whose sunny beam

My memory would not cherish less;--

And oh, that smile! whose joyous gleam

No mortal language can express..." (pause)

He is my heart, I know, he is the other half of me. Lord. Please. Help me to understand.

(ANNE exits. Fade up on CHARLOTTE and EMILY in the living room. CHARLOTTE is writing) CHARLOTTE: Will you listen to my new poem?

EMILY: If I must.

CHARLOTTE: “The peaceful glow of our fireside,

Imparts no peace to me:

My thoughts would rather wander wide

Than rest, dear Jane, with thee.”

EMILY: Jane who...

CHARLOTTE: Shush. “I’m on a distant journey bound,

And if, about my heart,

Too closely kindred ties were wound,

‘Twould break when forced to part.”

EMILY: It’s sound. I particularly like the sense of separation. I find it very wise.

CHARLOTTE: Do you think I should submit it to Blackwood’s Magazine?

EMILY: If you wish.

CHARLOTTE: Darling. Haven’t you ever dreamed of seeing your words forever sealed in print....

EMILY: My writing is for me and for me alone. It serves no purpose but itself.

CHARLOTTE: But think of all the great writers whom we have enjoyed. We would know nothing of them if not for their books.

EMILY: Tallie. Publish, if it makes you happy. It just doesn’t matter to me.

(ANNE enters, flushed, giggling, out of breath. EMILY begins to look around for something)

CHARLOTTE: Where have you been, you ninny? It’s almost time for bed.

ANNE: I was talking with Mr. Weightman. He's a very odd fellow. He said that the only thing wrong with being a Priest is working on Sunday mornings.

EMILY: How facetious.

ANNE: (drunk with love) He'd rather be out hunting foxes.

EMILY: Where is my volume of Shelley?

ANNE: I gave it to Mr. Weightman.

EMILY: You what?

ANNE: He said he needed to prepare for his lecture. I'm sorry, I didn't think you would mind--

EMILY: Annie plays fetch.

ANNE: Better than your fictitious hounds--

CHARLOTTE: But darling, you will come with us, won't you? To the lecture...

ANNE: Oh, Emmy please? Mr. Weightman's leaving early. We can't do it by ourselves...

CHARLOTTE: (pulling out desk bundled in a blanket) And by the way, I have something for you--

EMILY: Oh, Tallie! Where did you--Ha! My very life is in this desk....

ANNE: Tallie....

EMILY: My favorite ink from India...

CHARLOTTE: (aside, unfolding another paper) Annie. I thought this the most--sensible--way...

EMILY: I was beginning to think it was gone forever...(hugging CHARLOTTE: quickly) I am deeply in your debt...

ANNE: Oh, dear. I'm suddenly so tired...Goodnight...

EMILY: What? It's only seven...(sits. opens desk) Wait...it's all, out of order...

CHARLOTTE: (slowly--To EMILY--who interjects, overlapping freely in between) "I love thee boy, for all divine..."

EMILY: How could you...

CHARLOTTE: "All full of God thy features shine..."

EMILY: You mustn't...

CHARLOTTE: "Darling enthusiast, holy child..."

EMILY: Stop your mouth...

CHARLOTTE: "Too good for this world's warring wild..."

EMILY: Give that back!

CHARLOTTE: You are so careless with your possessions. I think you really wanted them to be found!

EMILY: How many more did you steal?

CHARLOTTE: I didn't steal. I copied them and returned the originals.

EMILY: If you were a man, I'd beat you for this!

CHARLOTTE: Why must you keep them from us?

EMILY: They're not for other people. They're just my thoughts!

CHARLOTTE: Thoughts are not complete until they have reached another...

EMILY: That's your opinion! My thoughts are complete in my mind and God's alone!

CHARLOTTE: The truth is, sister, these are not common effusions. Your verse is terse and concise, vigorous and genuine. They're not as grand as Milton, nor as lyrical as Shakespeare. But they certainly rival your beloved Shelley.

(EMILY desperately grabs the paper away and tucks it away in her desk) ANNE: Emmy, why did you write about love? Is it about someone in particular?

EMILY: Who would I be in love with? The groundskeep?

ANNE: Then it must be a Gondal poem after all...

EMILY: What? Of course it is. Rosina is running away with a shepherd!

ANNE: What? She would never...

EMILY: I am the Queen and I say she will!

ANNE: She's mine and she'll do what I want!

CHARLOTTE: Gondal or not, my dear, better stuff was never penned.

EMILY: How would you know, Charlotte? With that sentimental wash you write...

ANNE: Emmy!

CHARLOTTE: While your style is startlingly excellent, your subject matter is morally disturbing--

ANNE: Darlings, no! Please, let's do not fight. What does it matter who is better? Can't we all just live in peace?

EMILY: How long have you known she read my poems!

ANNE: I'm not a tattle--What was I to do?

CHARLOTTE: Won't you publish your poems with us? What damage could it do?

EMILY: You know what my answer will be. Now and forever. I'd rather lie cold and deep in the earth than be the folly of haughty men!

(Fade down on CHARLOTTE, EMILY and ANNE. Fade up WEIGHTMAN steps up to the podium with paper in hand)

WEIGHTMAN: (He reads from notes) The notion of the moral and the immoral is simple enough to most. For Aristotle, true emotions were evoked from specific situations under a certain set of moral conditions. The trouble arises when we are introduced to the concepts of Eros and Logos, that is, worldly and divine love. I posit that in modern times, Eros, or worldly love, has too often been maligned. Take, for instance--the Romantic poets. The critics say--(He accidentally drops his notes: panic, ad lib. disarray)--those critics say--Ahem. Forget that. We are not concerned about the critics. We are concerned about the very nature of human love. I believe that certain forms of Eros, for example, the love between a mother and her child, between close-knit sisters, these forms of Eros enter upon the realm of divine...

(EMILY enters on the moors...but WEIGHTMAN seems to hear her)

EMILY: "Come walk with me, it may not be, Is human love so true?"

WEIGHTMAN: I will even go so far as to say...that in certain instances, the powerful love between a man and a woman...May even transcend Eros, blending with Logos,

becoming the quality of goodness, truth, and beauty akin to that of God. This becomes a third kind of love, encompassing body, mind, and soul. This kind of love would never fade, it could transcend time, and reincarnate itself from form to form as time went on. To find this love, in life, would indeed be Heaven on Earth.

(Fade down on the lecture. EMILY is still alone on the moors)

EMILY: “All day I’ve toiled, but not with pain,

In learning’s golden mine;

And now at eventide again,

The moonbeams softly shine....”

