

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT  
THIS PLAY IS FULLY PROTECTED BY COPYRIGHT

All plays, books, music and other materials published by Heartland Plays, Inc. are fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries which the United States has reciprocal relations including, but not limited to all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, The Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention. All rights to the plays and materials on our website are strictly reserved including, and without limitation, professional and amateur performance rights; motion pictures; public reading; radio and television broadcasting; audio and video recording and reproduction of any type known or yet to be invented; information storage and retrieval systems of any type known or yet to be invented; and the rights of translation into any and all languages. No individual or organization whether amateur or stock may perform this or any play published by Heartland Plays, Inc. without first obtaining advance permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. and paying the appropriate fees including Royalties and Single-Use Copyright fees. Heartland Plays, Inc. collects royalties on behalf of the Playwrights whose plays it publishes. Unauthorized copying, transcribing or reproduction of this or any play or excerpt, or storage or transmittal in any form and by any means whether known or yet to be invented, is strictly forbidden except as provided by Agreement with Heartland Plays, Inc. Any unauthorized use is a violation of copyright laws and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

FIVE SIMPLE RULES TO REMEMBER

1. DO take advantage of the free online perusal of our plays to help you make the best choice for your particular needs or production.
2. DO enjoy the convenience of our online purchase application for performance rights and single-use copyright.
3. DO understand that this play and all plays and materials on our website are controlled by Heartland Plays, Inc. and fully protected by copyright.
4. DO NOT attempt in any way to copy, transcribe or reproduce this play by any means or perform this play or use any play or material from our website without first receiving permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. Any attempt to use this or any other work without first obtaining permission is a violation of copyright and punishable by law.
5. DO NOT rob this Author or any of the Authors we represent of their right to be paid for the use of their property. It is a crime and it is wrong!

**Product Code A0574-A**

# Are They Little Women?

by  
Kay Thomason-Vardy

Inspired by Louisa May Alcott's  
"Little Women"

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
REPRODUCTION WITHOUT SPECIFIC WRITTEN PERMISSION PROHIBITED**

**Performance Rights Available Exclusively through  
Heartland Plays, Inc. at [heartlandplays.com](http://heartlandplays.com)  
[playsnow@heartlandplays.com](mailto:playsnow@heartlandplays.com)  
customer service: 406-431-7680**

**Copyright © 2023 by Kay Thomason-Vardy**

# Are They Little Women?

by Kay Thomason-Vardy

## **CHARACTERS**

Characters based on Alcott's "Little Woman" but adapted as follows:

AMY-LOU: *Writer; is the oldest sister*

BETH/ELIZABETH: *Artist; 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest*

MEG/MEGAN: *Musician; 3<sup>rd</sup> oldest*

JO/JOSEPHINE: *Actress; youngest sister*

MOTHER/MRS. MARCH/MARMEA: *Their mother*

MR. MARCH: *Their father*

HANNAH: *The March's servant*

THEODORE LAWRENCE (TEDDY, LAURIE, MASTER LAWRENCE)

NOTE: *All characters are dressed in period attire except Theodore who will appear to be initially from modern day England, then find "appropriate" period clothing as story unfolds.*

### NAMES & AGES OF THE MARCH SISTERS IN ALCOTT'S "LITTLE WOMEN"

*Aged 16 "Meg"an March – Actress oldest*

*Aged 15 "Jo"sephine March – Writer 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest*

*Aged 14 Eliza"beth" March - Youngest and sickliest, musical one, the one that dies*

*Aged 12 Amy March – Artist youngest*

## **SETTING**

*The March's Home*

*England, mid-1800's; The sitting room/parlour of a country manor.*

*A war is taking place in Great Britain that resulted in more deaths from illnesses than the war itself. It ended in stalemate. The original story is set in Massachusetts in the 1860's when the American civil war was taking place.*

