

JO checks to make sure the back of her dress isn't showing. She realizes she's holding out her gloves and quickly crumples them in her hand so no one can see.

A YOUNG MAN stares at JO. JO checks behind her to see who he might be looking at. She looks back at him and sees him walking towards her.

JO: Oh, no, no, no, Meg!

The YOUNG MAN moves closer to JO. A few couples dance between JO and the YOUNG MAN. JO spots a curtain and quickly slips behind it into a small study to avoid him. As she does, she runs right into Theodore Laurence – or LAURIE.

START

JO: Oh, I didn't know anyone was here. I won't disturb you.

LAURIE: Please don't go. I don't know many people here.

JO: I don't know many people here either. Except for my sister.

LAURIE: And now me.

JO: And now you, yes. You're Mr. Laurence, aren't you?

LAURIE: No. Mr. Laurence is my grandfather. I'm Laurie.

JO: Laurie Laurence. What an odd name.

LAURIE: My first name is Theodore. But I don't like it. So, I make everyone call me Laurie.

JO: What about Teddy?

LAURIE: I like that. No one's ever called me that before.

JO: I hate my name too. Josephine. I have never known what to do with a name like that. I go by Jo.

LAURIE: Very nice to make your acquaintance, Jo.

LAURIE extends his hand to shake hers.

JO: And you, Teddy.

JO extends her hand. Then remembers what MEG told her and instantly takes her hand back before she can shake his.

- JO: Do you like parties?
- LAURIE: I've been abroad for a few years and haven't been around enough company yet to know how you do things here.
- JO: Abroad! I want to go to Europe someday so badly. Tell me everything. Where did you just come from?
- LAURIE: Paris.
- JO: I've always wanted to go to Paris. Can you speak French? Can you say something? I can read it but can't pronounce it very well.
- LAURIE: C'est ta sœur qui danse ?
- JO: Soeur? Oh, sister! Is that your sister dancing? Yes! That's my sister Meg. She's the oldest. She's seventeen. Then me. I'm sixteen. Then Beth who's fifteen and Amy who's fourteen.
- LAURIE: I often hear you calling to one another. You always seem to be having such a good time together.
- JO: I wish you'd come over and see us. Do you think your grandfather would let you come over?
- LAURIE: He doesn't want me to be a bother to strangers.
- JO: We're not strangers. We're neighbors. Do you have any sisters or brothers? You can bring them along too if you'd like.
- LAURIE: I don't. It's only me and grandfather. Are you in school?
- JO: Not anymore. I stopped going years ago. I go to wait on my aunt. But I am also a writer. *(Holding up her ink stained hands)* I'm going to have a story published one day. Are you in school?
- LAURIE: No. I have a tutor who I work with, Mr. John Brooke. He's helping to prepare me for college.
- JO: I would give anything to go to college. Education is the greatest gift.
- LAURIE: Then you should go.

JO: Women can't.

LAURIE: There are a few colleges now that have opened just for women.

JO: Ah, yes. But we can't afford those.

LAURIE: Oh. I see.

The music in the other room changes.

JO: That's a splendid song. Aren't you going to dance?

LAURIE: I will if you'll come with.

JO: I can't. I told Meg I wouldn't because... Well... You won't tell anyone, will you?

LAURIE: Of course not.

JO turns around and shows him the back of her dress.

JO: I have a bad habit of standing in front of the fireplace.

LAURIE tries to stifle his laughter.

(Laughing) It's bad, isn't it?

LAURIE: Well... We have plenty of room here. Shall we?

He reaches out his hand. She takes it. They struggle to find a starting position.

JO: At home I usually dance the part of the boy. Meg takes the girl.

LAURIE: Shall I let you lead then?

JO: For your sake it's probably best.

END

LAURIE changes the position of his hands so that JO can lead. They smile and dance. After a while MEG peeks through the curtains and limps towards JO.

MEG: I have been looking for you everywhere. I've sprained my ankle. I should never have worn these silly high heels.

JO and LAURIE bring MEG to a chair to sit.

FRIEDRICH: I read the stories you left. Is that what you write? Is that what you care about?

JO: Well, there's a demand for it. For those types of stories. Adventures, romances, murders.

FRIEDRICH: Mmm-hmm.

JO: And I don't see any harm in supplying it. Many very respectable people make an honest living from it.

