

Wuthering Heights

In this scene, the young HEATHCLIFF has arrived back from an escapade on the moors, wet and alone. He is explaining to the kindly housekeeper, Nelly, what has happened.

HEATHCLIFF: Cathy is at Thrushcross Grange. I would have been there too, but they did not have the manners to ask me to stay. In fact, they threw me out because I laughed at them... and cursed a bit too!

Let me get this jacket off. I'm wet through.

(Taking his wet jacket off) It's a long story, Nelly. Cathy and I escaped from the washhouse and thought we would just go and see whether the Lintons passed their Sunday evenings standing shivering in corners! We ran from the top of the Heights to the park, without stopping. We crept through a broken hedge, groped our way up the path, and planted ourselves on a flower-plot under the drawing-room window. Both of us were able to look in by clinging to the ledge. It was exciting!

We saw a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold. There was a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre and shimmering with little soft tapers. Old Mr and Mrs Linton were not there; Edgar and his sisters had it entirely to themselves. We should have thought ourselves in heaven!

But you'll never believe what we saw next! Isabella lay screaming at the farther end of the room, shrieking as if witches were running red-hot needles into her. Edgar stood on the hearth weeping silently, and in the middle of the table sat a little dog, shaking its paw and yelping; which, from their mutual accusations, we understood they had nearly pulled in two between them. That was their pleasure! To quarrel over who should hold a heap of warm hair! Then, each began to cry because both, after struggling to get the dog, refused to take it.

We laughed outright – rather loudly too. The Lintons heard us, and with one accord they shot like arrows to the door. We made frightful noises to terrify them still more, and then we dropped off the ledge, because we felt we had better flee. I had Cathy by the hand, and was urging her on, when all at once she fell down. They had let the bulldog loose and it had seized her ankle! The dog was throttled off and a manservant took Cathy in his arms and carried her inside the house.

I followed, grumbling. When Isabella saw me she shrieked even more and said that I was a 'Frightful thing' and looked exactly like the son of the fortune-teller who had stolen her tame pheasant!

They said I was wicked – so I let them think I was and I started cursing again – so that Robert, the manservant, was ordered to send me away. That's why I am here and Cathy has remained behind.

(Softly) Don't be angry, Nelly.

by Emily Brontë, adapted by LAMDA