

Pip and Jane

An original plagiarism by Sarah Formica

When the moon, which was full and bright (for the night was fine), came in her course to that space in the sky, and looked at me, her glorious gaze roused me. Awaking in the dead of night, I opened my eyes on her disk—silver-white and crystal clear. It was beautiful, but too solemn; I sat down and began to cry again. And while I was peering about anxiously among the trees, a little sharp bark just over my head made me look up in a great hurry. Good God! What a cry! The night—its silence—its rest, was rent in twain by a savage, a sharp, a shrilly sound.

“Grrrrrr, grrrrrr.”

An enormous puppy was looking down at me with large round eyes, and feebly stretching out one paw, trying to touch me. Every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh in my bones shrank when he came near. He ran headlong at me: I felt him grasp my fur: he had closed with a desperate thing. I really saw in him a tyrant, a murderer. I felt a drop or two of blood from my head trickle down my neck, and was sensible of somewhat pungent suffering: these sensations for the time predominated over fear, and I received him in frantic sort. I don’t very well know what I did with my paws, but he called me ‘Cat! Cat!’ and bellowed out aloud.

“Oh my dear paws! Oh my fur and whiskers! Wicked and cruel boy!” I said. “Oh why? Why make us both miserable? Why punish us? What for?”

He said to himself, “Pip, what a fool you are! I were a dog in disgrace.” I offered no answer, but stood feeling my whisker and looking dejectedly at him. “In a word, I was too cowardly to do what I knew to be right, as I had been too cowardly to avoid doing what I knew to be wrong.”

“Keep still, you little devil. Tell me your name! Quick!”

“Pip, ma’am.”

“Once more. Give it mouth!”

“Pip. Pip, ma’am.”

“You young dog. I quite forgot you didn’t like cats.”

“Not like cats!” cried the dog, in a shrill, passionate voice. “Would *you* like cats if you were me?”

“Well, perhaps not.” I forgave him at the moment and on the spot. There was such deep remorse in his eye, such true pity in his tone. I forgave him all: yet not in words, not outwardly; only at my heart’s core.

“Your name is Jane, is it not?”

“Yes, sir, Jane Eyre.”

“That’s a curious name, miss.” He walks upon his paws. He had very long claws and a great many teeth. And yet what a dear little puppy he was! You can only imagine the galaxies of bugs soaring above us, whirling and diving, butterflies and bees and dragonflies and ladybugs, moths, and all sorts of ugly creatures, a whole wild and perfectly orchestrated symphony of pollination and predation. I would fain at the moment have become bee or lizard, that I might have found fitting nutriment, permanent shelter here. But I was a cat, and had a cat’s wants.

“What is the matter?”

“Nothing at all, sir.”

“Well, you have been crying, Miss Jane Eyre; can you tell me what about?”

“I am tired, sir. Wet, cold, alone, and hungry. That’s a cat’s life, Pip.” He looked at me for a minute.

“And a little depressed,” he said. “What about? Tell me.”

“Nothing—nothing, sir. I am not depressed.”

“But I affirm that you are: so much depressed that a few more words would bring tears to your eyes—indeed, they are there now, shining and swimming; and a bead has slipped from the lash and fallen on to the flag.”

“I cry because I am miserable. There are things I do not understand. It concerns gender, about which I find my ideas not as clear as I should like them to be. I know that gender is what divides us into Toms and Queens, but having begun life as a Queen kitten, I do not seem to be a Queen cat, yet am quite certain that I am not an old Tom.” I tell this lightly, but it was no light thing to me.

“Come, Miss Jane, don’t cry,’ said Pip. He might as well have said to the fire, “Don’t burn!” but how could he divine the morbid suffering to which I was a prey?

“How are you getting on?” said I, the Cat.

“I don’t know why it is, but you bring out something feral in me and so I have been wanting to ask you if you get violent impulses that overwhelm you so that you just go and do them?”

“When the human put me in the Private Place I bit him. I am sorry for that part, but sometimes bites come out and have to be bitten. How is he my master? Am I a servant?”

“I entirely understand and approve of your philosophy of bites. I admire you dreadfully, and I want to be a gentleman on your account.”

“Wolf, I’ll tell you something more. Your tail, like mine, is faultless.” His tail was a great asset to interspecies communication. “I spent most of the day crouching and lashing my tail. Orphaned and abandoned as a kitten, I had had little or no teaching from elders of my kind, and had worked out a code of behavior of my own which was not always entirely satisfactory to myself or others.”

“You were an orphan like myself; like me, too, had been brought up by hand. Is sorrow the true wild? And if it is—and if we join them—your wild to mine—what’s that? For joining, too is a kind of annihilation. What if we joined our sorrows, I’m saying.”

“You see, a dog growls when it’s angry, and wags its tail when it’s pleased. Now I growl when I’m pleased, and wag my tail when I’m angry. Not a charm or hope calls me where my fellow-creatures are—none that saw me would have a kind thought or a good wish for me. I have no relative but the universal mother, Nature.” I said it so finally, and in such an undiscussible way.

“I wish I was a frog. Or a eel! I am not at all happy as I am. I am disgusted with my calling and with my life. I have never taken to either, since I was bound. Don’t be absurd. I want to be a gentleman.” I surveyed him. It seemed I had found a brother: one I could be proud of—one I could love.

