

1 **INT. CHURCH, HAWORTH - DAY****1***1854. July.*

Rows of pews stretch forward to the altar which is decorated with white flowers and greenery, the pews also have posies of white and green at the end of each bench. A small congregation of about twelve wedding guests waiting patiently. In a single row four young clerics sitting together, hair combed flat, faces shining turn together as they hear the door bang open. An usher (another cleric) slips through the door and hurries down a side aisle. The young clerics watch with professional interest as they see the Usher whispering to an anxious looking Vicar. We sense that something is not right.

2 **INT. FRONT BEDROOM, PARSONAGE - DAY****2**

An elaborate lace wedding bonnet is lying on the neatly made double bed, seated at a table in front of the window is Charlotte (30's), cool clear eyes, her hair neatly braided wearing wedding dress of pale grey silk. She hears a noise and half turns towards the door.

3 **INT. LANDING, PARSONAGE - DAY****3**

The landing is deserted, in front of us is a small room with a single bed that overlooks the garden, to the right and left are two closed bedroom doors. We hear Tabby coming up the stairs. She looks across at the door on the right but knocks at the door on the left. She waits. No answer.

TABBY

Reverend?

She tries the handle, it's locked.

4 **INT. PATRICK'S BEDROOM - DAY****4**

A simply furnished room, double bed with small tables either side, a chest of drawers and a desk in the window. Patrick Bronte (78) is sitting up in bed awake, a tall, formidable man with white hair and piercing eyes, on the bedside table next to him are two loaded pistols.

TABBY

Please Reverend, you have to come now. She needs you.

We hear Tabby try the handle again but he does not react.

5 **INT. FRONT BEDROOM, PARSONAGE - DAY****5**

Tabby comes in to find Charlotte still at the dressing table.

TABBY

He won't come. Too poorly he says.
Selfish old bugger I say and I
don't care who hears me say it.

CHARLOTTE

(calmly)
Go and let them know I'm coming.

TABBY

I'm not leaving you!

CHARLOTTE

Please.
(look)
Don't worry about me.

Tabby give one last look and then leaves.

6 **EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY****6**

The graveyard stands between the church and the Parsonage which is fronted by a small garden. We see Tabby hurrying past the tombstones towards St Michael's Church.

7 **INT. LANDING, PARSONAGE - DAY****7**

Charlotte comes out of her room, she looks into the small front room, bed stripped bare. She listens - nothing. She crosses to her father's room and hears a 'theatrical' cough. She moves towards the back bedroom at the top of the stairs and leans against the door, head resting for a moment on the wood, hand flat against the door.

Slowly her fingers sink into the door, moving through the seemingly solid wood.

8 **INT. BACK BEDROOM, PARSONAGE - NIGHT****8**

1824

Charlotte moves through the door and finds herself standing in the tiny bedroom, dark and crowded, with four beds of different styles and six equally different children. Moonlight falls from a small window with no curtains and a pale thin girl with long brown hair, Maria Bronte (11), is sitting on the floor between the beds, lit by a single candle, telling a story. Around her listening with fierce concentration are her younger siblings: Elizabeth(10) Young Charlotte (9) Young Branwell (8) Young Emily (7) and Young Anne(6) who is sitting on Emily's lap wrapped in a blanket.

MARIA

(whispering)

All through the wickety wood they came, skipping and flittering, tumbling over themselves to be the first to bathe in her warmth. For, stronger than the sun she was burning with a light too bright for the eyes of mortal man.

Unobserved Charlotte sits down on a bed.

MARIA (CONT'D)

And when they were all assembled like butterflies in a circle around her she bade them repeat the binding spell. 'Ole mandicara messarate.'

The children repeat the whispered phrases in unison.

ALL

Ole mandicara messarate.

MARIA

'Andar soleminto saraments. Sale masterido candifaste.'

*

Charlotte joins in the whispered reply. Young Emily stares directly at her.

*

YOUNG EMILY

I can see you.

Charlotte looks around uncertain.

MARIA

Who are you talking to?

YOUNG EMILY

Mummy.

ELIZABETH

(looking)

Where?

YOUNG CHARLOTTE

(disbelieving)

Mummy's in heaven.

YOUNG EMILY

(pointing)

No she's not. She's there, look!

They all look but there is no one.

YOUNG BRANWELL

(teasing)

Whooooooooooooooooo!

YOUNG EMILY

Shut up Branwell.

Branwell blows out the candle and the girls scream and everyone dives for their beds. Maria shares with Elizabeth, Charlotte with Emily, Anne is lifted into the cot and Branwell has his own.

