

**Catching Jane Eyre in the Rye:  
The magical day when J.D. Salinger met Charlotte Bronte and spawned  
a literary hybrid  
(Grade 13 English essay by James Fitzgerald, May 1968)**

-

Well, if you really want to know about it, my crummy life started out pretty depressing, being an orphan and all. I was living at my Aunt's house, who was a real bitch, along with her bratty kids, who just used to beat the hell out of me because I wasn't too big a kid then. The only reason they didn't kick me into the street was my uncle, or some guy who wanted me taken care of, just before he kicked off, so I ain't complainin' too much.

When I was around 10, I just couldn't hack it anymore, so when some weird guy from church named Brocklehearse or something flew in one day, he said I ought to go to school and learn neat stuff, which at the time (since I wasn't too educated then), I thought was better than sitting on my ass being beaten to a pulp.

The only trouble was, this school was like hell on wheels. What I mean is, it was pretty rotten at first because this damn moron Brocklehearse was out to get my hide, God knows why. But I hacked it for eight years, learning crap like how to paint, which was the only thing I could do half decent. By the time I was 18, you can see why I felt like busting out and getting a job or something. Except the only goddam thing I could do would be a lousy "governess", which sure ain't great pay. But I couldn't complain much, because there wasn't no choice at the time.

Well, to cut a hell of a long story short (mainly because my language is kind of unbelievable, so everyone tells me), I hopped the nearest buggy and before I knew it, I was the governess for some little punk of a French kid at some big, haunted mansion called Thornbush Hall or something. This was kind of like a new life for me, and it sure was a hell of a lot more exciting than that goddam school or my Aunt's place, which ain't saying much. I had had a pretty deadly life up until then, and since I was a typical ugly kid, I figured it would keep on going like that.

But then this big ugly guy, Eddie, walked into my life, uglier than me even (well, maybe not). The first time we met I sure as hell will never forget -- he goddam nearly ploughed me over with that dumb horse of his. But he turned out to be a good head, since he really was the first guy ever to seem even a little interested in me, which sounds a bit phoney and mushy, since he was way then hell older than me. But I figured we were a perfect pair, him with his dough and ugliness and repulsive charm and everything, and me with...well, whatever he saw in me.

Well, getting back to cutting a long story short, I had a lot of kicks at Eddie's pad, since there was this creepy broad somewhere up on the third floor who really went in for all sorts of weird stuff like setting people on fire and sucking blood. Eddie seemed to be a real good sport about it all, until some wise guy from Jamaica or some Godawful place went and broke up this thing I

had going with Eddie, who I really dug by this time. I found out that dirty old Eddie had locked that nut up in the attic -- and it was his goddam wife! So I said, what the hell, because obviously, you know, everything was a bit too strange for me. Especially since Eddie wanted to marry me, of all the damndest things.

Well, I promised to cut this story short, but it's sort of hard to squish up my life story like this. I could probably write a book about me, for Christ's sakes, and make a bloody mint. That is, if people go in for this kind of crap.

So, anyway, I just took off from this Thornbush Hall and -- see how this grabs you -- just happened to stumble on my goddam cousin's place (not those other s.o.b.'s where I was a young kid, these were some other cousins I didn't even know about). They turned out to be a bit weird too, since there was this Saint Somebody trying to play God all the time, and he even tried to suck me into learning some unreal language and go to India with him.

Well, this didn't exactly thrill the hell out of me, so just in time I had this weird feeling or something that Eddie baby was calling me. And please don't cut me up about that, because it's true and I don't give a damn what any of you smart asses might think! I just had this feeling that he was calling me, honest.

So I lit out for Eddie's and found the place a goddam mess. And Eddie wasn't in too great shape either. His crazy wife had set fire to the house and jumped off the roof and Eddie was blinded by the fire. So right now I'm playing the good kid and sort of taking care of him, since he has been the only really nice guy in this crummy life of mine.

All I can say is that I'm goddam glad that nothing too way out or too coincidental has happened in my life so far, because I want to sell a lot of copies of this book I'm going to write, and I don't think too many people go in for the long, unbelievable stuff every guy and his brother are writing these days.