“You have no sense of humor, but you are a gentleman.” I should have been able to help somehow, I should be able to help now somehow, something more use than a pat on the shoulder and Hi how’s it going. “Is everything a lesson? I am learning from you, my friend, how life gets twisted until there’s no way ever to untie it because the future has become the past and there is no now, no way. No way at all.”

“It was with a depressed heart that I walked in the starlight for an hour and more, about the court-yard, and about the brewery, and about the ruined garden. My mind was too preoccupied to be able to take in the subject clearly. There was something lingering in my thoughts. I came on purpose to find you, Jane Eyre. To live, for me, Jane, is to stand on a crater-crust which may crack and spue fire any day. It is a habit of kittens that, whatever you say to them, they always purr. And it really *was* a kitten, after all. Entire tiger in your soul,”

I felt my life to be more full of delight. Not without sorrow or fear or pain or loss. But more full of delight. I also learned that my delight grows—much like love and joy—when I share it. “Stay a bit. I know what you’re going to say, Pip: stay a bit!”

“Oh my ears and whiskers, how late it’s getting! I think I should like to go home. To me, parting is a painful thing.”

“Is it all over? Farewell!” was the cry of my heart.

“I am torn away now. I hope they’ll remember your saucer of milk at tea-time.”

“I have been bent and broken, but—I hope—into better shape. Be as considerate and good to me as you were, and tell them we are friends.”

“We are friends,” said Pip.

“And will continue friends apart,” said I, in catly fashion.

Color Key:

Maroon = Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. London: Smith, Elder, & Company, 1847.

Purple = Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. London: Macmillan & Company, 1865.

AND

Carroll, Lewis. *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*. London: Macmillan & Company, 1871.

Yellow = Le Guin, Ursula K.. *Book of Cats*. New York: Library of America, 2025.

Blue = Dickens, Charles. *Great Expectations*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1861.

Pink = Gay, Ross. *The Book of Delights*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2019.

Black = My own changes, for clarity

Chapters Referenced:

Jane Eyre: Chapter I, Chapter II, Chapter III, Chapter VIII, Chapter XVII, Chapter XX, Chapter XXIII, Chapter XXVII, Chapter XXVIII, Chapter XXXIII

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland: Chapter I, Chapter II, Chapter IV, Chapter VI, Chapter VIII

Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There: Chapter XI, Chapter XII

Book of Cats: “Don Diego”, “Entanglements”, “The Cat Letters”, “Grace”, “Raksha”, “The Cat”, “The Lives of Ursula’s Cats”

Great Expectations: Volume 1 Chapter I, Volume 1 Chapter VI, Volume 1 Chapter VII, Volume 1 Chapter VIII, Volume 1 Chapter XII, Volume 1 Chapter XVII, Volume 2 Chapter XIX, Volume 3 Chapter XIV, Volume 3 Chapter XVI, Volume 3 Chapter XX

The Book of Delights: “Preface”, “Praying Mantis”, “Joy Is Such a Human Madness”

Reflection:

When I was given this assignment, I knew immediately that Pip and Jane would be my subjects. *Great Expectations* and *Jane Eyre* are two books that had a major impact on me in my youth. My goal was to get these two characters, who I see so much of myself in, to interact and find solace in each other's company. I began to wonder how I might go about this. Then I remembered that I have always said that if I were to get pets later in life, I would name them after Pip and Jane. It came to me then that I should turn these characters into a dog and a cat. Once I decided that, I brought in literature that I thought would make that process easier. I needed descriptions of cats and dogs, so I turned to Lewis Carroll, who describes in detail the Cheshire Cat, Dinah, Kitty, and a puppy in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*, which were also two favorites in my youth. I wanted to include more recent favorites, too. Ursula K. Le Guin's *Book of Cats* was of course very helpful in gathering descriptions. I pulled mostly from my favorite section of the book, "The Cat Letters", which are letters written back and forth between Le Guin and her daughter as if they were their cats writing to each other. Ross Gay's *The Book of Delights* is one that I often dip into for wisdom and joy when I need it, and I love the prose, so I thought it would be a good fit. I ended up only using a few sections, but I think they added depth and emotion in places that I needed it.

I struggled for a while with what point of view to employ, as both *Great Expectations* and *Jane Eyre* are written in the first person. Should I do a story that switches perspectives? Should I flatten it and make it third person? I ended up deciding to format the story through Jane's

perspective because I wanted to present fear upon first encountering the dog and then watch as she begins to trust him. I tried to be conscious of noticing when I was using one text too much in a section and slotting in something else to mix it up when needed. I am very happy with the structure and feel I created something almost unrecognizable from the original stories while still preserving the characters that I care so dearly for. This text is original for many reasons: it stages an interaction between two characters who were never meant to interact; it transforms two human characters into animals, changing their life experiences and how they see the world; it combines texts of Victorian literature with texts written in the last decade, highlighting timeless themes; it turns two bildungsromane into a story about friendship and the other, with a tone intended to be both ridiculous and comforting. It is also certainly a plagiarism. Besides a few things that I changed for clarity, none of these are my own words. However, the story is completely new and the relationship between the characters is something that I fabricated. My favorite book of all time is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and I feel that here I brought together parts from many places to bring to life something my own. This plagiarism is original.