WEIGHTMAN: (offstage) Miss Brontë?

EMILY: “True to myself, and true to all, May I be healthful still... And turn away from passion’s call, and curb my own wild will...”

WEIGHTMAN: (offstage) Emily!

EMILY: Oh, damnation! I can’t let him see me like this.

(WEIGHTMAN appears. The sound of the dogs returns)

WEIGHTMAN: Miss Brontë. There you are. We were worried -- Are you-- unwell?

EMILY: No, no. I’m fine.

WEIGHTMAN: Where have you been? We missed you at the reception. Did you enjoy the speech?

EMILY: Yes, yes. I enjoyed it very much. I just need time to think...

WEIGHTMAN: Why are you so nervous? Was my lecture really that horrible?

EMILY: Mr. Weightman. Do you really believe what you said tonight? That human love can be divine?

WEIGHTMAN: Of course I do. I wouldn’t have lectured on it if I didn’t.

EMILY: But isn’t that idea, well, a little dangerous?

WEIGHTMAN: I suppose so. But I’m not advocating frivolous love. I think the love of two people can be the strongest bond in the world. Harder than iron to break.

EMILY: Then, do you think that God himself has a hand in it?

WEIGHTMAN: Perhaps. What's in that brain of yours?

EMILY: Oh, Mr. Weightman. I don't know how to explain...

WEIGHTMAN: You've never been at a loss for words with me before.

EMILY: It's just--I wonder if I have felt--the hand of God upon my heart.

WEIGHTMAN: Why, Miss Brontë...

EMILY: It's terrible. It's like a great rush of pain. That's what it feels like, cutting off my air, my circulation...

WEIGHTMAN: Did my lecture inspire all this?

EMILY: Yes. I'm afraid it did.

WEIGHTMAN: Why, I had no idea you harbored this kind of passion.

EMILY: Passion. Yes. You've hit the mark.

WEIGHTMAN: Well, I'm afraid passion is another matter entirely. I haven't quite figured out where passion comes into the Aristotelian scheme. That is, if passion really exists.

EMILY: I feel it. I tell you. It's real.

WEIGHTMAN: To tell you the truth, I've felt it myself.

EMILY: You have?

WEIGHTMAN: There are times when my reason fails to inform me--when my spirit too, longs for release...

EMILY: Exactly.

WEIGHTMAN: But this, desire--it cannot come from God...

EMILY: Why not?

WEIGHTMAN: Because, because it is unreasonable. Oh, Miss Brontë.

EMILY: What?

WEIGHTMAN: I am the most divided man in the world...

EMILY: Never say that.

WEIGHTMAN: Oh, Emily. When I read Byron, the passion he describes seems more true, more alive, than life itself. Why then do the Church elders, who I admire and respect for their strength of faith, tell me that the Romantics are false? I know that I am not alone in my experiences...

EMILY: Mr. Weightman. There is something that I must tell you.

WEIGHTMAN: And something I've been wanting to tell you.

EMILY: I have made against you, certain, trespasses...

WEIGHTMAN: You have been a great friend, an honest voice...

EMILY: Promise nothing will ever change that.

WEIGHTMAN: Not even death itself.

EMILY: Dear Lord.

WEIGHTMAN: That's why I know I can tell you.

EMILY: You must.

WEIGHTMAN: I've been thinking it's time to marry.

EMILY: Unbelievable!

WEIGHTMAN: Do you think your sister Anne will consider me?

EMILY: (pause) Of course.

WEIGHTMAN: I haven't the faintest idea what to say or do--Your Father will be so relieved.

EMILY: I see.

WEIGHTMAN: You aren't too shocked, are you? I would have thought you, of all people--

EMILY: It comes as a surprise, I must admit.

WEIGHTMAN: Yes. I act like an idiot when I'm around her, making jokes, using other voices...Oh, Miss Brontë. Emily. I consider you my friend. My equal. I have rarely met a woman of your intelligence...

EMILY: Friendship, like the holly-tree...

WEIGHTMAN: I truly enjoy our little talks...

EMILY: Yes. So do I.

WEIGHTMAN: Good. Then you will be my confidant in this affair?

EMILY: Yes, yes. More than you could ever know. (beat) Meet me on the moors this evening.

WEIGHTMAN: You are a little sorceress, aren't you?

EMILY: Please. Just come. At midnight. To the meeting of the waters. You will see what confidence I shall bring.

WEIGHTMAN: Confidence is a thing I sorely need.

(HE exits. EMILY walks to the moors. Music. Sounds of wild dogs barking, very distant, sporadic)

EMILY: If ever a spirit did haunt my soul, come and council me now.

“There should be no despair for you

While nightly stars are burning.

While evening pours its silent dew,

And sunshine gilds the morning...

“There should be no despair--

though tears May flow down like a river:

Are not the best beloved of years

Around your heart forever?

“Winds sigh, revive, and from their fate

Your fate cannot be parted:

Then journey on, if not elate

Still never broken-hearted!”

(EMILY runs off, as music returns)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

AT RISE: Setting is the same as Act One.

(Music. Fade up on the moors again. EMILY pulls ANNE, in bed clothes, behind her)

ANNE: (offstage) It's too dark. Don't go so fast!

EMILY: Come on. I want you to see something.

ANNE: I'd be happy back in my bed!

EMILY: Sleep brings no hope to me.

ANNE: Why are you being so cryptic? Where are we going?

EMILY: By the meeting of the waters. That is where we shall wait.

ANNE: Oh, I do hate it when you become so conspiratorial.

EMILY: Fate is driving us here tonight. Our true hearts will be exposed.

ANNE: You make everything sound so--decadent.

EMILY: But first. Tell me one thing.

ANNE: What?

EMILY: Just tell me this one thing, and if you answer correctly, we shall go home.

ANNE: What is it, then?

EMILY: Are you in love with Mr. Weightman?

ANNE: What?

EMILY: Do you love the man, yes or no?

ANNE: Love is very--hard to discern...

EMILY: Answer me, or we'll be out here all night...

ANNE: No. I do not love him.

(EMILY takes ANNE's arm and twists it behind her back) EMILY: Who are you?

ANNE: Anne!

EMILY: Who?

ANNE: Anne Brontë! Stop it, you're hurting me...

EMILY: Aren't you the little orphan girl, Rosina?

ANNE: Stop it, Em. I don't want to play!

EMILY: Aren't you the little orphan girl, and am I the magnificent Augusta Geraldine Amelda?

ANNE: Yes, but--

EMILY: Say it.

