

SIDE 1. Jo, Professor Bhaer

PROFESSOR BHAER

Miss March! Another letter has arrived for you! Miss March?!

JO

(enters/grabs the letter)

Thank you, Professor! Christopher Columbus! Another publisher.

(she looks at the professor)

Another rejection?

PROFESSOR BHAER

I have no idea. I do not read your letters. They keep arriving and I keep bringing them to you.

JO

And I keep hoping-

PROFESSOR BHAER

We all keep hoping for your success, Miss March. The entire boarding house keeps hoping. You have us all on edge.

JO

(she reads)

'My dear Miss March, I read your story', Well, he's read it. 'Unfortunately..... unfortunately I found your tale tasteless and vulgar. Not at all suitable for my readers. My advice to you....'

(she hands him the letter)

PROFESSOR BHAER

(he reads)

'My advice to you is to return home, get married, and have babies. This is what women are made for. Sincerely, F. Putnam'

JO

Twenty-two

PROFESSOR BHAER

Twenty-two?

JO

Twenty-two rejections since I've been in New York. They all say the same thing. Go home. Give up.

PROFESSOR BHAER

F.Putnam is an idiot. His words are stupid.

JO

F.Putnam is one of the most powerful publishers in the city.

PROFESSOR BHAER

You cannot lose faith, Miss March. There will be someone who will publish your story. I am certain of it.

JO

Professor Bhaer? Is it possible that I could read my story to you? I would so respect your opinion.

PROFESSOR BHAER

(honored)

Yes. Of course

JO

(she joyfully grabs her portfolio)

Actually, its one of my best.

(she reads)

'It's a mean and stormy night. The moors are bleak and bloody. Thunder claps! Lightning strikes! The fair Clarissa, her clothes in disarray, races across the coastal heath- *(as Clarissa, Jo breathes dramatically)* With bold determination, the villainous aristocrat Braxton Prendergast, lurches for her!

(JO as Clarissa) 'Keep away from me you wretch!'

(JO as Braxton) 'I cannot keep away. Your beauty draws me. Your passion ignites me!'

(JO as Clarissa) 'I defy you! Don't come any closer!'

(JO Braxton) 'I must have her. And the mother too!!!!'

PROFESSOR BHAER

(interrupting her)

Miss March!

Tell me, what is it you are writing here?

JO

Blood and guts stories. Theyre all the rage. The magazines and periodicals are full of them

PROFESSOR BHAER

Violence and seduction on every page?

JO

Read Shakespeare. Read history. Read the newspapers!

PROFESSOR BHAER

It is getting late. Perhaps it is best we pursue this another time.

JO

No, I want to know what you think, Professor.

PROFESSOR BHAER

Blood and guts stories? What you think the world wants to hear? If I have noticed nothing else about you, Miss March, I have noticed you are unique. Something you should try not to forget.

JO

And?

PROFESSOR BHAER

And... you should be writing from life. From the depths of your soul. There is nothing here of the women I have come to know..- I think you could do better.

JO

(taken aback)

Better?... And who are you anyway: an aging German professor, close to 50-?

PROFESSOR BHAER

I am 34.

JO

34, really? Well-you look a lot older.

PROFESSOR BHAER

I worry a lot.

JO

And just what do you worry about?

PROFESSOR BHAER

How to avoid conversations such as this!

(he starts away, immediately turns back)

Miss March, since you have been here- you shout, you rant, you upset the whole order of this house. I am a serene and peaceful man.

JO

Serene and peaceful? You're aloof and arrogant-

PROFESSOR BHAER

Arrogant? Miss March, I spoke my mind, as you spoke yours. Obviously it was not appreciated on either side.

(He goes)

JO

(yelling after him)

Obviously! My stories were a great success in Concord!

SIDE 2. Amy, Meg, Beth, Jo, Marmee, Mr Laurence, Laurie

AMY

Jo, the girls at school were horrible to me! Charlotte Fenton said my dress was ragged and my nose was flat!

MEG

Jo, I hate being a governess. I should be making my debut and meeting eligible young men.

