

MEG: Jo! You startled me. Why are you just sitting there?

JO: I was waiting for you.

MEG: I wish you wouldn't have.

JO: Is that lipstick, Margaret March?

MEG: Oh!

She quickly tries to wipe the lipstick off her lips with her hands when MARMEE enters the room.

START

MEG: Oh, Marmee. Did I wake you?

MARMEE: No, dear. A mother never sleeps until all of her children are home safe and sound. Did you enjoy yourself?

MEG: I did. But I think I've sat in the lap of luxury long enough.

MARMEE: I was afraid home would seem dull to you after your adventure tonight. I'm glad you've returned. I'll see you girls in the morning.

She turns to leave.

MEG: Marmee, do you... Have plans for us?

MARMEE: I have many plans for my daughters. I believe all parents do.

MEG: But... What are they? Is it marrying well? Is that part of your plan, Marmee? For us to marry rich?

MARMEE: Is that what you think?

MEG: If I don't want to be a governess the rest of my life... If I don't want to take care of other people's children forever and ever... I've heard what Aunt March has said to you over the years. 'One of your girls needs to marry well. One of your girls needs to save this family.'

JO: Aunt March has said the same thing to me, Marmee.

MARMEE: Your Aunt March says a lot of things. And she's not the authority on your life or anyone else's.

MEG: But... She's right. Isn't she?

MARMEE: I suppose you're both old enough now to hear my thoughts on this... So here it is. I want my daughters to be accomplished, admired, loved, and respected. In regards to marriage... To be loved by a person who treats you well is one of the best and sweetest things that can happen in this life. And I do hope that you may know this experience if you want that. And as for money... Yes, well money is a needful and precious thing. But I never want you to think for one moment that money is the first or only prize to strive for. I'd rather see you both terribly poor if you were happy than queens on thrones without any inner peace or self-respect.

MEG: Sallie thinks poor girls don't stand a chance.

JO: ~~I'm not certain Sallie stands a chance either.~~

MEG: ~~Jo!~~

JO: ~~What?~~

MEG: Marmee... I can't quiet the voices inside my head... Sallie, Annie, Aunt March. Sometimes I don't know what to think.

MARMEE: It's impossible to feel right and true to yourself when all you do is look outward and at others. You must look inside yourself... At your soul... At your heart. That should be the only guide you have in this world. The one and only.

END

Transition. JO and LAURIE play chess on the floor. JO reads from a newspaper while they play. MEG works on her needlepoint. JOHN reads from a book. AMY sits on the floor, drawing the scene. BETH plays at the piano, but she struggles with one of the keys.

LAURIE: Are the keys sticking again?

BETH: Yes. They don't play as smoothly as the keys on your piano.

JO: More than three-hundred thousand men have been killed in the war already. And I'm sure that doesn't account for the men that have been injured.

AMY: Jo, not now.

LAURIE: Must you read while we're playing a game?

LAURIE: Yes. But first let me skate up ahead to make sure the ice is all right.

He skates away. AMY'S voice gets closer.

AMY: *(Off stage)* Jo!

LAURIE: *(Calling to JO)* Keep near the shore. The middle of the ice isn't safe yet. Tell Amy.

AMY: *(Off stage)* Jo!

JO turns to the audience.

JO: Let her take care of herself

She skates off after LAURIE, just in time for AMY to reach the shore. AMY sits to put on her skates.

AMY: *(Calling out)* You said you would take me with you next time you went skating!

She finishes tying up her skates and walks onto the ice.

(Calling out) I'm coming!

She starts to skate to catch up with them. As she does, she passes through the middle and the ice starts to crack. AMY looks down and within seconds the ice breaks and she falls right through. AMY screams.

JO: *(Off stage)* Amy!

Transition. MARMEE comes out of AMY'S room and closes the door behind her. JO comes to meet her.

START

And? How is she?

MARMEE: She's warmed up. Now's she's just asleep. You and Laurie were good to get her home as quickly as you did.

JO: If it hadn't been for Laurie it might have been too late. I let her go. I let it happen. Marmee, if she should die-

MARMEE: Jo-

JO: It would be my fault. I let my temper get the better of me. What's wrong with me? What if one day I do something dreadful and make everyone hate me.

MARMEE: Oh, love. I understand. I do.

JO: How, Marmee? You're never angry. Not like I am.

MARMEE: Jo... I'm angry every day of my life.

JO: You are?

MARMEE: Yes. I've been trying to cure it for years.

JO: How have you done it?

MARMEE: I haven't. Not really. I've only learned to control it.

JO: What makes you so angry?

MARMEE: Nearly everything. Life can be very hard at times. It can be big and full and beautiful but it can also be very, very hard.

JO: Why don't you show it?

MARMEE: It's not right for you and your sisters to have to live with that.

JO: How did you learn to control it?

MARMEE: My mother used to help. But I lost her when I was a little older than you are and for years I had to struggle alone. I had a hard time, Jo. A very hard time. And then I met your Father and was so happy that life seemed to feel easier. Then I had the four of you and was happy all over again. But even still, trouble always finds its way to your door. And I had to learn how to take each moment as it comes.

JO: What do I do, Marmee?

MARMEE: Well, for tonight... You must forgive your sister for burning your novel. It was a terrible thing to do but it's only just a story.

JO: It's not just a story. I wanted to sell it. I wanted to take it to a publisher to make some money.

MARMEE: What made you decide to do something so-

JO: I've read the letters that Father has sent you, Marmee. I know I shouldn't have but I found the box where you keep them.

MARMEE: Jo!

JO: I know everything. How much money do we have left?

MARMEE: Not enough.

JO: I thought I could sell my novel for twenty, maybe thirty dollars even. It would have helped wouldn't it?

MARMEE: Yes. But Jo... You shouldn't be concerned with all of that.

JO: How can I not be? If we don't have enough money to eat or-

MARMEE: Your Father will help when he returns.

JO: And what if Father doesn't return?

MARMEE: Jo!

JO: I don't want us to become like the Hummel's. Sleeping in one room with a broken window and no food to eat.

MARMEE: That won't happen to us.

JO: How do you know? Please, Marmee. I want to help.

MARMEE: You do help, Jo. By tending to Aunt March.

JO: But that's hardly enough. I want to do more. I'm the only one who can. Meg is busy with the King family. Beth can hardly stand to leave the house. And Amy is too young to work.

MARMEE: We will find a way to keep going.

JO: Will we?

MARMEE: Yes, love. We will.

BETH: *(Off stage)* She's awake. **END**

Transition. JO turns to the audience.