

LAURIE: See? She seems like a mean old lady, but I've always thought she had a rather soft side. Oh... I need your assistance with something.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a newspaper clipping and a pencil.

Your autograph, Miss. March. If you would be so kind. What is this? Your eighth published story now?

JO smiles, takes his pencil, and signs the clipping.

JO: Ninth, thank you very much.

LAURIE: Your ninth! You are a marvel, Jo, why do you sign them anonymously? You should attach your name to them.

JO: Mother and Father wouldn't approve of some of them. The killing parts especially.

LAURIE: But surely they read everything you write.

JO: They only read the ones I tell them to read.

MARMEE pops her head into the room.

MARMEE: Jo! The garlands!

JO: Yes, Marmee.

MARMEE rushes out of the room again.

LAURIE: Can I be of some assistance?

JO: Yes. Please.

She steps onto the sofa to hang one side of the garlands on the wall. LAURIE hangs the garlands on the other side of the wall. When he's done, he goes to JO. He slowly lowers her down. As he does, they stop, face to face. JO breaks away from him as MR. LAURENCE enters the room.

START

JO: Mr. Laurence!

She goes to him and hugs him.

JO: That wedding cake you sent... I've never seen anything like it.

MR. LAURENCE: I hope it will do. It is strawberry inside and the icing is buttercream.

JO: And I intend to eat all of it.

MR. LAURENCE: I saved two seats for us, Theodore.

JO: Oh, we set aside two very special seats for you right in the front. Father can show you where they are.

MR. LAURENCE: How is your Father, Jo? I saw him outside. He was mumbling to himself.

JO: Oh, he was likely rehearsing. He's terribly nervous for today.

MR. LAURENCE: I suppose it's not every day that you officiate your daughter's wedding.

JO: No, it's not.

MR. LAURENCE: But how is he, Jo? Truly, I want to know.

JO: Well, after all these years I think I can say that Father has never been the same since coming home from the war.

MR. LAURENCE: He was lucky to survive. I know many men who were not as fortunate.

JO: I know. But he's had a very hard go of it, still. His hearing is gone in one ear. He seems to always be shaking or weak on his feet. And he seems terribly sad. No matter what we do to try and brighten his spirits.

MR. LAURENCE: If there is anything I can do-

JO: You already do too much. **END**

JOHN enters the room in a suit. He walks with a slight limp.

JOHN: Laurie! (*Hugging LAURIE*) I was worried you wouldn't come. That your studies might prevent you from-

LAURIE: Nothing could prevent me from being here. You look dashing. How is the cottage? You'll have to give me the grand tour.

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,