FRANK CHURCHILL - in three parts

1. FRANK CHURCHILL HAS A HAIRCUT

He never liked the little local barber's

with its commonplace chat about village scandals and the weather,

the democratic scissors which snipped at anybody's hair

who had the pence to pay, the tousled broadsheets,

the notices on the wall for last year's barbers' do.

He wanted the magicians in the immaculate salon

and now he has them, his pockets full of his aunt’s money,

a perfumed cloth around his pampered shoulders.

But there’s a lock of dark Jane Fairfax's hair in a box

he sometimes opens and sees the present turning to the past

where a rough-voiced man places him in a grubby chair

and, bending over him, holds a razor to his throat.

2. FRANK CHURCHILL BUYS THE PIANO HE WILL SEND TO JANE FAIRFAX

I want a piano, a black piano, a black immaculate piano,

its keys waiting for her fingers to wake them.

I want a room with long, tall windows, the light

from a garden falling on her face as she receives the piano.

I want a stool, a soft upholstered stool

where she will sit, with the pulse of the music governing hers.

I want sonatas, Irish folksongs and French dance tunes,

torrents of notes on reams of paper, nursery rhymes and concertos,

that she will play as if she has known them all her life,

at the black immaculate piano that I have sent her,

and I will listen as if I have never heard music before.

3. FRANK CHURCHILL HEARS THE NEWS OF HIS AUNT'S DEATH

She died as she promised, sick of hypochondria,

propped on her pillows, smelling of medicines and money.

No more duplicity, fabricated excuses

for visits to the countryside, endless consoling

for an invalid aunt, one half of my face

in the light, the other in darkness, brooding on Jane,

who now can come out of the shadows, blush

as she does so, and graduate from mistress to bride.

Let there be fireworks. Let there be picnics

and balls never-ending. Let there be weddings.

You think that I'm callous? How callous was she,

ruling me from her sickroom, blighting my happiness?

Yet I'd have liked just once to have brought them together

and for a blessing to have passed between them, the two loves of my life.

*Note:*

*The poem is based on Frank Churchill in ‘Emma’ who depends for his income on his supposedly sick aunt who has adopted him, an income he would lose if his unapproved relationship with Jane Fairfax were revealed.*