ANNE: You are Augusta Amelda, Queen of all Gondal, and I am Rosina, your slave. Why are you doing this?

EMILY: As your Queen, I demand to know: Are you in love with William Weightman?

ANNE: Oh, Emily. I'm so confused.

EMILY: I am your Queen! Answer me!

ANNE: I don't know what it is about him. He's somewhat handsome I suppose, and quite well read--

EMILY: Annie!

ANNE: He makes my stomach tighten up and my ears begin to ring...I confess, I have at length imagined a future life together--I thought you'd hate me Em, if you knew I was so weak...

(EMILY lets ANNE go) EMILY: Do you love him?

ANNE: I don't know. I've never been in love before.

EMILY: I don't want to lose you, Annie.

ANNE: What are you talking about? You won't lose me....

EMILY: But you'll run away and be married.

ANNE: I'm not leaving...

EMILY: You're the good one, the warm one, and so pretty...

ANNE: You're pretty, too--

EMILY: Not me. Handsome, maybe. Not pretty. Well. You must tell him how you feel.

ANNE: Why, I can't, Emily. Charlotte thinks he's...

EMILY: Forget Charlotte. Think quick of what to say. He'll be upon us any minute.

ANNE: You--brought me out here--to be with him? Oh my lord--what shall I say? What shall I do? I will make an utter fool of myself....

EMILY: Recite one of your poems!

ANNE: They're all about God, or Gondal, or the tense is all wrong--

EMILY: Then tell him the love poem. The one that I wrote.

ANNE: But--I can't. Those are your words.

EMILY: They're yours now. Please. All I want is your happiness. (pause) You do love him.

ANNE: I do. Is it wicked?

EMILY: Don't worry about morality. Love is a force of Nature, and Nature, a force of God. If God is good, as you believe, than love itself must be good. You must meet with him and share your soul. Perhaps a treaty can be forged--a bond--

ANNE: Oh, brave Emily. Strong Emily. Where would I be without you?

EMILY: Certainly not here, that's the truth.

(WEIGHTMAN enters. He carries a flask. He is tipsy, out of breath)

WEIGHTMAN: Emily! Emily! Here comes I, Wee Willie Weightman, your little charge, out of the night and here to participate in whatever dark dealings you have planned...

EMILY: William?

WEIGHTMAN: In the immortal words of William Blake: "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom." (sees ANNE) Oh, dear lord, I beg your pardon.

ANNE: (whispers to EMILY) He's drunk.

EMILY: All the better to present your case.

WEIGHTMAN: Anne, beautiful Anne. What has brought you here? Oh, I know, I see. Emily. You're playing games...I thought you were to be my confidant--

EMILY: Hush. Don't be a fool. Tell her what you told me.

WEIGHTMAN: Oh, my--I'm not prepared--You see, my friends took me out to celebrate. My lecture was a success! We went down to the Black Bull, had a little bit to drink. You know--pleasures of the flesh....

EMILY: Speak quickly. We mustn't be out all night.

WEIGHTMAN: Dear God, I am a disgrace.

ANNE: It's all right, Mr. Weightman. I don't mind.

WEIGHTMAN: Miss Brontë--Anne--you are too kind. Dear Lord, I've had too much to drink.

ANNE: Mr. Weightman, William--I, too, have something I must share...

WEIGHTMAN: "She walks in beauty like the night Of cloudless climes and starry skies... And all that's best of dark and bright Meet in her aspect and her eyes."

ANNE: Listen, Em. That's Byron!

WEIGHTMAN: "And on that cheek, and o'er that brow, So soft, so calm, yet eloquent..."

EMILY: Go on, say the verse--

WEIGHTMAN: "The smiles that win, the tints that glow, But tell of days in goodness spent, A mind at peace with all below, A heart whose love is innocent--"

ANNE: "I love thee boy, for all divine, All full of God thy features shine. Darling enthusiast, holy child, Too good for this world's warring wild..."

WEIGHTMAN: That's--for me--?

ANNE: Yes. I love you. William. Please tell me you love me, too.

(ANNE closes her eyes and puckers. He kisses her. EMILY slips away. WEIGHTMAN looks after EMILY. ANNE opens her eyes)

ANNE: (cont.) William. Did you hear? I said I love you.

WEIGHTMAN: Lord, clear my head...

ANNE: Oh, I've ruined everything--

WEIGHTMAN: Shh, my purest Anne. We must step back a moment to consider what's transpired...

ANNE: But I'm giving you my heart...

WEIGHTMAN: I cannot, in good conscious, mislead you any longer--

ANNE: Then, you do not have affection for me?

WEIGHTMAN: Oh, much more than passing fancy--

ANNE: But not enough to say you love?

WEIGHTMAN: How could you fall for such a creature as me?

ANNE: It's something terrible. You're ill, aren't you?

WEIGHTMAN: No, no, of course not. God help me. It's something--I cannot fully--
Something that prevents me from.... I'm already engaged.

ANNE: I beg your pardon?

WEIGHTMAN: I'm engaged. To a woman in Appleby.

ANNE: How long--?

WEIGHTMAN: S-since before I arrived in Haworth. I've known her since I was a child... Uncle arranged it--Her name is Isabella--

ANNE: You have been--deceitful. (pause) So. Tell me about her.

WEIGHTMAN: She--I don't know how to say this. She is a good person. Sweet. Loving by nature, but--

ANNE: But she's insane and was locked away in an attic?

WEIGHTMAN: Certainly not! She's--from a old family, but, she's--uh, not much of a conversationalist. She nods her head as if she's listening, but in her eyes, there's nothing there.

ANNE: Do you love her? (pause) How could you be engaged to a woman you do not love?

WEIGHTMAN: Anne. Precious girl--

ANNE: Would you place fortune before love?

WEIGHTMAN: This meeting is premature--

ANNE: I should have never opened my heart to you!

WEIGHTMAN: If only I had the chance to speak with your sister--

ANNE: My sister! What has she--

WEIGHTMAN: Give me time to think--

ANNE: You think to much, Mr. Weightman. We've crossed the will of God!

(ANNE runs away. WEIGHTMAN sits, pulls out flask and drinks. Barking in the distance. EMILY returns, hidden from WEIGHTMAN, in the shadows)

EMILY: "Come, walk with me, there's only thee

To bless my spirit now...

We used to love on winter nights

To wander through the snow...

Can we not woo back old delights?"

WEIGHTMAN: "Misery--O Misery, This world is all too wide for thee."

(WEIGHTMAN exits)

EMILY: "Shade of Shelley, I condemn

All the puny ways of men

Free my heart, my spirit free beckon and I'll follow thee!"