AMY

Its going to be a dismal Christmas with Father away and no money for presents

BETH

Meg, Amy- Jo has a surprise for us!

JO

Listen everyone, I have risen to the occasion this year and written us an Operatic Tragedy!

BETH

And we're going to perform it for Christmas!

AMY

No, I cant! Not with this flat nose!

MEG

Jo, aren't we getting a little old to play at this.

JO

Play? This is not play, this is work! I made an important decision today. I've decided Im going to become a world-renowned writer.

BETH

Jo, you can do anything!

JO

I shall write great books and earn barrels of money. And Ill give you all everything you've ever dreamed of! Christopher Columbus, I'm bursting with energy! Someone give me a task to do!

BETH

I want you- to bring Father home.

JO

I shall write President Lincoln tonight! Another!

MEG

I want you- to get Annie Moffat to invite me to her St Valentine's Day ball!

JO

Ill wring her bloody little neck if she doesn't. Another!

AMY

I want you- to get us a Christmas tree.

JO

I will go chop one down immediately!

AMY

From where?

JO
There! Across the road!

BETH
But that's on Mr. Laurence's property.

AMY
You'll go to prison for it!

JO
(she exits in an exaggerated flourish)
Prison? What care I for prison?

(The Girls rush to the window to watch her)

BETH
Jo is an incredible human being.

MEG
Look, its Mr. Laurence. He's standing there at the window glaring out.

AMY
He looks so sinister.

BETH
I think he looks sad.

AMY
I wouldn't be sad living in such a house.

BETH
Has anyone ever been inside?

AMY
He'd never let any of us in.

BETH
He must be lonely.

MEG
Well they say he's a very angry and bitter man. He shut himself in that house years ago and hardly ever leaves. He just stares out that window... Jo is going to get us all into deathly trouble.

AMY
We'll be known as the family with the criminal sister.
(Marmee enters)

MARMEE
What criminal sister?

BETH & MEG

Marmee!

AMY

Marmee, you're home!

MARMEE

My girls. What's happening here. Where's Jo?

BETH

She's outside.

MARMEE

Outside? Doing what?

JO

(she enters, breathless, trailing an evergreen behind her)

I have returned!

MARMEE

Jo!

JO

(surprised)

Marmee!

MARMEE

Where did you get that tree?

JO

I borrowed it from Mr. Laurence.

MARMEE

Jo! You didn't-

JO

(passionate)

I took it for us, Marmee!

MARMEE

You'll take it back immediately.

JO

Take it back? That's like brining back a chicken after you've chopped off its head.

AMY

Oh Marmee, Do let us keep it.

BETH

It would look lovely downstairs.

MEG

Please. Its Christmas, Marmee.

MARMEE

Girls, no. Destroying someone else's property is not the way to get what you want. Jo you must learn not to act on every whim!

BETH

Well, we could give the tree to the Hummels. They have so little.

MARMEE

Good. The tree goes to the Hummels then. Now what about Mr Laurence?

MR LAURENCE

What about him?

MEG

(surprised)

Mr Laurence!

MR LAURENCE

Yes, Mr Laurence!

(to Jo)

You!

JO

Me?

MR LAURENCE

You chopped down my perfect Douglas fir. I should have you arrested!

JO

I'll make it up to you, sir.

MR LAURENCE

With what? You have nothing of use to me.

JO

I'll plant six more.

MR LAURENCE

Twelve! What else?

JO

I'll chop your firewood for a few days.

MR LAURENCE

Weeks! And I hope such an incident never happens again. You have ruined my day!

(He exits)

(They all see Laurie who has remained behind, reticent, but waiting to say something)

LAURIE

He loves his trees. I'm Theodore Laurence the Third. But everyone calls me Laurie. I've come to live here. In Concord. With my grandfather... I play the piccolo. I can sleep standing up. And I won a medal at school for holding my breath nearly three minutes before passing out.

(to Jo)

I think that was terrifically daring of you chopping down grandfather's tree....

Well, goodbye.

(he starts to leave)

JO

Theodore Laurence the Third! Would you mind delivering this tree to the Hummels?