9

INT. LANDING, PARSONAGE - NIGHT

9

Patrick in his nightshirt, comes out of his bedroom with a lantern. Although this is three decades earlier (he is 47) his white hair and his gaunt but formidable figure feels more grandfather than father as he makes his way to the children's bedroom and opens the door.

10

INT. BACK BEDROOM, PARSONAGE - NIGHT

10

Patrick comes in and hold up the lantern, everyone is still and seemingly asleep as he inspects the beds but they all watch him when he is not looking. Then he stands at the open door and turns to the room.

PATRICK

Branwell, go to my room, you can sleep there.

(no one moves)

Now!

Branwell gets up and silently pads off to his father's room.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

And not another squeak from the rest of you. Goodnight.

ALL

Good night, Papa!

He leaves there is a moments silence.

YOUNG CHARLOTTE

(whisper)

You can't start a story and not finish it. That would be cruel.

Everybody tumbles out of bed back onto the floor and the candle is relit.

TITLES START

11 **INT. KITCHEN, PARSONAGE - DAY****11** *

Emily, Elizabeth and Maria are dressed and playing a complicated version of 'tag' which demands hopping around on one leg. Tabby is making tea and toasting bread at the same time.

TABBY

(cheerfully)

Out of my kitchen you little beasts
before one of you gets hurt. I
mean it, out!

She scurries out the shrieking children.

12 **INT. PATRICK'S BEDROOM - DAY****12**

In the foreground on a bedside table are the two loaded pistols. Branwell picks them up and crosses to Patrick at the window.

BRANWELL

Please?

PATRICK

Certainly not. These are not toys.
(relenting)
If you behave yourself you can help
me clean and reload them after
breakfast.

He turns to the window.

13 **EXT. PARSONAGE - DAY****13**

Patrick opens the windows of his bedroom and fires two pistols into the air.

14 **INT. KITCHEN, PARSONAGE - DAY****14**

Tabby finishes making a fresh pile of toast and heads for the dining room passing Patrick carrying his pistols.

PATRICK

I'll take my tea in the study, Mrs
Ackroyd.

TABBY

I won't be a minute.

She goes into the dining room.

15

INT. DINING ROOM, PARSONAGE - DAY

15

A chaotic breakfast, everyone helping themselves to whatever they need, Tabby puts the toast on the table and heads for the teapot on a side table. Maria and Branwell are reading separate pages of a recent copy of The Times, Charlotte has a book and Elizabeth is talking to Emily in 'Pig Latin' and buttering toast for Anne.

MARIA

(reading)

The Birmingham Ladies Society for the relief of Negro Slaves have published a pamphlet, they're arguing for immediate emancipation.

TABBY

(to Emily)

Does she want jam on that? Give it here to me.

She puts the tea on a side table and attends to Anne.

YOUNG BRANWELL

(primly)

Wilberforce says the slaves are not ready: 'Education before emancipation!'

YOUNG CHARLOTTE

You don't need much education to decide whether you want to be free or not.

TABBY

(reaching across)

Give us that bowl, young lady.

Charlotte passes her porridge bowl and Tabby goes back for Patrick's tea.

BRANWELL

Freedom is a responsibility not a right!

YOUNG CHARLOTTE

It is a right if you're American!

YOUNG BRANWELL

Not if you're an American slave.

TABBY

(going)

Or a Yorkshire one!

(going)

I want to see that table cleared in five minutes.

Branwell sticks his tongue out at Charlotte and she throws a piece of toast at him which is a cue for general mayhem. *

16 **EXT. PARSONAGE/GRAVEYARD - DAY**

16

The churchyard appears quiet and deserted, dark statuary and slabs of stone. Patrick comes out of the front door carrying a bible and crosses through the small garden in front of the house into the graveyard which stands between the Parsonage and St Michael's Church.

As he makes his way through the headstones three black faced figures (Maria, Elizabeth and Young Emily) carrying makeshift spears emerge from hiding and start to track him. Young Charlotte and Young Branwell, their faces also smeared with soot are hidden ahead of him.

PATRICK

(not looking up)

I've told you before, it's disrespectful. Find somewhere else to play.

Branwell grunts in mock 'Zulu' to his troops, Emily and Charlotte stand up and grunt back, on Branwell's signal they charge towards the moor. Anne trails behind, the last, also dressed as an unlikely 'savage' carrying a home made 'stick' spear.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Anne!

Anne stops and turns.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Go back to the house and take that nonsense off.

(firmly)

Now.

Anne looks at her father for a moment and then makes an APE LIKE series of GRUNTS, flings her makeshift spear at him and runs after her sisters.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Annie, come back here.

But she is gone and Patrick sighs recognizing his impotence walks on towards the Church. A crackle of thunder.