(Fade on EMILY. Fade up on ANNE, in the graveyard, praying)

ANNE: Oh dear Lord in Heaven, my only Savior, Savior of us all, I cannot stand what I have done, I cannot stand what I have become. Oh, Mother, if you are in heaven, looking down on me, please, please, forgive, I cannot stand to think what you must think of me, secretly meeting with man in the wild, a man who pretends to be a friend and defender of God, and yet a demon and a traitor....And I, confessing my love....Show me the light, what may I may do to remedy the situation? I cannot bear the weight of this alone....

(ANNE exits. Fade to morning. CHARLOTTE enters with letters. EMILY is sitting with her writing desk: she is wild from lack of sleep) CHARLOTTE: Where's your sister?

EMILY: Isn't she your sister, too?

CHARLOTTE: She wasn't in bed this morning. It's not like her to walk alone...

EMILY: Tallie. I had a dream last night. The most fantastic thing...I saw you dining with Thackary and Anne signing books of prose...

CHARLOTTE: What is this altered spirit?

EMILY: The world bowed at your feet, Charlotte. You even found a mate, a curate, I think...

CHARLOTTE: Oh, posh!

EMILY: Odd part is, last night, I didn't sleep a wink. Still, it's true. I know it. Here. (opening writing desk, pulling out pages) I want you to have these...

CHARLOTTE: But, Emmy...

EMILY: Here, take this...

“On a sunny brae alone I lay

one summer afternoon;

It was the marriage-time of May,

With her young lover, June...”

CHARLOTTE: Are you sure...

EMILY: And this:

“Death! that struck when I was most confiding In my certain faith of joy to be-- Strike again, Time’s withered branch dividing From the fresh root of Eternity...”

CHARLOTTE: What’s wrong with you? Have you been into the sherry?

EMILY: Only drunk with Reason. Drunk with life.

“Woe for the day, Regina’s pride, Regina’s hope is in the grave...”

CHARLOTTE: From Gondal--

EMILY: And here’s the “Last Words” of Augusta Amelda. Here, Charlotte, take them all...

CHARLOTTE: But you can’t really mean...what am I to do...

EMILY: I don’t care one iota. Lock them away in a chest. Finish your chapbook. Say you wrote them yourself...

CHARLOTTE: No, I can’t. I wouldn’t...

EMILY: There. I’m through. (wiping off hands) What a relief!

CHARLOTTE: Darling! You can’t give up... Your voice is strong and fierce; it must be toned and sharpened.

EMILY: And who, pray tell, can offer that?

CHARLOTTE: Academia.

(EMILY spits)

CHARLOTTE: (cont.) Must you do that! How will you ever become a lady!

EMILY: Since when did I aspire to be a lady?

CHARLOTTE: I want so desperately for us to have an education. You might as well know I’ve been looking overseas. We must acquire some languages. German, French. I’m particularly interested in a finishing school in Brussels... the Pensionnat Heger. We need only stay one year. And in our spare time, we could write...

EMILY: You scheming old maid! Won’t you ever be satisfied...

CHARLOTTE: To be satisfied is to become null and void! Emily. Please. I need you and you need me.

EMILY: I need no one!

CHARLOTTE: Why must you fight me all the way? I'm trying to protect you. But you are fierce and willful, and cannot see how far withdrawn you grow. It cannot be productive for you to wander day and night with the wild dogs on the moors. And these dreams, I really think you mean that they are true...

EMILY: I see the sprits, Tallie...

CHARLOTTE: You cannot see spirits. They are false, they lead you away from your true path...

EMILY: They show me what is real...

CHARLOTTE: This is real. Your work! You must write again. You must use your spectacular will to come back to us! God has given us a means to save ourselves. You from madness, and I from despair. It's a gift we must not waste! We are poor. We are women! We have nothing!

EMILY: We have our souls, Charlotte...

CHARLOTTE: But for how long? This is our last chance. The only way to seize our destiny. It's the only way to freedom! Please, sister. I am withering away...

EMILY: I will never leave Haworth. I'm tied here by a force a dozen times stronger than you!

(ANNE enters from the moors)

CHARLOTTE: Annie!

ANNE: Such a visitation...

CHARLOTTE: Where have you been--

EMILY: Here comes the bride...

ANNE: Why did you leave me out there with him? Why did you take me in the first place?

EMILY: Are the nuptials set? Should we make the lace?

ANNE: Don't you talk to me--

EMILY: Something's gone wrong...

CHARLOTTE: What has happened? Has he proposed?

(ANNE goes for the house. EMILY grabs ANNE's arm)

EMILY: I did it for you, you belong together...

ANNE: Not in a thousand, thousand years.

EMILY: What has changed?

ANNE: Charlotte--keep her away from me--

CHARLOTTE: Tell me sisters--All I want to do is help--

EMILY: All you care about is you! Annie...

ANNE: Please Charlotte. I want to go away now...

EMILY: I took her to meet Weightman.

ANNE: This is not Gondal!

EMILY: He loves her, can't you see?

CHARLOTTE: What right have you to play God with us?

ANNE: I am tainted. Ruined. Sinful.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, Annie. Shh. Papa must never know...

ANNE: You left me out there with him, full of drink--I can never be his wife.

EMILY: So he drinks. Branny drinks. There are greater faults--

ANNE: No! There is another--His wife to be.

EMILY: His wife to be, that's you--

ANNE: You and your awful tricks. You must have known it from the start. He's not free--he's betrothed. To a woman from Appleby.

CHARLOTTE: Mr. Weightman is engaged to a woman from Appleby?

EMILY: Who, what? Lies!

CHARLOTTE: How could he not have mentioned--

ANNE: And he doesn't even love her--Oh--stop my heart--I'm feeling feint--

CHARLOTTE: (To EMILY) What on earth were you thinking?

ANNE: I think that's rather strange--were you talking to him about me? What right have you--

EMILY: I didn't know--I swear--Let me get my hands on him. I'll kill him for hurting my Anne--

CHARLOTTE: Your Anne? Your Anne? You have done enough. (To ANNE) Think. The situation might be salvageable. Marriages can be--un-arranged...

ANNE: Charlotte, please. I've been praying all night. He has some strange power over me. I wish I could rid him from my mind completely. (pause) Do you think that God understands what it's like to be in love?

CHARLOTTE: He created us, didn't He?

ANNE: But I don't always understand what I create. Do you think that God can forgive my indiscretions?

CHARLOTTE: I'm certain that he will. The man's lied to us about his entanglements. He is obviously a scoundrel and a rogue. He'll never want for troops of victims amongst young ladies.