MARMEE

Jo!

LAURIE

I don't mind at all.

JO

He doesn't mind.

LAURIE

Just point me in the direction.

JO

They live half a mile down the road. The red house with broken shingles.

LAURIE

My pleasure. Merry Christmas!

SIDE 3. Laurie, Jo, Meg, John Brooke

LAURIE

Excuse me!

JO

(surprised)

You?

LAURIE

Me!

JO

What are you doing here?

LAURIE

I passed out. Too much dancing, I guess.

JO

Too much punch, I'd say.

JOHN BROOKE

(calls)

Laurie!

Laurie, where have you been? I've been looking everywhere for you.

LAURIE

Mr. Brooke, I want you to-

JOHN BROOKE

You've been missing for hours. Your grandfather will be furious. He wants you to meet some important people-
(he starts to pull Laurie away)

LAURIE

And I have! These are the March sisters I've been telling you about, well two of them.

This is Meg, right?

MEG

Yes. Well, Margaret.

LAURIE

And that's Jo. She cuts our firewood on occasion. This is Mr John Brooke. He's a scholar from Boston.

JOHN BROOKE

I'm Laurie's tutor. Come, Laurie.

(he quickly picks up Laurie's things, and accidentally, Meg's dance card, starts away)

MEG

(calls)

Sir! You've taken my dance card!

JOHN BROOKE

Your dance card?

Oh? Is this yours? Sorry.

(returns the card, suddenly notices Meg's beauty)

So, you're Margaret March?

MEG

Yes, I am.

JOHN BROOKE

Its- a splendid party, isn't it.

MEG

Yes, it is. Quite—lovely.... *(awkward pause)* So, you're from Boston?

JOHN BROOKE

Actually Maine.

MEG

I've never been to Boston or Maine.

JOHN BROOKE

You should go. Its beautiful country. Very primitive.

MEG

I think Id like primitive.

JOHN BROOKE

Really?

LAURIE

Mr. Brooke is a romantic.

MEG

Is that true?

JOHN BROOKE

Well, no. Not entirely. I do read Sheats and Kelley... (fumbling), I mean- Keats and Shelley

MEG

So do I.

JOHN BROOKE

You read Keats and Shelley?

MEG

All the time.

JO

(amazed at the exchange)
Christopher Columbus!

JOHN BROOKE

(suddenly inspired)
Would you like to dance, Miss March?

JO

Actually, Meg and I were about to —

MEG

Id be delighted, Mr Brooke.
(she takes his hand- they exit)

JO

Did you see that?? He just—
(she turns and sees Laurie beaming at her)
What is it with you and that smile?

LAURIE

You make me beam.

JO

Well, you look ridiculous.

LAURIE

You're looking very fetching tonight.

JO

(mocking, as a belle)
Fetching , really!?

LAURIE

Dance with me! I'm quite good. I won a medal for dancing at school.

JO

I don't dance. Besides, I have a patch on the back of my dress.

LAURIE

A patch? Let me see!

JO

(trying to avoid him seeing the patch)

No! No!

LAURIE

(seeing it)

I like it! That patch could start a whole new fashion. Dance with me tonight and I guarantee by next spring every girl in Concord will be wearing a patch on her dress!

JO

Id like to see that.

LAURIE

So, tell me, when you're not attending balls, what is it you do all day?

JO

I write blood and guts stories. I make extraordinary plans. I'm going to Europe with my aunt. I'm going to meet famous writers and converse with revolutionaries. What about you? What do you do? Marmee says you're all alone in the world. No mother. No father. You must be lonely.

LAURIE

I'm not lonely. I've got cranky old grandfather. And I've got a cat. And I've got-

JO

What?

LAURIE

Well, I was hoping to say you.

JO

(laughing)

Me? You most certainly do not have me.

SIDE 4. Jo, Laurie

LAURIE

Jo! Jo March! Its your best friend- Theodore Laurence the Third!

JO

Laurie! Laurie, Laurie, Laurie! Christopher Columbus, it so good to see you! You've not been here in weeks.