17 **EXT. MAIN STREET HAWORTH - DAY**

17

CLOSE ON: Wheels as they bump over the cobbled street and through the puddles.

A carriage is making its way up the rainswept hill, we catch a glimpse of a sharp faced woman dressed in black, with a carefully arranged fringe, Aunt Elizabeth Branwell (50).

18 **EXT. ESCARPMENT, MOOR - DAY**

18

Still raining as Young Branwell's (no longer black) face appears as he scrambles onto the top of a rock and stands up. Below him Maria, Charlotte and Emily are struggling to follow his climb.

YOUNG BRANWELL

Go round, it's too dangerous.

Below him Young Charlotte is reaching for a grip, Young Emily is struggling behind her. Charlotte starts to slip down the muddy slope.

YOUNG BRANWELL (CONT'D)

Told you!

YOUNG EMILY

Perhaps he's right. We could go around.

YOUNG CHARLOTTE

You mean, because we're girls?

YOUNG EMILY

(indignant)

He's not wearing a dress!

Charlotte starts to climb with grim determination.

19 **EXT. PARSONAGE/GRAVEYARD - DAY**

19

Rain falling on the gravestones, we see the house in the background.

20 **INT. DINING ROOM, PARSONAGE - DAY**

20

Tea is laid out, Patrick is sitting with Aunt Elizabeth who wears a small hairpiece to give the impression of a 'fashionable' fringe. She sips cautiously at her tea.

AUNT ELIZABETH

Coming through the village. There was a distinct... odour.

PATRICK

(nodding)

No sewers.

AUNT ELIZABETH

I beg your pardon?

PATRICK

Haworth... No sewers, everything runs down the street, gets worse in the rain because of the flooding because the...

AUNT ELIZABETH

(quickly)
I understand.

PATRICK

(cheerfully)
We give thanks that we live at the top of the hill, not the bottom.

Tabby brings in a cake, inquisitive and watchful of the new arrival.

TABBY

Tea alright for you Miss Branwell?

AUNT ELIZABETH

(uncertainly)
It's very... tasty.

TABBY

Not too strong? Vicar likes his tea strong, don't you Reverend?

PATRICK

(diplomatically)
Thank you, Tabby. That will be all.

Tabby goes.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Mrs Ackroyd has been with us since Maria died. She's from the village.

Aunt Elizabeth registers that this is clear.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

The children are very fond of her.

AUNT ELIZABETH

(expectant)
So, where are they? The children.

PATRICK

Ah!

He has no idea. He looks towards the window.

AUNT ELIZABETH

(following his look)
Surely they can't be outside in
this weather?

PATRICK

I think it's clearing up.

21 EXT. MOOR, NR HAWORTH - DAY 21

Branwell's face large in frame.

BRANWELL

Run, run for your lives. The
French are upon us!

We see six French Cavalrymen charging towards the children.
The children running for their lives.

22 INT. DINING ROOM, PARSONAGE - DAY 22

Patrick and Aunt Elizabeth looking out of the window.

AUNT ELIZABETH

Don't you worry about them, out
there by themselves?

PATRICK

Good Lord, no. They won't go far.
Besides the fresh air is so good
for them.

She gives him a look.

23 EXT. MOOR, NR HAWORTH - DAY 23

The French soldiers are on foot now, swords drawn, fighting
the children. From a distance this looks real but as we get
closer we see that the children have imaginary weapons which
they use with skill and daring. Branwell and Charlotte are
fighting two men each, the girls fight with as much bravado
as the boys until they have all 'killed' their opponents.

BRANWELL

(pulling his knife out of
a soldier)
We can leave no prisoners, no word
must get to back Bonaparte.

Emily despatches her soldier with brutal efficiency.

24 INT. DINING ROOM, PARSONAGE - DAY 24

Patrick and Aunt Branwell now sitting.

AUNT ELIZABETH

And what subjects do they enjoy?

PATRICK

Literature of course, classical and contemporary but you'll find history is a particular favourite, we are studying the campaigns of Napoleon at the moment.

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AUNT ELIZABETH

How interesting. And the girls?

PATRICK

I was talking about the girls, Branwell, sees himself more as the 'artist'. His drawing is very advanced.

On Aunt Elizabeth as the door CRASHES OPEN, and six soaked children come running in whooping like Indians, they stop and stare at Patrick and Elizabeth.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Children. This is your mother's sister, your Aunt Elizabeth. She's come to... look after you.

AUNT ELIZABETH (AWKWARDLY)

I am very pleased to make your acquaintance...

(she's rehearsed this)

Let me see if I can do this:
Maria... Elizabeth... Charlotte...
Branwell... Emily and you must be
'Baby' Anne.