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

*Although the set should represent the place and period, keep it minimal yet realistic. There is no need to overstate or over complicate the smooth running of the story. Perform it as though someone cannot stop turning the pages of the novel until that very last scene.*

## **PROPS LIST AT END OF SCRIPT**

# Are They Little Women

by Kay Thomason-Vardy

## ACT ONE

### SCENE 1

#### The Beginning

SETTING: *The sitting room/parlour of the March's home; a country manor, 1863 England.*

AT RISE: *MR. MARCH, MARMEA and the MARCH SISTERS are seated in the room.*

MR. MARCH

By the end of the season, girls, those of you who are of age will be allowed to marry. Families of great patronage are arriving this evening from out of town. There is to be a ball held at Lady Fairmont's for introduction and merriment.

*SISTERS react uncomfortably/excitedly.*

MARMEA

Ladies preserve yourselves. Do not be overcome. We will have to run up gowns, quickly now.

*MARMEA takes him aside as the SISTERS exit excitedly chattering.*

MARMEA, *Cont'd*

That is wonderful news, Mr. March. Have you found agreeable suitors for each? Gentlemen with the capacity to flourish our girls with prosperous holdings? I must alert you that each have come to desire beautiful things in abundance, Mr. March as you should well know.

MR. MARCH

I am well aware of the nature in which our ladies should wed. However, these conditions may be wavered for the right—

MARMEA

These conditions layout the very foundations on which society is built, Mr. March, and as such there is no room for negotiation. You *will* decide accordingly the most appropriate match before tonight. It would not do to let any *rogue* distract their eyes or bewitch their senses. No, it must be all laid out. These girls know nothing of the world of men, Mr. March. They will need clear and firm guidance in their selection of an appropriate...

*At this moment an inebriated modern-day young man rolls onto stage from behind the curtain as if being thrown out of a pub. He is dressed in*

*jeans and t-shirt. An OFFSTAGE VOICE is heard yelling "Yah barred! Go home and get yahself cleaned up. Bloody drunks."*

*There is a shocked silence as everyone in the room stares down at the young man. HANNAH enters with a poker to stoke the fire. She does not acknowledge the young man on the floor.*

HANNAH

*(Directly to MR. MARCH)*

Good evening, Sir. If you would permit me I have come to stoke the fire. If this is a bad time, Sir, I could come back later *(Still not acknowledging the man)* As you please, Sir.

*HANNAH curtseys and exits. MR. AND MRS. MARCH slowly turn to look at each other, checking that the other has seen this apparition, too. HANNAH then suddenly re-enters.*

HANNAH

Pardon the intrusion, Sir *(Quickly curtseys)* but there appears to be a male arranged across the parlour rug. On the floor. Just There. *(Pointing)*

*They all look back and closely inspect the man.*

MR. MARCH

What? Oh. Yes! Hannah, perhaps some tea. Yes. Fetch tea for our guest and perhaps the smelling salts. And if you could keep the girls entertained elsewhere, that would be most favourable.

HANNAH

Yes, Sir. *(Curtseys and exits hurriedly)*

MARMEA

*(Swooning on the sofa)*

Is this one of your out-of-town suitors? I should have known it was too good to be true.

MR. MARCH

I haven't the faintest idea who this chap is....

*HANNAH returns with the tea tray and cakes along with some smelly salt. MR. MARCH quickly helps the lad up onto a chair, brushing him off.*

MR. MARCH, *Cont'd*

It's lovely to see you, old boy, and where may I ask did you purchase this exquisite apparel? It's so *(Thinks)* different and tight.

THEODORE

Where am I? *(Blurry-eyed; head banging)* Who am I?

MR. MARCH

*(Aside)*

Good question. No need to get into all that right now, let us have some tea and, ahh, look you're favourite, Mrs. March; scones and jam.