ANNE: Yes. I've come to my decision. I can never trust a man with such terrible secrets. (beat) I thought, perhaps, under the circumstance, it might be wise if I had some time alone. I thought I might go back to governing...

EMILY: No--you promised--

ANNE: It might be a kind of penance...

CHARLOTTE: Darling. There must be some other way. We could ask Papa to make him go--

EMILY: No--you mustn't--

CHARLOTTE: Why? (pause) Emily. Why?

ANNE: Perhaps she's grown fond of him, too.

EMILY: Don't be ridiculous. I care no more for him than the rocks in the field, the wind in the trees, the puddles of mud that form in the rain--

ANNE: But Emily. Those are the things you love the most--

CHARLOTTE: Emily? Tell us now, before you burst! (long pause) Damn it! The world does not revolve around your passion and your darkness. You think you are free; you think that you are humble. But you are in a prideful, brooding trap. I cannot watch you struggle any more.

EMILY: Annie--

ANNE: You've broken my heart--

CHARLOTTE: Come, dear.

EMILY: Do not go...

ANNE: I can't bear to look at you--

EMILY: Tallie--

CHARLOTTE: Fend for yourself.

EMILY: But--I--

(ANNE and CHARLOTTE exit. Fade down on the courtyard. Rise on EMILY as she walks out to the moors)

EMILY: "The night is darkening round me,

The wild winds coldly blow;

But a tyrant spell has bound me,

And I cannot, cannot go."

"The giant trees are bending

Their bare boughs weighted with snow

The storm is fast descending,

And yet I cannot go.

"Clouds beyond clouds above me,

Wastes beyond wastes below;

But nothing drear can move me:

I will not, cannot go.”

(Fade on EMILY to black. CHARLOTTE enters and lights a candle in the dark Living Room. She huddles over a page and reads, with pen in hand. A red fire glows)

CHARLOTTE: “...Mr. Rochester, as he sat in his damask-covered chair, looked different than before; not quite so stern--much less gloomy. There was a smile on his lips, and his eyes sparkled, with wine, I am not sure; but I think it very probable. He was in his after dinner mood; still he looked preciously grim, cushioning his massive head against the back of his chair, and receiving the light of the fire in his great, dark eyes; for he had great, dark eyes, and very fine eyes, too--not without a certain change in their depths, which, if it was not softness, reminded you of that feeling...”

Buttons and coal. I might as well give up. Ah, my dear imagined reader, it's really no great loss....

(WEIGHTMAN enters. His face is pale and his eyes are sunken. He carries the now tattered volume of Shelley under his arm)

WEIGHTMAN: Pardon, may I--

CHARLOTTE: You! You're not allowed in here--

WEIGHTMAN: Please. The fire's out in my cottage--

CHARLOTTE: You know where the wood is--

WEIGHTMAN: Please, let me warm myself--

CHARLOTTE: There. (Throws him a blanket) Now be on your way--

WEIGHTMAN: It's freezing. I have a most persistent chill--

CHARLOTTE: I don't care if you have ice in your socks, get out...

WEIGHTMAN: Rats. I've never met three more headstrong women...

(WEIGHTMAN coughs)

CHARLOTTE: Oh, Lord. (pause) Come. Sit by the fire. But just for a few moments.

WEIGHTMAN: You are an angel--

CHARLOTTE: Don't start with me. I'll pour you some tea.

WEIGHTMAN: So. (pause) How are your sisters. Are they well?

CHARLOTTE: Well enough. And your fiancée?

WEIGHTMAN: Hmm? Oh, that.

CHARLOTTE: (sarcastically) You must be very close.

WEIGHTMAN: We have our--differences.

CHARLOTTE: Then some women are immune to your spell?

WEIGHTMAN: Like you?

CHARLOTTE: Who's to know.

WEIGHTMAN: Charlotte. Come now. You're not flirting with me, are you?

CHARLOTTE: Why not? The house has already gone to the dogs--I might as well join along. (gives him some tea) It isn't fair, it isn't right. I'm the one who works the hardest, studies the most. But I'll never have real talent...it's hopeless, useless...

WEIGHTMAN: Talent's not everything, Charlotte. (coughs) You must persist.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, what bundle of self-pity I am. (touches his forehead) You've a fever, haven't you?

WEIGHTMAN: How--

CHARLOTTE: What is it?

WEIGHTMAN: Your sisters. Are they--well?

CHARLOTTE: I told you. They are--fine.

WEIGHTMAN: And--is it true--Anne is leaving?

CHARLOTTE: Yes. And Emily and I have been accepted into the Pensionnat Heger. You men will soon be on your own. (pause) Far be it from me to give advice, Mr. Weightman--

WEIGHTMAN: No, no--please--

CHARLOTTE: But in the meanwhile, do stay away from my sisters if you're fond of your career. Now if you'll excuse me...

WEIGHTMAN: I see. Perhaps, then, you could return this volume for me...

CHARLOTTE: (ignoring him, back to her work) This is writing from the devil, it's worthless sentimental drivel....

(Threatens to throw her writing in the fire. WEIGHTMAN stops her)

WEIGHTMAN: Stop, sweet Charlotte... You mustn't throw away your labors so...

CHARLOTTE: No worse than throwing away my sister's affections.

WEIGHTMAN: Perhaps you've been misinformed. It is they who have rejected me. There is many a man who is worse than I, and you should be happy that Anne did not bear herself to a real villain.

CHARLOTTE: You are villain enough for Haworth.

WEIGHTMAN: Were I a better clergyman, I might deduce a want for your own secret love.

CHARLOTTE: For your information, I've had full proposals...

EMILY: Really? From who?

CHARLOTTE: From one Mr. Bryce, an acquaintance of father's, a man in all respects better than you...

WEIGHTMAN: But you turned him down? Why?

CHARLOTTE: You know nothing about me, and nothing about the sort of love of which I am capable.

WEIGHTMAN: For your sake, I hope that you are right. Else your judgmental ways could doom you to loneliness.

CHARLOTTE: Kiss me, Mr. Weightman.

WEIGHTMAN: Why?

CHARLOTTE: Just a for a moment. For the experience. Then I'll go back to hating you. (He does, on the forehead. After a beat) How can you pretend to care about us, when you've been so deceitful?

WEIGHTMAN: “Darling enthusiast, Holy Child--”

CHARLOTTE: Emily shared her work? With you?

WEIGHTMAN: Not Emily. Anne--

CHARLOTTE: Mr. Weightman. It’s Emily who wrote those lines.

