

SCENE A: Laurie, Amy, Jo

Scene 5: Jo's Garret

(LAURIE enters. AMY meets him.)

AMY. Laurie! Oh, do come in. Here, sit next to me and tell me everything.

LAURIE. Well...I delivered fair Meg to the mansion door.

AMY. Yes, and?

LAURIE. That's all.

AMY. Well, how did she look?

LAURIE. (Looks about for JO:) Same as she looked when she left here an hour ago.

AMY. No. I mean, really, how was she?

LAURIE. I say, Amy, isn't Jo at home?

AMY. Laurie, please. We're discussing Meg.

LAURIE. Quite right. Sorry. What were we saying?

AMY. Well...how was she? Did she fit in with the other girls?

LAURIE. Yes, I think they found her quite satisfactory.

JO. (Enters:) And they hugged her and kissed her and screamed over her dress and gloves—

LAURIE. All that and more.

JO. Good. I'm glad I'm not there.

AMY. Oh, honestly, Jo! You have no respect for anything important.

(AMY exits.)

JO. Why didn't you stay?

LAURIE. I knew you were here so I came back.

JO. You felt sorry for me?

LAURIE. No, I should say not!

JO. Well I was invited, but I declined. I don't much like fancy social occasions.

LAURIE. Fine with me. I came back because I felt like a visit with you.

JO. Oh. Very well. (Starts up the stairs to the garret.) Come along, Teddy.

LAURIE. Teddy?

JO. May I call you that? Theodore is too much, but I like “Teddy” and I think it suits you.

LAURIE. Then call me Teddy.

(They ascend to the garret.)

So this is your special hideaway. May I really come in?

JO. Well, usually no one is allowed in but me. But, yes, you may.

(Sets a large cushion between them, sits, hugging her knees.)

I call it my garret and pretend that I’m a brilliant writer and that I live here, at the top of the house, midst a bustling city.

LAURIE. All alone?

JO. What of it?

LAURIE. Oh...nothing. Going to show me a story?

JO. Oh, I don’t think so.

LAURIE. Oh...I’ll wager you are a brilliant writer.

JO. Time will tell, but not today.

LAURIE. Well, this is capital—to have the whole attic to yourself.

JO. Yes, and actually I’m not alone. There’s Scrabble.

LAURIE. Scrabble? Who or what is Scrabble?

JO. Oh, he’s quite intelligent. Excellent listener. A rat—there he is behind your foot.

LAURIE. (Jumps away:) Yipes!

JO. Gone again. Good-bye, Scrabble!

LAURIE. I don’t believe he exists at all!

JO. Oh, he does and I read him all my stories.

LAURIE. Should I be jealous?

JO. No.

LAURIE. Some people have a muse or an angel. Leave it to Jo March to have a rat!

JO. Oh, I do like you! Forgive me for being cranky. I’m writing a book of fairy tales. I’ve been working on it forever and the last story won’t come out right. I’m afraid I’ve been lazy and restless since Christmas. All of us have, though we try to be good.

SCENE B: Meg, Beth, Jo, Marmee, Amy

MEG. But then, standing at the punch bowl in my borrowed gown, I started to feel peculiar. I couldn't remember quite who I was. And when the gossip began, I wished with all my heart I was home. I'm sorry for the gossip, Mother, but I didn't invent it. I think I best tell what they said and get it off my mind... They all think that you have what they call "plans" for us and Laurie because he has money—that you want us to know Laurie so he'll marry us—I mean, one of us—

BETH. How peculiar.

JO. It's not peculiar, it's ridiculous. You don't have any "plans" for us, Marmee. So that's what they say in "society"? Wait 'til I tell Laurie. Won't he shout.

MEG. I'd rather you didn't tell Laurie, Jo. Really, have you no pride?

JO. I'd imagine I do.

MARMEE. Of course she won't tell.

JO. We'll just marry him, won't we, and march on to our cooking and sewing and adventure will be finished and liberty will be at an end.

MARMEE. Who on earth are you quoting?

JO. Jo March.

MARMEE. I see. Listen, Meg, shall I tell you who you are?

MEG. Please do.

MARMEE. You are a fine young girl, and the daughter of a family not rich enough nor inclined to follow fashion. But you'll be your own woman, soon, and of course you need to satisfy your curiosity about the world.

JO. Does she have to do it in a low-cut gown? Christopher Columbus!