LAURIE

I was in Boston. I have dreadful news.

JO

What news?

LAURIE

With the war ended, grandfather's insisted I get on with my life. He enrolled me in school.

JO

What?

LAURIE

I'm going off to college for the summer session.

JO

That's wonderful news!

LAURIE

What's wonderful about it? Leaving the best friend I've ever had?

JO

I can't imagine life here without you. Not seeing your silly grin every day-

LAURIE

I don't want to go.

JO

But you've got to go. This is an incredible opportunity. College- I'd go in a minute. I'd study everything.

LAURIE

What do you need of schools? You're going to be a famous writer.

JO

(laughs, doubting)

Famous?

LAURIE

I need to tell you something.

JO

Tell me something.

LAURIE

Ever since that first day I saw you- do you remember that day?

JO

Of course.

LAURIE

The day you chopped down grandfather's cherished tree – I knew then that you and I would be magnificent together.

JO

(she puts her hand on his shoulder)

We are magnificent together.

LAURIE

(takes her hand)

My sweet Jo – for weeks now- months even- this whole year actually – Ive wanted to-

(he kisses her)

JO

(pulling back)

Laurie, don't.

LAURIE

That was my first kiss. I've thought about it a long time-

(he tries again to kiss her)

JO

(holding him off)

What's got into you?

LAURIE

Look, here, I took part of my inheritance and I bought you this ring.

JO

Laurie, what are you talking about?

LAURIE

I want to marry you.

JO

Marry me? Stop this, Laurie – its not funny.

LAURIE

I practiced saying the words over and over: "Marry me, Jo March, marry me-"

JO

Have you gone mad??

LAURIE

... I love you, Jo. And I want you to be my wife.

JO

No. No! Find someone else! Find – find some accomplished girl.

LAURIE

I don't want an accomplished girl. I want you.

JO

(after a moment)

Well you cant have me. I wont go and be a wife.

LAURIE

At least say you'll think about it.

JO
There's nothing to think about. Ill never marry.

LAURIE
You don't mean that.

JO
I do mean it!

LAURIE
Jo, I know you. You'll marry.

JO
I wont!

LAURIE
You will. Just not me. That's what you're really saying.

JO
Go away, Laurie. I thought we understood each other. I thought you understood me.

LAURIE
You knew all along how I felt. Everyone knew!

JO
You knew all along who I am – what I want. I bared my soul to you Laurie! Now I cant even look at you. Go away!

LAURIE
Jo..

JO
Please, just go!
(he rushes off)

SIDE 5. Amy, Jo, Marmee

(Amy appears dressed in a ball gown much too big for her)

AMY
I'm ready!

MARMEE
Amy, what are you doing?

AMY
Im going to the ball.

JO
You're what?

MARMEE
Amy, no—

AMY

I found this old dress and it almost fits. All it needs is a pretty sash. Besides, why shouldn't I go?

JO

Because you weren't invited.

AMY

I can go in your place.

MARMEE

Amy!

JO

In my place?

AMY

Why not? You don't care about good society and I do.

JO

I don't care about snobs. People who think they're better than you just because they have grander houses-

AMY

Well, they do have grander houses.

MARMEE

That's enough, Amy. I dislike all this high society talk.

AMY

But I want elegance and fine things, Marmee!

JO

And I want passion! I want to be noticed because I'm unique. Not because of some silly sash.

AMY

Sashes are not silly. Aunt March says the right accessories could be the key to a girl's success. Besides, I'd never go to a ball with scorch marks on the back of *my* dress.

JO

What?!

AMY

(going behind her)

As big as your-

MARMEE

Amy, stop it! Oh, Jo, you always stand too close to the fire... *(inspecting Jo's dress)*. I can patch this. I'll get my sewing basket.

AMY

Jo hates fancy balls. She should just stay home in her musty old attic and write her dreadful stories..

MARMEE

Amy!

JO

My stories are not dreadful!

AMY

Nobody reads them and nobody likes them!

MARMEE

(fixing Jo's patch)

Girls, please!

JO

Well, I like them! Im sending one off to a very prominent New York publisher.