WEIGHTMAN: No. You must be mistaken. It’s Anne who gave me Shelley--

CHARLOTTE: No, I’m quite sure. (beat) She’s brilliant, isn’t she?

WEIGHTMAN: And this volume?

CHARLOTTE: What? Oh. I’ll take that...

WEIGHTMAN: No. I’ll return it to Emily myself--Oh, impossible...I thought she hated me...

CHARLOTTE: No, no...I was mistaken, that was Annie’s poem, indeed...

WEIGHTMAN: Sweet Heaven! God has at last revealed himself...

CHARLOTTE: I think you should leave now--

WEIGHTMAN: Listen to me. (from book) “Emily. I love thee. Would we were twins of the same mother...” (grabs CHARLOTTE) She’s mine, Tallie.

CHARLOTTE: What? Let go of me...

WEIGHTMAN: She’s meant for me...

CHARLOTTE: You don’t deserve her. Get out!

WEIGHTMAN: Shelley proves it...

CHARLOTTE: Damn Romantic poets! I do not believe in ghosts...

WEIGHTMAN: I’ve been dead before. By drowning. Just like him...

CHARLOTTE: Remember God, Mr. Weightman...

WEIGHTMAN: Ha! He won’t remember me! (let’s her go) Goodnight. I’ve a fine young foal to train...

(WEIGHTMAN exits.)

CHARLOTTE: (after him) You've no right! (beat) You'll destroy her!

(CHARLOTTE hesitates. Dogs bark. Fade up on EMILY whispers, laying on a gravestone)

EMILY: Mama...Mama...let me in. You must let me in Mama. Mama? Mama, please, I've never asked for much. Talk to me. Please, say something. I'm afraid, Mama. I think--I think I'm being haunted, Mama, by the King of Darkness himself...I can't fight him alone. I beg you, Mama, if you love me at all, please, let me in...

(Fade up on WEIGHTMAN, on the moors, at night, walking, with a book)

WEIGHTMAN: "While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped Thro' many a cave and ruin, With fearful steps pursuing... Hopes of high talk with the dead. I was not heard: I saw them not... ..Sudden thy shadow fell on me: I clasped my hands in ecstasy..."

(WEIGHTMAN exits. Dogs fade. Fade to the Courtyard. Morning. EMILY holds a pair of gloves. ANNE carries a bag. They both wear shawls)

EMILY: So. Here we are.

ANNE: Yes.

EMILY: I owe you an apology.

ANNE: If you like.

EMILY: I never should have... It was madness.

ANNE: I hope you understand then why I broke my promise.

EMILY: Yes. I do.

ANNE: You do?

EMILY: I am not invulnerable to love.

ANNE: Maybe. Maybe not. Sometimes I think you do not want to be loved at all. (beat) It is a good thing for me to go.

EMILY: On this day, four years in the future, do you think we shall be finally established to our hearts content?

ANNE: Have faith.

EMILY: Time will tell.

(CHARLOTTE enters with a bundle)

CHARLOTTE: The carriage is almost ready. I brought you some linen writing paper. You must write us all the time.

EMILY: Here. Take these gloves. They're horribly crafted, by me.

ANNE: Thank you. Emmy, the one thing you cannot do is sew. (beat) I cannot go.

CHARLOTTE: You must.

ANNE: I'll be all right. Thorpe Green. The name sounds pleasant enough.

CHARLOTTE: Maybe this family will be better.

EMILY: The children will act like angels all the time.

CHARLOTTE: Certainly they will.

WEIGHTMAN: (off) Hold the horse, man. Ho!

CHARLOTTE: Oh, Lord!

ANNE: Why has he come--?

(WEIGHTMAN enters, with two books)

ANNE: (cont>) William. What are you doing here?

WEIGHTMAN: I couldn't let you leave without a good-bye...

ANNE: I have made my own amends.

WEIGHTMAN: Please. Forgive me. For all that I have done--I have every confidence you will find a better sort...

ANNE: That's awfully presumptuous of you, Mr. Weightman.

WEIGHTMAN: Know that I never meant to hurt you.

ANNE: But you did.

WEIGHTMAN: Yes. Still. I have a present for you.

ANNE: An Anglican Bible. With my name...

WEIGHTMAN: Engraved in gold...

ANNE: Oh, William...

CHARLOTTE: You must board the carriage. You have far to travel...

ANNE: Yes. Well. Right. I'm off.

EMILY: Be brave, dear Sis!

ANNE: Be good. All of you. Goodbye!

(ANNE leaves. The sisters ad lib "goodbyes." They all watch her as she goes. Sound of horse and carriage down a lane)

CHARLOTTE: Seems like only yesterday she came home.

EMILY: She'd still be here if it weren't for the two of you and your meddling!

WEIGHTMAN: It was a foolish thing you did, bringing her out on the moors with us—

CHARLOTTE: Come now. No need for dramatics. Emotional displays are self-indulgent and entirely unbecoming. Excuse us, Mr. Weightman...

EMILY: Tallie, leave me alone. Can't you even wait till she's down the path?

WEIGHTMAN: I brought your book of Shelley.

EMILY: I don't know what you're talking about.

WEIGHTMAN: Please, take it...

CHARLOTTE: Darling, we must discuss the travel arrangements...

EMILY: Don't pester me!

WEIGHTMAN: It's your book. I can't keep it...

EMILY: I don't want it anymore...

WEIGHTMAN: You have to take it! It belongs to you! It has your little notes tucked in every page...

(CHARLOTTE takes the book. WEIGHTMAN coughs)

CHARLOTTE: Give it here. Mr. Weightman. You shouldn't stay out here. With that cough of yours.

WEIGHTMAN: Feeling much better, thank you. In fact, I think I need a walk.

CHARLOTTE: And we have chores to do. Come along, Emily.

EMILY: I think I need a walk as well.

CHARLOTTE: No, you don't.

EMILY: Yes I do.

CHARLOTTE: You can take your walk later.

EMILY: Later it will grow dark, kind Sis.

CHARLOTTE: Emily. I thought we agreed --

EMILY: I agreed to nothing, Tallie.

CHARLOTTE: Must you always be so stubborn and selfish?

EMILY: Must you always be so nosy and nasty?

CHARLOTTE: Will I ever get through to you? He is a man possessed...

EMILY: And what if he is? I doubt his demons can outwit my own.

CHARLOTTE: Look to the light, Emily. I worry for your soul...

EMILY: Worry for you own, and save yourself!

CHARLOTTE: Go on. Enjoy yourself. But don't come running back when you're down and disgraced!