MARMEE. Well, perhaps not, but though I can't approve of low-cut gowns, I don't see any serious harm done. And as it happens, Jo, I do have plans for my girls. Would you all like to hear them?

AMY. Yes!

MEG. Please tell.

MARMEE. I want my daughters to be...let me see...accomplished,

good...to have a happy youth, to be well and wisely married—

JO. Or to be splendid old maids!

MARMEE. That's right, Jo. And either way, to be cherished and admired...to be ready for duty and capable of joy. My dear girls, I am

ambitious for you but not to have you make a dash in the world merely by marrying rich men. Beth, shall we see about tea?

JO. (Detains MEG:) Meg? Did you really flirt?

MEG. I tried. I don't know if I succeeded.

JO. You won't get silly on me, will you Meg? You won't turn all stupid and blank, and pine at the window for the young men, and forget who you are and forget me?

MEG. No, Jo.

JO. Promise?

MEG. I think so.

JO. Promise?

MEG. I think so.

JO. Say "yes." Say "definitely yes."

(MEG gazes out the window.)

Well?

MEG. (Absentmindedly:) Oh. Yes!

SCENE C: Hannah, Mr. Laurence, Beth

Scene 3: Gratitude

(HANNAH enters with OLD MR. LAURENCE.)

HANNAH. Come in, come in, sir. Look who I found on our doorstep?

OLD MR. LAURENCE. Uninvited! A rogue and a beggar!

(BETH rises.)

HANNAH. More like a king, at least to this household!

OLD MR. LAURENCE. How are you, Amy?

AMY. I'm really just fine.

BETH. (Offers her chair:) Sit here, Mr. Laurence.

OLD MR. LAURENCE. Sit down, dear girl. I didn't come to frighten you, I came to hear you play—

BETH. (Clears her throat.) Mr. Laurence—

OLD MR. LAURENCE. No, no, please don't say a word!

BETH. Dear Mr. Laurence—

OLD MR. LAURENCE. Sshh. I heard music from my window this afternoon and then I heard nothing, so I became impatient and meddlesome and here I am.

BETH. (Sits.) What would you like to hear, sir?

OLD MR. LAURENCE. Anything that's not a hymn.

(BETH plays.)

OLD MR. LAURENCE. Very nice. The human spirit does need something more than hymns.

(**BETH** gets up, runs to him and kisses him.)

SCENE D: Laurie, Jo, Beth

LAURIE. We're in for a laugh. The jig is almost up.

JO. We could use a laugh. What are you plotting?

LAURIE. You'll soon see. Any minute now. But in the meantime, here's something from Amy to all of us. Beth, you've impressed Amy with your fever, even if you haven't impressed me—

JO. Teddy!

LAURIE. I mean it, Beth. I'm not impressed. I want you to give me a different show. Show me Prometheus stealing fire from heaven. Show me Grendel with his arm torn off, dragging Beowulf down to the watery depths.

(BETH laughs.)

That's better. A comedy, now. Show me Cleopatra, driving a herd of elephants.

JO. Teddy, show us what you brought.

LAURIE. Well. What I have here is Amy's last will and testament.

(BETH laughs.)

This is serious! She sees that life is tragic and in earnest. She knows sometimes the good die young. Put on a serious face, you clown!

(BETH suppresses giggles.)

“Amy March: My Last Will and Testament. I, being of sound and sanitary mind.

BETH. Sanitary!

LAURIE. Oh, yes. “—do wish to dispose of all my earthly property, should I meet an early and untimely end, as follows: viz. to

wit: namely...” And there's an enormous list. Whoever would guess little Amy had so much property. You get her inkstand, Jo, but not the lid because you, yourself lost it. Beth, you get her doll collection, even though she acknowledges some are broken.

BETH. Some? Most of them are broken.

JO. —and some are not quite sanitary.

LAURIE. “Furthermore, if I should die untimely, I wish to be remembered as a great artist, even if I have yet to produce a masterpiece. Remember what was in me.”

JO. There. She has me shedding a tear—as though we won’t have her to plague us for many years to come.

LAURIE. Wait, there’s more. “I, Amy March, affix my hand to this, my last will and testament. I hope all will be satisfied and not blame the dead.”

JO. That’s wonderful! Don’t tell her we laughed, Teddy. Tell her we won’t blame the dead.

BETH. Do you hear the music?

(Solo piano, from far off.)

LAURIE. Yes! Grandfather’s playing by the open window for you, Beth. Shall I tell him you like it?

