

JO: Aunt March lives on an enormous estate called Plumfield. It's been in Father's family for generations. Though as long as Father and Mother are alive, Aunt March will ensure they have nothing to do with it. Every corner of the house is decorated to Aunt March's liking. Which means it's ugly. And every room smells like rotting flowers. Just like Aunt March.

Transition. JO sits on a sofa, reading from the Bible. Across from her is AUNT MARCH, nodding off to sleep. Beside AUNT MARCH is a cage with a large PARROT inside.

(Reading) 'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark...'

She looks up and sees that AUNT MARCH is fast asleep. JO closes the Bible, tiptoes towards her, and waves a hand in front of her face. When JO's certain she's asleep, she quietly sneaks away.

PARROT: Josephine!

JO whips around and looks at the bird.

JO: Shhh!

PARROT: Josephine!

JO: Quiet!

START

PARROT: Josephine! Josephine! Josephine!

AUNT MARCH'S eyes shoot open. JO leaps back onto the sofa, opens the Bible, and smiles at AUNT MARCH.

AUNT MARCH: Josephine!

PARROT: Josephine!

JO: *(Under her breath)* Stupid bird.

AUNT MARCH: Josephine, what are you doing?

PARROT: Josephine! Jose-

AUNT MARCH: *(To the PARROT)* Quiet!

JO: I was reading the passage that you asked me to-

AUNT MARCH: No, child. With your life. What are you doing with your life?

JO: Why I'm your companion, Aunt March.

AUNT MARCH: What else?

JO: I'm writing. I only just submitted a play for a contest at The Concord Journal.

AUNT MARCH: And marriage?

JO: What about it?

AUNT MARCH: Are you thinking about marriage?

JO: Should I be?

AUNT MARCH: Josephine, it's all you should be thinking about. You and your sisters. Listen to me, Josephine March.

PARROT: Josephine!

AUNT MARCH: You must know that marrying well is of the utmost importance for you. If that Father of yours hadn't squandered so much of his money helping friends over the years... Friends who could never even attempt to pay him back... Then perhaps your family would not be in so dire a situation. And if your Mother had any money to her name... Which she doesn't... Then perhaps you and your sisters would not have to shoulder all the responsibility. As it stands, your Father hardly makes enough at the Church. One of you girls needs to marry and needs to marry well. One of you girls needs to-

END

AUNT MARCH immediately falls asleep. Her snoring continues. JO waits a moment then tries to sneak away.

PARROT: Josephine!

JO: Quiet!

PARROT: Josephine!

JO: Shhh!

START

*Transition. JO sits with AUNT MARCH, who keeps coughing.
The PARROT sits in its cage.*

- AUNT MARCH: You seem quite unlike yourself, Josephine.
- JO: I miss Beth.
- AUNT MARCH: I know, child. We all do.
- JO: I thought I'd have her beside me for the rest of my days. I thought we would grow old together. Now I'll die an old maid... A literary spinster with a pen for a spouse and nothing else to show for myself.
- AUNT MARCH: You remind me very much of me at your age. You always have.
- JO: Why? Were you also this miserable?
- AUNT MARCH: Yes. Josephine-
- PARROT: Josephine!
- JO: Hush!
- AUNT MARCH: My dear... You must know that I am not well. I haven't been for quite some time.
- JO: Is there anything I can do?
- AUNT MARCH: Yes. I've decided to leave Plumfield to you.
- JO: To... Me? But... Why?
- AUNT MARCH: I suppose the miserable must stick together.
- JO: But, Aunt March... I can't let you. It's too much.
- AUNT MARCH: I had always hoped to do something rather grand with this house. It's a beautiful old place that will treat you with love and kindness if you treat it as such.
- JO: Would the house not be better off for Meg or Amy? If your desire is for something grand then they would be much -

START

AUNT MARCH: That is not the kind of grand I mean. I want this home to go to good use. And I know you will think of something to do with it. You are smart, Jo. You always have been. I have been thinking that one of my many regrets is not paying for you to attend college.

JO: I always thought you hated me.

AUNT MARCH: What would cause you to say such a thing?

JO: You chose to take Amy to Europe with you. You gave her the chance to travel.

AUNT MARCH: Travel will come and go. You, my dear, could make a real difference.

JO: I don't know what to say.

AUNT MARCH: Yes. You can say yes.

JO: Yes, Aunt March. Yes.

END

Transition. JO turns to the audience.

It's been four weeks and I have spent more time with Aunt March than I ever thought I would. She told me stories about her life that I never heard before and that she never told anyone else. And much to my surprise I genuinely like her. I only wish I had spent more time getting to know her better all these years.

A few days ago, she passed away. We are having a small funeral for her. I'm going to read a poem that I wrote. Yesterday a barrister came to the house to inform us that, true to her word, Aunt March has indeed left Plumfield to me. It really is a beautiful house. I want to do something worthy of its beauty. Oh, Aunt March also left me...

She reveals the PARROT cage.

PARROT: Josephine!

JO: I suppose every gift comes with a good dose of punishment.

I kept thinking about Mr. Dashwood's offer to write a book for girls. I'm still unsure as to what that means.