

Jane Satterfield

THE BRONTË BADASSES

are up to here with their aunt's old-time religion,
their brother's boozy brawls. They'll walk miles
in unhip boots, unfazed by hail or funnel clouds,
slinging sweet iambics to help them keep the pace.
Anne's irked past words with nannying and given in
her notice—good riddance to the coked-up
financier and his straying wife, the schoolboy
stoning sparrows, the chronic cleaning up.
She's breathing freer now that a Gothic cross heaves
between her breasts. Some nights she leads
kitchen karaoke, is not above canoodling
in the crypts with her father's curate. Charlotte downs
a dirty chai to plot another romance novel.
She'll lock the doors and justify their genius,
rifling through her sisters' desks. She's no ordinary
busybody, *just looking for a pen*. Her love letters
to her old prof are full of pretty filthy stuff—
submissive dreams and words like whips. Emily's
an insomniac, works from dusk till dawn and still
finds time for pistol practice—survivalism calls.
When hailed to play piano, she'll unleash a dark
fugue on unwitting guests and call her hawk
down with a whistle—watch out, she'll throw
red wine in your face. Beguiling cocktails?
They can't even. Their laughter sets the house
abuzz as any hive. They go commando when
they can, in town or on the primrose path.