*

The panting children stare at the strange woman, Anne is particularly unimpressed with the title 'Baby'. Aunt Elizabeth bravely faces their steady gaze.

Then Emily give a loud 'Indian Whoop' and is followed by the others whooping, as they charge out of the room.

TABBY

(calling after them)

No wet clothes on the beds, you little heathens.

Aunt Elizabeth, unnerved, as the children head up the stairs.

PATRICK

They are a little unpracticed at the art of receiving visitors.

TABBY

Then the little hare says to the maiden, seat yourself on my little hare's tail, and come with me to my little hare's hut. So the girl seats herself on the little hare's tail, and the hare takes her far away to his little hut...

She moves on past Branwell lying on the floor of the small front room concentrating on his drawing.

TABBY (CONT'D)

...And he tells her you must cook green cabbage and millet-seed, and I will invite the wedding guests.

28

INT. FRONT BEDROOM, PARSONAGE -- NIGHT

28

Aunt Elizabeth takes a last look at Branwell, who stares at her. She closes the door and sits in front of the mirror on the dressing table.

TABBY (O.S.)

But when all the wedding-guests assembled, they were all hares. A crow was there as parson and there was a fox as clerk, and the altar was under the rainbow.

Bringing her hand up to her forehead she removes the hair piece that makes up her curled fringe and stares at herself for a moment in the mirror.

29

INT. DINING ROOM, PARSONAGE - DAY

29

Aunt Elizabeth, hairpiece in place and looking rested is sitting at the head of the dining room table. The CHILDREN are copying out texts, Anne is doing a drawing of St George and the Dragon.

Maria asks a question of Branwell in a 'gibble gabble' French. She is talking nonsense but Branwell unhesitatingly replies with a short sharp meaningless expletive.

BRANWELL

(innocently)

Do you speak French Aunt Elizabeth?

AUNT ELIZABETH

(laughing)

French? Goodness, no.

(on his look)

Well, I understand a little of course.

Branwell 'translates' her answer back to Maria.

AUNT ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

What are you saying? Stop it at once.

Charlotte joins and suddenly all children start talking excitedly, thrilled at the effect it is producing.

AUNT ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I mean it. That's enough. Stop. Stop this at once.

They don't.

30 INT. HALLWAY, PARSONAGE - DAY

30

The six children, in disgrace, are lined up outside Patrick's study. The girls stand in line their hands behind their backs, Branwell is ostentatiously reading a small volume of poems which he swiftly hides as Patrick and an emotionally drained Aunt Elizabeth appear. Aunt Elizabeth hurries upstairs to her room Patrick surveys his children sternly.

PATRICK

(stern)

Branwell, go to my room, I shall speak to you later. Annie find Tabby, she'll be in the kitchen. The rest of you, come in.

He opens the door as Branwell marches off with a smirk on his face and the girls file in.

31 INT. PATRICK'S STUDY - DAY

31

The four girls stand in a line in front of Patrick's desk as he surveys them sternly.

PATRICK

I am disappointed in you, children, particularly you Maria. As the eldest you should be setting an example.

Maria looks down.

YOUNG EMILY

What did we do?

PATRICK

(sharp)

Quiet. Your Aunt tells me that you are incapable of concentration and that your written work is poor.

YOUNG CHARLOTTE

She never reads anything we write.

PATRICK

Because you never write what she tells you to! Your account of Wellington's emotions before the battle of Waterloo may be interesting Charlotte but it is not true.

YOUNG CHARLOTTE

How do you know?

PATRICK

This is the impertinence your Aunt spoke of!

MARIA

If we don't try to understand how people feel, how will understand what they do?

PATRICK

Facts, Maria, education, is about facts. Save your imagination for the nursery.

(as they protest)

Enough! You girls need to take your schooling seriously, because one day, mark my words, you may depend on it. I do not have the resources, and I never will, to make marriage a simple practicality, Education is your only hope of independence.

The children are silent, shocked by his anger.

32 EXT. COWAN BRIDGE SCHOOL - DAY**32**

A small cluster of stone cottages by a narrow road. It is raining and the camera moves down to see a sign which reads: 'The Clergy Daughters School, Cowan Bridge' and in smaller letters beneath: 'Rev. W. Carus Wilson, Headmaster'.

33 INT. DINING ROOM, COWAN BRIDGE - DAY**33**

A long stone floored room with two narrow table each seating twenty uniformed girls aged between 9 and 20. At the head of the tables stands the Cook, fierce looking woman wearing a dirty apron who is ladling out a meagre amount of thin broth and passing it out. The older girls sit nearest to her and the youngest at the far end of the table. Miss Andrews (40's), angular, dressed in grey, patrols in between the

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