EMILY: Don't be emotional, Tallie. It's not becoming.

WEIGHTMAN: Now, if you will excuse us, your sister and I will be off on our walk...

CHARLOTTE: You--I--Fools.

(CHARLOTTE leaves. EMILY and WEIGHTMAN walk to the moors. The sound of wild dogs lingers off and on in the great distance)

EMILY: Well, you certainly made a mess of things...

WEIGHTMAN: I should say the same to you! What were you trying to say that night after lecture? I think I cut you off--

EMILY: Do you still intend to marry?

WEIGHTMAN: There is no Isabella.

EMILY: What?

WEIGHTMAN: Well, there was, once. But she broke it off when she learned of my chosen profession...

EMILY: You are nothing but full of lies!

WEIGHTMAN: And I have lied deepest to myself. I let Anne believe long enough to set her free, from who she thought I was...from this sheltered prison you call home.

EMILY: A cruel trick by a spineless man...

WEIGHTMAN: Am I? Would you have truly wished for your sister and I to have become one?

EMILY: Then, you never really loved our Anne...

WEIGHTMAN: Under the conditions, I tried very hard to love her.

EMILY: And what conditions are those?

WEIGHTMAN: Knowing she was the one that made most common sense.

EMILY: What kind of person are you?

WEIGHTMAN: A restless, searching one. Just like you.

EMILY: At least I know the boundaries of my sex! Anne would have never approached you on her own...but her passion was true, I tell you...night after night she longed for you, she'd fondly trace your feature in the air...

WEIGHTMAN: Ah, yes. Your mysterious knowledge of passion.

EMILY: There isn't anything mysterious about it. It comes through observation.

WEIGHTMAN: Observation of whom?

EMILY: What?

WEIGHTMAN: Who is this man that inspires the heart of such a one as you? He must be some character, to weather the tides of your affection. (Barking becomes louder)
What is it?

EMILY: It's those dogs again.

WEIGHTMAN: Is it someone from the parish?

EMILY: Please, don't persist--

WEIGHTMAN: Ah! I must be close then.

EMILY: It's really none of your business. They sound closer than ever...

WEIGHTMAN: Emily, I have told you all my secrets! Now, you must confess!

EMILY: I cannot confess! To do so would only put the both of us in jeopardy...

WEIGHTMAN: But aren't you the brave one? Don't you love to challenge danger?

EMILY: What if I were to say I loved you, Mr. Weightman? Would it not belie the friendship we pretend? What, with my sister loving you, and a wife to be in Appleby, wouldn't that put me in the most dire of straits? Imagine, how I would feel, were I in love with you. Our walks, our chats, how they would take on a multiplicity of meaning? How every time you looked, or smiled, or brushed an arm past mine, what that would do to my wicked, churning heart? Do you think that any normal being could tolerate such a condition? Certainly not, I tell you. Anyone in their right mind would ignore such feelings, cut them out and throw them to those dogs!

WEIGHTMAN: Emily...

EMILY: Listen! Hear them? That is the way love sounds! Do you know what I'm saying William? Am I making any sense?

(The dogs stop barking)

WEIGHTMAN: No.

EMILY: Do you not see what a horrible situation this would be, if we shared a passionate love?

WEIGHTMAN: It would be the end of friendship, I suspect.

EMILY: Then promise not to ask me about the man I love.

WEIGHTMAN: That I cannot do.

“Sweeter far than placid pleasure; Purer, higher beyond measure...”

EMILY: How...

WEIGHTMAN: It was in your book. And you wrote the poem that Anne spoke to me.

EMILY: Oh, no...

WEIGHTMAN: You cannot live your whole life never experiencing passion, Emily. That would be worse than an untimely death! It would be as if you never lived at all!

EMILY: I'm not afraid of death.

WEIGHTMAN: I am! Death is everywhere. That's why I want to live...with you...

EMILY: I cannot give my heart away ...

WEIGHTMAN: You can.

EMILY: If I loose my heart, I'll loose my mind...

WEIGHTMAN: And I'd be stealing you forever from the one thing you truly love: these dreary Yorkshire moors!

EMILY: Love them? I hate them! They have sucked my soul and will not let me free--

WEIGHTMAN: What's the matter?

EMILY: I saw something--a shadow--

WEIGHTMAN: Where?

EMILY: It's nothing.

WEIGHTMAN: Don't pull away. Don't turn against your own heart...

EMILY: What do you know of my heart? I will not bend for love! (pause) There it is again...

WEIGHTMAN: What? The dogs?

EMILY: No. Don't you see? A shape. Through those trees.

WEIGHTMAN: Show me.

EMILY: It's him.

WEIGHTMAN: Who? The groundskeep?

EMILY: Do you know me, William? Do you? (pause) There! He comes clear! Do you see him? (beat) Do you know me, spirit? Tell me who I am!

WEIGHTMAN: Emily...

EMILY: Maybe he'll speak...Wouldn't that be magnificent?

WEIGHTMAN: Love--

EMILY: Listen--

WEIGHTMAN: Emily. You needn't search anymore...

EMILY: I've been waiting all my life for this...Can't you see him?

WEIGHTMAN: Look at my face. He's here. I've come through time for you...

EMILY: You mustn't speak such things...As if you've no soul of your own...Oh, no. He's disappearing! Oh dream!

WEIGHTMAN: Forget the dream! I'm here...

EMILY: Spirit! Please, don't go...

WEIGHTMAN: Damn it! There's nothing! Nothing here but me, wanting you, loving you!

EMILY: You didn't see him.

WEIGHTMAN: I saw, some movement...

EMILY: But not--

WEIGHTMAN: No. But that's perfectly explainable--

EMILY: You think I'm insane. That I've made this whole thing up.

WEIGHTMAN: No.

EMILY: You think I'm a liar...

WEIGHTMAN: If you say you saw a ghost, well then, you did!

EMILY: If you love me, how could you not see him? William, I no longer feel my darling, lonely pain...

WEIGHTMAN: I will prove myself to you.

EMILY: We should head for Haworth...

WEIGHTMAN: Hear me, ghost? Reveal yourself! I challenge you!

(WEIGHTMAN leaves to follow the ghost)

EMILY: No, William. This is madness. Wait!

(EMILY exits after WEIGHTMAN. Music. Fade up on CHARLOTTE in the graveyard with a letter and a manuscript. The sound of the carriage in the distance)

CHARLOTTE: To Masters Aylott and Jones, 8 Paternoster Row, London. Gentlemen. Though we are obscure and unrecommended, please lend an indulgent ear. Enclosed is our advance--in full and in cash. Please commence production of four-hundred copies of this short book of verse, to be self-published and fully credited to we three brothers — Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell.