AMY

And he'll hate it, just like the rest of them.

MARMEE

Amy, that is enough. There, Jo, its barely noticeable. Now get going. You should not be late.

AMY

I have nothing, and Jo has everything! Please, cant I go??

JO

What do I have? I wear dresses with patches. I write stories my sister hates..

AMY

You could give me the invitation.

JO

The invitation is meant for me!

MARMEE

Your time will come Amy.

AMY

(impassioned)

No, my time will never come! I'm always forgotten! I'm always last! I'm never invited anywhere! I have nothing special.

MARMEE

That's enough, Amy! Both of you look at me! I cant demand you two love one another- but I do demand you live together with respect...

AMY

(continues impassioned)

I hate the way I look! I hate my nose. I hate this dress!

JO

It was mine.

AMY

I want something that's mine!
(she storms off)

MARMEE

I'm so sorry, Jo.

JO

Its not your fault. Though you did give birth to her.

MARMEE

Cant you see, she wants to be like you? She wants to have what you have. She's just a child, Jo.

JO

She's not a child. She's a demon in a child's body.

MARMEE

Jo...

JO

My writing is everything to me, Marmee. Its who I am. Its my future. Its my passion.

MARMEE

Youre not wrong, Jo, to feel anger. But if you build a wall between you and Amy, I fear the person you may end up hurting is yourself. My dear, don't let the sun go down upon your anger. Forgive each other.

JO

Ill never forgive her.

SIDE 6. Meg, Beth, Jo

MEG

Jo, Beth, I'm engaged. John proposed. And I accepted.

BETH

Oh, Meg, how wonderful.

JO

Engaged?

BETH

Isn't it wonderful Jo?

JO

What about our promise to remain together?

MEG

We made that a long time ago. I've changed, Jo- you've changed..

JO

I haven't changed. I'd never make a promise one day, then break it another.

MEG

(taken aback)

I love him.

JO

So, you love him? I'm talking about us, Meg. We're alone now. We only have each other. Our future as a family is at stake-

MEG

Jo-

JO

You can't turn your back on us.

MEG

I'm not turning my back on you-

JO

I told you I'm going to become a famous writer.

MEG

I know.

JO

And I'll give you everything you ever dreamed of-

MEG

I dream of him, Jo. I dream of John and our future. I dream of him, and our little house, our little family and our little life...

JO

(cannot grasp this)

What?

BETH

She loves him, Jo-

MEG

I do! With all my heart and soul.

(she exits)

JO

I've lost Meg.

BETH

You haven't lost Meg. You haven't lost any of us.

JO

I've lost my trip to Europe

BETH

You'll find your way there some day, Jo. I know you will. You can do anything. You can make the clouds disappear.

JO

It's you who makes the clouds disappear. My sweet, Beth.

BETH

Come, lets walk. Tell me about all your adventures today.

JO

Well, I sold my hair

'BETH

Yes, you did.

JO

And before that, I stood in the common, and when no one paid attention to me I cried out "Jo March is here!"

SIDE 7. Aunt March, Jo

AUNT MARCH

(bellows, shocked as she sees Jo's shorn hair for the first time)

Josephine, what have you done?!

JO

I sold my hair so Marmee could have a safe journey.

AUNT MARCH

(furious)

You did what? I've told you, if you need money, come to me!

JO

I was hoping to earn my own money.

AUNT MARCH

Cutting one's hair and selling it like a beggar- is not an option for a lady. You look like a shorn sheep! Have you forgotten our contract?

JO

I never forget it. Traveling. Seeing Europe. Paris. London-

AUNT MARCH

You don't live up to your part of the bargain- why should I live up to mine?

JO

I've tried to live up to my part. I went to a ball. I improved my manners. I read books on etiquette, I practiced dancing with Meg, I've held my tongue when I've wanted to scream out! I cant help that I've got a fire in me, Aunt March!

AUNT MARCH

Well, just see how far this "fire" takes you in life. See what doors this "fire" will open. See what society thinks of your "fire".

JO

To hell with society!

AUNT MARCH

Josephine!