BETH. Oh, yes.

LAURIE. And when are you going to play for him again?

JO. Not today...

SCENE E: Brooke, Meg, Aunt March

AMY: Mr. Brooke. Hello, Mr. Brooke!

BROOKE. Excuse me, forgive me—I seem to have left my umbrella — Hello, Margaret.

MEG. (Backing away:) Mother will like to see you. I'll call her.

BROOKE. I don't believe your mother is at home.

MEG. Oh?

BROOKE. I saw her in the village.

MEG. Oh.

BROOKE. Are you afraid of me, Margaret?

MEG. (Stops herself:) No, of course not. Welcome home, Mr. Brooke.

How can I be afraid of you when you've been so kind to Father?

BROOKE. Margaret, while I was away, your mother often read your letters aloud to me.

MEG. Yes, she told me.

BROOKE. Wonderful letters—so full of home! I took the notion that while you were writing, you sometimes thought of me.

MEG. I'm sure I did. We're all so grateful to you, Mr. Brooke. I can't imagine how to thank you.

BROOKE. (Takes her hand:) Shall I tell you how?

MEG. Oh, no—please don't!

BROOKE. I won't trouble you. I only want to know if you care for me a little, Meg.

MEG. I don't know...

BROOKE. I can wait. And you can choose to discover if you do.

MEG. But I don't choose! I'm all flustered. Please go away and let me be!

(AUNT MARCH enters.)

AUNT MARCH. What's all this?

MEG. Hello, Aunt March!

(BROOKE flees to the dining room.)

AUNT MARCH. I came to call on your father.

MEG. Father's not yet arrived home. I'm so surprised to see you.

AUNT MARCH. That's evident. And who was that?

MEG. It's Father's friend.

AUNT MARCH. And what is "Father's friend" saying to make you blush like a peony?

MEG. Mr. Brooke came to get his umbrella.

AUNT MARCH. Brooke? That boy's tutor? Making a proposal? You haven't gone and accepted him, child?

MEG. Hush! He'll hear you.

AUNT MARCH. Do you mean to marry this—this—Mr. Groom? If you do, not one penny of my money goes to you.

MEG. I shall marry whom I please, Aunt March, and you can leave your money to anyone you like.

AUNT MARCH. Highty tighty! You'll be sorry, when you've tried love in a cottage and found it a failure. This—Groom is poor and has no rich relations, has he?

MEG. No, but he has many warm friends—

AUNT MARCH. He knows you have got rich relations. I suspect that's the secret of his liking.

SCENE F: Father, Jo

FATHER. Ssssh. Where is she? My lieutenant? (Goes to the bottom of the stairs.) Guess who's home, Jo?

JO. (Flies down the stairs, and into his arms:) Father! Is it really you? Oh, Father! You look absolutely well!

FATHER. And you! You look fierce and wonderful. And let me see what's left of your hair. Dear heart, thank you for the sacrifice.

JO. Oh, I didn't mind. (Salutes.) Army regulation.

FATHER. Well, you paid for my medicines, you know. Now, how's my Jo?

JO. I'm fine. Perfectly fine. With you home, how could I not be?

FATHER. There's something.

JO. Well, but it just seems that everyone is leaving us. Oh, but here you are, Father, home at last. Beth's gone. Meg is going. And now, I've sent Laurie away—I can't help it, but I won't marry him. I really can't, Father.

FATHER. No, perhaps not.

JO. I'm too young.

FATHER. Hmm.

JO. That's all.

FATHER. There's some other reason, I think. What's on my Jo's mind?

JO. I always meant to...do things, you know. I never meant to marry.

FATHER. Well, that's a good reason to say no for now. What things do you mean to do?

JO. Oh, I'll sweep and work in the garden...

FATHER. Yes, and?

JO. —and iron the curtains, you know, and clean the carpets—

FATHER. Hmm. And what about adventures?

JO. I'll have Hannah teach me to cook.

FATHER. What about artistic accomplishments?

JO. I'll—I could put violets in the window box and train a rose bush

over the garden gate.

FATHER. What happened to writing?

JO. Nothing. I don't care for it—it's childish.

FATHER. Very strange. I don't know this young woman. Rather a drudge, I'd say. If I have the expression right, rather an old poke.

JO. Don't say that of me, Father! I just—I can't help it.

FATHER. What do you mean, you can't help it? I believe you could do almost anything you set your mind to. Really, Jo—you're trying my patience.