FRIEDRICH: Miss. March, there is a demand for whiskey, but I think you and I do not care to sell it. It is what you call... Pandering, no?

JO: No. It's not. And it pays... Well. I send any money I make from my writing home to help my family. I would think you of all people would understand that.

FRIEDRICH: You misunderstand me.

JO: No. I understand you perfectly. You don't like what I write.

FRIEDRICH: I think one should write from the heart. And a heart I know you have. I have seen this with my own eyes.

JO: Writing from the heart is a privilege that not all people... That not all women have.

FRIEDRICH: You are capable of more.

JO: Are you saying this as a teacher, Professor Bhaer?

FRIEDRICH: No, Miss. March. As a friend.

JO: Well I think that a friend would offer more kindness than you have.

FRIEDRICH: Miss. March-

JO: It's late. If you will excuse me.

Transition. Clearly still upset from her conversation with FRIEDRICH, JO takes a moment to calm herself. Then walks into MR. DASHWOOD'S office.

START

JO: Here are the changes you requested for my latest story.

JO hands him a stack of papers that he looks through.

MR. DASHWOOD: I will send the payment when the story appears.

JO turns for the door.

Miss. March, I have been meaning to speak to you. There is great demand for a story for girls.

JO: A story for the paper?

MR. DASHWOOD: No. A story as in a book. As in a novel. And seeing as how you're the only female writer we work with, I thought you may want to write it.

JO: Write a book for girls? A book for girls that would be published?

MR. DASHWOOD: Yes.

JO: I don't have any idea what I would write about.

MR. DASHWOOD: Perhaps something that girls would like.

JO: I don't know any girls except for me and my sisters.

MR. DASHWOOD: Then write something they would like to read.

JO: Oh, they don't read for pleasure. They never have.

MR. DASHWOOD: It would pay a hundred dollars.

JO: A hundred?

MR. DASHWOOD: Yes. Fifty at the outset and fifty when the book was printed.

JO: A hundred dollars?

MR. DASHWOOD: Yes, Miss. March. If there's anything you can think of... Anything at all that comes to mind that you think girls might like-

JO: Tell me... What is the difference between a story for a boy and a story for a girl? Isn't a story a story?

MR. DASHWOOD: Not quite.

JO: Well, it should be. There shouldn't be any difference. As long as there are compelling characters and a good tale that-

MR. DASHWOOD: Miss. March if you're not interested-

JO: Oh, I am. I'm very interested. I've always wanted to write a novel and have it published.

MR. DASHWOOD: Well, think about it then.

JO turns to leave then quickly turn back.

JO: A hundred dollars?

MR. DASHWOOD: Yes. As I said.

JO: You did, yes. And would you be open to a different arrangement?

MR. DASHWOOD: Such as?

JO: Such as a percentage of the sales instead.

MR. DASHWOOD: And why would you want an arrangement like that?

JO: Well, you said there is great demand for a story for girls. If there is such a demand then a percentage of the sales would be more profitable in the long run, wouldn't you agree?

MR. DASHWOOD: And how much of a percentage are you desiring.

JO: Twenty percent.

MR. DASHWOOD: Twenty! No. Absolutely not.

JO: Fifteen.

MR. DASHWOOD: No.

JO: Ten.

MR. DASHWOOD: Five.

JO: Seven. Point five.

MR. DASHWOOD looks at her and grins.

MR. DASHWOOD: All right.

END

They shake hands.

Transition. FRIEDRICH sees JO walk by wearing her coat and suitcases in hand.

FRIEDRICH: Miss. March! Going home? So soon?

JO: My sister Meg is having twins. I got a telegram this morning I'm going to take the train this afternoon.

FRIEDRICH: I see. Do you want me to accompany you to the station?

JO: No. I can manage.

FRIEDRICH: Miss. March... You have not said a word to me in days.

JO: I've been very busy.

FRIEDRICH: Miss. March, I did not mean to offend or hurt. Anything I said about you and your work comes from a place of utmost respect. And admiration.

JO: Thank you.

FRIEDRICH: I have a something for you.

He goes to his shelf and pulls out a small book. He fixes his hair and hands her the gift.

JO: Shakespeare!

FRIEDRICH: Have you read these?

JO: Sonnets? No not yet.

FRIEDRICH: They are some of his favourite writing of mine.

He takes the book from her and flips to a certain page.

(Reading) 'When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone bewep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,