

Text II - LOVE AND MARRIAGE

She was vexed, but she did not proceed. Apparently taking up another subject, she recommenced in a short time.

"If I were in heaven, Nelly, I should be extremely miserable."

"Because you are not fit to go there," I answered. "All sinners would be miserable in heaven."

"But it is not for that. I dreamt, once, that I was there."

"I tell you I won't hearken¹ to your dreams, Miss Catherine! I'll go to bed," I interrupted again. She laughed, and held me down, for I made a motion to leave my chair.

"This is nothing," cried she; "I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung² me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret, as well as the other. I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man³ in there, had not brought Heathcliff so low I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff, now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire."

Ere⁴ this speech was ended I became sensible of Heathcliff's presence. Having noticed a slight movement, I turned my head, and saw him rise from the bench, and steal out⁵, noiselessly degrade her to marry him, and then he stayed to hear no farther.

My companion, sitting on the ground, was prevented by the back of the settle⁶ from remarking his presence or departure; but I started, and bade⁷ her hush⁸!

"Why?" she asked, gazing nervously round.

"Joseph is here," I answered, catching, opportunely, the roll of his cart-wheels up the road; "and Heathcliff will come in with him. I'm not sure whether he were not at the door this moment."

"Oh, he couldn't overhear me at the door!" said she. "Give me Hareton⁹, while you get the supper, and when it is ready ask me to sup with you. I want to cheat my uncomfortable conscience, and be convinced that Heathcliff has no notion of these things -- he has not, has he? He does not know what being in love is?"

"I see no reason that he should not know, as well as you," I returned; "and if *you* are his choice, he'll be the most unfortunate creature that ever was born! As soon as you become Mrs Linton, he loses friend, and love, and all! Have you considered how you'll bear the separation, and how he'll bear to be quite deserted in the world? Because, Miss Catherine".

"He quite deserted! we separated!" she exclaimed, with an accent of indignation. "Who is to separate us, pray? They'll meet the fate of Milo¹⁰! Not as long as I live, Ellen for no mortal creature. Every Linton on the face of the earth might melt into nothing, before I could consent to forsake¹¹ Heathcliff. Oh, that's not what I intend -- that's not what I mean! I shouldn't be Mrs Linton were such a price demanded! He'll be as much to me as he has been all his lifetime. Edgar must shake off¹² his antipathy, and tolerate him, at least Nelly, I see now, you think me a selfish wretch¹³, but, did it never strike¹⁴ you that, if Heathcliff and I married, we should be

¹ harken: listen

² flung me out: threw me out with force

³ wicked man: Catherine's brother Hindley

⁴ ere: before

⁵ steal out: leave

⁶ settle: bench with a high back

⁷ bade: asked

⁸ hush: be silent

⁹ Hareton: Hindley's son

¹⁰ Milo: according to a Greek myth, Milo attempted to pull a tree up by the roots closed on his hands and held him tightly so that he was devoured by wild beasts

¹¹ forsake: stop helping

¹² shake off: get rid of

¹³ wretch: a contemptible person; a person to despise

beggars? whereas, if I marry Linton, I can aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of my brother's power."

"With your husband's money, Miss Catherine?" I asked. "You'll find him not so pliable¹⁵ as you calculate upon: and, though I'm hardly a judge, I think that's the worst motive you've given yet for being the wife of young Linton."

"It is not," retorted she, "it is the best! The others were the satisfaction of my whims¹⁶; and for Edgar's sake, too, to satisfy him. This is for the sake of one who comprehends¹⁷ in his person my feelings to Edgar and myself. I cannot express it; but surely you and everybody have a notion that there is, or should be an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of creation if I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated¹⁸, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees -- my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath -- a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff he's always, always in my mind -- not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself - but, as my own being -- so, don't talk of our separation again -- it is impracticable; and - "

She paused, and hid her face in the folds of my gown; but I jerked it forcibly away. I was out of patience with her folly!

From Chapter IX, Wuthering Heights (1847) by **Emily Brontë** (1818-1848)

http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/fiction_u/brontee_wh/wh_ch9.html

¹⁴ strike you: come into your mind

¹⁵ pliable: easily influenced

¹⁶ whims: sudden wishes with no serious reason behind them

¹⁷ comprehends: includes

¹⁸ annihilated: destroyed