

# St John, Jane, Mrs Reed

## Side for Auditions:

### II.10 116-118

ST JOHN

Mrs. Reed, you have a visitor.

#40 – *The Death of Mrs. Reed*

*(JANE and YOUNG JANE stand on opposite sides of the bed.)*

JANE

Hello, Aunt Reed.

MRS REED

Who is it? Who is this child?

*(She turns from side to side. Throughout the scene she cannot tell whether she should be addressing Jane herself or the image of Young Jane, just as vivid to her.)*

ST JOHN

She says she is your niece, Jane Eyre.

MRS REED

Are you Jane Eyre?

JANE

I am.

MRS REED

I've had more trouble with that child...such a burden to be left on my hands...her sudden fits of temper...and her watching...always watching!

JANE

Mrs Reed, why did you hate her so?

MRS REED

It was her mother I hated - my husband's only sister and oh! such a favourite with him! When she died he was heart-broken, pitiful man.

*(MRS REED grows more and more harsh and sarcastic.)*

He had to take the sickly, whining, pining creature in. A weak man. Weak. Naturally weak.

*(MRS REED seems to be in her own world. ST JOHN takes JANE aside.)*

ST JOHN

Jane, she knows not what she says...

JANE

What of her son, John? Should he not be sent for?

ST JOHN

John, I'm afraid, is dead Miss Eyre.

JANE

Oh, no.

ST JOHN

His death is the cause of his mother's sad state.

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JANE

How did it happen?

ST JOHN

A life of indulgence amongst the worst men and women. Extravagance and debt. Prison and despair. They say he killed himself.

JANE

God save his soul.

ST JOHN

Amen.

*(MRS REED suddenly sits up and speaks with a calm clarity.)*

MRS REED

Mr Rivers. In the top drawer of my dresser you'll find some miniature portraits. Bring them here.

*(ST JOHN leaves. MRS REED turns to JANE.)*

MRS REED

Jane Eyre. Come closer.

*(JANE sits on the bed by MRS REED)*

Do you despise me, child?

*(ST JOHN returns with two small portraits.)*

MRS REED

Give them to Jane Eyre.

*(ST JOHN gives JANE the portraits. Music begins as JANE examines them.)*

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JANE

Who painted these portraits?

MRS REED

Your mother painted them.

JANE

My mother?

*(A sudden dawn of understanding)*

These are my parents?

MRS REED

Yes, child.

JANE

My mother - and my father. Why did I never see these before?

MRS REED

Your uncle sent them to you.

JANE

My uncle!

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**MRS REED**

Your uncle in Madeira. Your father's brother. He wanted to adopt you, and comfort you, and cherish you...

*(Her voice starts to rise as she grows more and more impassioned.)*

...and leave you all his money. I told him you were dead!

*(She laughs and her eyes gleam as she continues.)*

There was typhus at Lowood School. Many of the pupils died. But you - you didn't die - but I said you did. And I wish you had! You should have died!

**JANE**

Why, Mrs. Reed? Why?

**MRS REED**

Because you so despised me! — when you told me that day you hated me so, in front of the school, in front of my son...

**JANE**

You must think no more of it.

**MRS REED**

...that the very thought of me made you sick.