(she folds up the package and ties it)

It will work. It must.

(CHARLOTTE tucks away the package and exits. WEIGHTMAN stumbles into the graveyard, exhausted, and lies, belly down, across a grave)

WEIGHTMAN: We shall elope...Uncle will cut me off when he hears... I shall be ruined. But it's no matter. We'll survive. We'll go to Ireland. Or Africa. Or the Americas. Yes. She'd like that. The Americas...

(EMILY enters, and rushes to WEIGHTMAN)

EMILY: You foolish, willful man. What have you done?

WEIGHTMAN: Come with me.

EMILY: Where...

WEIGHTMAN: Be with me.

EMILY: But what about Anne...and Tallie...

WEIGHTMAN: It's you I've come for. I know it now. Only — (coughs violently) you...

EMILY: William--you're very sick...

WEIGHTMAN: Nothing matters anymore, except for us.

EMILY: Are you the one? (She kisses him. They fall into a deep embrace) I want to know you, be you...

WEIGHTMAN: Darling, this is what I've longed for...

EMILY: William. Are we "one passion in twin hearts?"

WEIGHTMAN: You are my passion.

EMILY: "One spirit within two frames?"

WEIGHTMAN: You are my spirit. You are more myself than I. Whatever souls are made of, yours and mine are the same.

EMILY: My soul wants to leap from my body...

WEIGHTMAN: It's not your body anymore. This hand is not mine, it is yours. This bountiful hair, these soft cheeks, belong not to you, but to us.

EMILY: I'm bursting. I can't seem to think clearly. Where is my soul? I can't feel myself...

WEIGHTMAN: Shh. Love. It is here. Waiting.

EMILY: And your soul is inside me? (He coughs) What have I done, playing games with you so...

WEIGHTMAN: I forgive you, Emily. Please. Forgive me.

EMILY: I forgive what you have done to us. I love my murderer--but yours--How can I?

WEIGHTMAN: I am your ghost, Emily. I have always been, and always will be. Until the end of time. (he gasps for breath)

EMILY: Don't say that. You will not leave me. You must not go. Don't go William. Do not go!

(She holds him desperately, as he fades into unconsciousness. Very slow fade to black. The sound of a church bell, ringing, slowly, mournfully. When the lights return, EMILY and WEIGHTMAN are gone. CHARLOTTE is looking at the grave. ANNE approaches)

CHARLOTTE: Annie. We've been hoping...

ANNE: I came as fast as I could...I cannot believe it.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, darling. It all happened so quickly...

ANNE: Where is she —

CHARLOTTE: Inside. Helping Papa with the house guests.

ANNE: Well. Now that's a change...

CHARLOTTE: Please do not be so hard on her. It's been a very difficult time.

ANNE: How was the service?

CHARLOTTE: Papa said William had some "peculiar advantages," but that his "character wore well, the surest proof of real worth." It's true, I think that I misjudged him...

ANNE: Perhaps. And our little collection?

CHARLOTTE: I finally scraped together enough funds. I've transcribed it all as clearly as I can... It is with the printer. I have nothing left now to keep me busy, I can hardly keep myself together...

ANNE: With Emmy's poems, too?

CHARLOTTE: Wait until you see her. There is something...wholly different...

ANNE: If only I hadn't been so cold-hearted... he might have...and she...what if—

CHARLOTTE: Shh, darling. The doctor said the cause was protracted influenza. But it seemed to me one night, somehow, he was suddenly, taken...

ANNE: What finally transpired between them?

CHARLOTTE: She will not say directly... There is something of the devil all in this.

ANNE: Or of men. To tell you the truth, I do not understand this thing at all...

(EMILY enters. She is detached, aloof, calm)

EMILY: Sister. Welcome home.

ANNE: I am too late. Are you, at peace?

EMILY: I've decided to go with Charlotte to Brussels...

ANNE: It will do you well...I wish I had such an opportunity...

CHARLOTTE: Darling...about that. We needn't go if you don't want to. I've been so selfish—

EMILY: Tallie. I want to go. I need to see the world. Let's go as soon as we are able.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, my sweet, sad, maypole...

EMILY: Did you love him, Annie?

ANNE: No, I think not.

EMILY: He was a funny man.

ANNE: Emmy. Don't...

EMILY: Sometimes, I think he and I must have lived another life together. He knew me. He understood me, like I thought no man ever could...

ANNE: Oh, dear, oh dear...

EMILY: Please don't hate me.

ANNE: Shush. It's all right. Really. (beat) You held this inside all this while? How could you stand it?

EMILY: What was I to do? I couldn't very well disappoint your faith in stoic Major Em...

ANNE: Emmy--now I love you even more. We will forget this man. And the whole business of men. We don't need them, do we? We will carry on with our lives. I cannot stand to think we'll be apart again.

CHARLOTTE: Darlings. The pangs of separation make me think. Perhaps when we return, we might start our own girls school, and bring the students home to us in Haworth.

ANNE: A sound proposal.

EMILY: We will teach them Goethe's Faust, in German yet.

ANNE: I brought something to show you. I've been working on a novel...

CHARLOTTE: Anne, I will never forgive you for keeping our sister's talents such a secret.

ANNE: Yes, I know. She's always had a fire...

EMILY: Would you two still love me, if I did not write again? I don't know if I will be able...

CHARLOTTE: Oh, Emmy...Can you think we want you to be anything other than what you are?

EMILY: Dear sisters, every atom of your flesh is as dear to me as my own....

ANNE: See, now, we must remember, however bleak things seem, God has a reason for everything. Let me go and see how Papa's doing. (She hugs them both) It's good to be home.

(ANNE exits)

CHARLOTTE: Sissy...what did happen to you and he, out there on the heights?

EMILY: Perhaps I will write about it, someday.

(goes to a grave--a new one) "Holy be thy resting place

Wherever thou mayst lie;

The sweetest winds breathe on thy face,

The softest of the sky..."

CHARLOTTE: May God have mercy on his soul.

EMILY: I love you, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE: Why, sis. I love you, too...come inside now. It's about to rain.

(CHARLOTTE exits. Thunder rolls off in the distance).

EMILY: What weather! (pause) To wander. (pause) To wonder.

(WEIGHTMAN appears, a shadow, a whisper)

WEIGHTMAN: Let...me...in...

(He is gone. Silence. She looks and does not see him. Wind. Fade to black. Music.)

END OF PLAY