

John Reed, Young Jane, Mrs. Reed Side for Auditions: I. Prologue 2-4

(JOHN REED)

What are you reading?

YOUNG JANE

It's Bewick's Book of...

JOHN REED

You have no business to take my books.

(He snatches the book from YOUNG JANE.)

For they are mine. This whole house belongs to me, or will do in a few year's time. You - you're a dependent. That's what mamma says. You ought to beg and not live here and eat our food and wear good clothes and steal our things!

(JOHN REED suddenly and furiously rips pages from the book and throws them at YOUNG JANE.)

YOUNG JANE

(Crying)

No, please. Don't!

(He hurls what is left of the book at YOUNG JANE's feet then recoils from her, adopting a tone of mock horror.)

JOHN REED

Jane Eyre! What ever have you done?

(He turns and shouts down through the trap-door.)

Mama! Mama! Come quickly!

MRS. REED

(From below)

What is it, John?

JOHN REED

(Swiftly to YOUNG JANE)

Ugly, ugly, ugly face!

Now you'll learn to know your place!

(MRS. REED comes up the stairs and appears waist-high in the trap-door. JOHN REED points at YOUNG JANE who is now sitting on the floor in tears surrounded by pieces of the tattered book. MRS. REED stiffens with fury.)

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MRS REED

Jane Eyre!

(YOUNG JANE turns to MRS REED and shakes her head, bewildered.)

A precious book! Completely destroyed! How could you do such a wicked, wicked thing?

YOUNG JANE

It was John. John did it.

(MRS REED looks at JOHN, who turns on YOUNG JANE in outraged innocence.)

JOHN

Liar!

(Crying)

Mama!

(Mrs. REED turns back to YOUNG JANE, her fury suddenly brightening over.)

MRS. REED

How dare you accuse your kind young master. You vile, deceitful child.

YOUNG JANE

How is he my master? Am I a servant?

MRS. REED

You are less than a servant. For you do nothing to earn your keep. God should strike you dead for the ingratitude you show.

(She starts to leave through the trap door, JOHN REED following.)

YOUNG JANE

Then let him strike me dead. For I cannot bear to live here any longer.

(MRS REED is silenced briefly by YOUNG JANE's outburst.)

MRS REED

This violence is repulsive. Come along, John.

JOHN REED

(Still sniveling)

Yes, mama.

MRS REED

It's all right, my darling. I know what I must do.

(Turning back to YOUNG JANE.)

I abominate lying, particularly in children. My duty obliges me to purge you of your faults.

(As MRS REED descends through the trap-door a clock chimes seven in the hall below. JOHN REED follows her, turning to make a hideous face at YOUNG JANE before disappearing down the stairs. YOUNG JANE collects up the torn pages of the book and starts to piece them together, as JANE starts to sing.)