JO

We don't live for society. We live for what we have inside us. We live to expand our minds. Engage in passionate exchanges. Fulfill our dreams-

AUNT MARCH

That's enough! You think you know everything, and you know nothing! As for Europe, you can forget it. Europe is meant for someone with a little more understanding of its rewards.

JO

Aunt March, please..

AUNT MARCH

(bites out with absolute finality)

The subject is closed!

JO

(after a beat)

... The subject is not closed! And if it is, I open it up again! Ill go to Europe. I will! Ill go to Europe if I have to swim there!

SIDE 8. Amy, Aunt March, Marmee

(Amy returns from Europe with Aunt March. She rushes in excited. She looks different, having left Concord a child and returned a woman)

AMY

Everybody?! Im home!

AUNT MARCH

Look at this house!

AMY

Marmee! Jo!

AUNT MARCH

We left it in shambles- and its still in shambles.

AMY

Meg!?

(a pause)

Did you see the look I gave the coachman, Aunt March? His impertinence! He caught every bump in the road.

AUNT MARCH

One should always be civil to a coachman. You must respect those who have the reins- until you wrench the reins from them.

AMY

Yes, Aunt March.

(She shouts)

Jo! Marmee!!

AUNT MARCH

And remember, Amy, you're a lady now.

AMY

Yes... I'm a lady.

(she shouts in a lady like way)

Marmee!... When did this house get so small?

AUNT MARCH

As we grow grand, Amy, the world around us often diminishes in size. I have known people who have almost disappeared before my very eyes.

AMY

(running to her, embraces her, almost in tears)

Oh, you're such a dear Aunt March! Thank you so much for everything!

AUNT MARCH

(pulling away)

I'll go see to that wretched coachman.

AMY

Remember, Aunt March, respect those who have the reins.

AUNT MARCH

Very good.

(she goes)

(Marmee enters)

AMY

Marmee! Marmee! Marmee!

MARMEE

Oh, Amy, my baby is home!

(stepping back)

You're all grown up.

AMY

(full of emotion)

I am, Marmee. I really am. I feel older. I'm sophisticated. You can't imagine all the experiences I had. And wherever I was, I'd think if only Meg were here, if only Jo, if only Beth-

(she holds back tears)

MARMEE

Oh, Amy-

AMY

I was so sorry I wasn't here to say goodbye to her. I cried for weeks. I couldn't stop. Aunt March said I was being unreasonable. But my heart was breaking not to be here with her.

MARMEE

Beth understood. She said tell Amy not to fret.

AMY

Did she really say that?

MARMEE

She was so brave -to the very end. You would have been proud of her.

AMY

I bought her this metronome. The man said there wasn't another one like it... Oh, its so good to be home. In our dear little house.

MARMEE

Come, Amy, let us find Meg and Jo and you can tell us all about your adventures.

AMY

(as they exit)

I have so many things to tell you all. I ate frogs, actual frogs!

SIDE 9. Mr Laurnece, Beth

(Beth is at the piano playing. Mr Laurence enters)

MR LAURENCE

That piano sounds terrible.

BETH

It needs a tuning, sir.

MR LAURENCE

Where is my grandson?

BETH

Out with Jo.

MR LAURENCE

Out dawdling!

BETH

I'm sure he'll be home soon.

MR LAURENCE

That boy has missed six lessons – fallen behind in all his work. I have strictly forbidden him to associate with this family.

BETH

Why is that, sir?

MR LAURENCE

Because a man needs an iron will if he's to succeed in this world. And this family is softening him... Which one of the dreadful little March girls are you?

BETH

I'm dreadful Beth.

MR LAURENCE

Oh, yes, Laurie said you're the one who wants to play my priceless piano. Its out of the question. That piano belonged to my daughter, Laurie's mother. Its been locked since she passed away and that's how it shall stay.... Are you afraid of me?

BETH

A little.

MR LAURENCE

Why?

BETH

It might have something to do with your face, sir. Its very hard.

MR LAURENCE

I cannot help my hard face. Continue what you were playing... Come now, I haven't all day... Are you going to play or not??