*MR. MARCH picks up the smelly salts and shoos HANNAH away. HANNAH curtseys and exits as MR. MARCH wafts the salts under Theo's nose.*

*THEO reacts and wakes up a little – then suddenly he jumps, taken aback by the old-fashioned setting in which he finds himself.*

THEODORE

*(Much more alert)*

Where the hell? Who are you? What are you wearing? *(Looking around)* Is this some kind of joke? No one dresses like that these days. Where's my phone?

*THEODORE searches pockets revealing modern-day items like medicine packets, maybe a vape pipe, etc.*

MR. MARCH

What's a phone?

THEODORE

Do I know you? Are you Tony's friend? The one that's... he talks about him all the time? Yes, you must be, what was his name...was it...was it Bruce?

MR. MARCH

Bruce is the name of one's dog and would not be associated with a gentleman of my standing. I am Mr. March and that there is Mrs. March. You may call us by those names, or Sir and Marmea if you please.

THEODORE

Marmea?

MR. MARCH

And you are? *(Pause)* What is your name, boy?

THEODORE

Laurie. Well actually it's Theodore Lawrence but my friends just call me Laurie. Or Teddy. For short.

MARMEA

Theodore Lawrence? Impossible.

THEODORE

What?

MARMEA

Our neighbour across the grass, the grandson of Mr. Lawrence is Master Theodore Lawrence and you, sir, cannot be him...

MR. MARCH

Is it a miracle?

MARMEA

He ran away nearly seven years ago, breaking Mr. Lawrence's heart. And now you return?

MR. MARCH

It must be good fortune, Mrs. March. Master Laurie, it has been too long!

THEODORE

I am Master?...What? No, I'm not your neighbour and I don't live with my grandad. That'd be weird. I've got my own... I'd recognise you if I was your neighbour, we'd pass on the stairs surely...what do you mean across the grass? I live in a flat in the city (*Looks out the window and sees*) ...Oh my god, is that a cow? Why? Why are we in the middle of a field? And is that, bloody hell that house is massive! Have you seen it? It's like flippin' Chatsworth. Is this house that big? Can I have a nosey?

MR. MARCH and MARMEA

NO!

MR. MARCH

Master Lawrence...tea...stay in here and drink tea. We will just...

THEODORE

I don't like tea... have you got any coffee?

MARMEA

Oh, good heavens

MR. MARCH

We'll go find some, just, stay there.

*MR. MARCH ushers MRS. MARCH out. They both exit leaving THEODORE alone in the room.*

THEODORE

Alright. (*Starts looking around*) where are the hidden cameras? You can come out now, Tony, I've sobered up. Oh, my head, God them salts are strong... Where is my phone? Come

THEODORE, *Cont'd*

on guys this isn't funny! I get it, I need to stop drinking because I turn into a bit of a [dick]. Guys? Guys?! What is this? Is it some form of Victorian escape room? That's pretty girly, dudes? (*Crouching to the side where he fell in "from behind the curtain"*) What's the first puzzle? Hmm? Where's the secret door!?

*TEDDY bangs on a few things hidden out of sight as all the SISTERS burst in.*

JO

Who is plaguing this house with such clamour?

MEG

You're only cross because it isn't you, Jo. One does like to be heard.

AMY-LOU

I quite agree, Meg. I prefer the silence of the night, however, when Jo is asleep.

JO

Why do you all tease me so?

BETH

Because you are the youngest and so it is easy, nay it is your duty to be teased, little sister.

JO

I am not little; I will be of age the same as you Elizabeth by the end of the season and you heard Pa-pa we are all to be...

AMY-LOU

If you are to be present at that ball, I will eat my own gown and not attend.

BETH

Amy-Lou you have a most descriptive way with words, but I do rather think they are musings of your imagination that if brought to reality one wouldn't be able to act upon them.

AMY-LOU

Luckily, I often keep my thoughts for my stories and plays.

MEG

Which we are all privy to and so must suffer the musings in reality.

JO

And you make us act them out, too.

AMY-LOU

Which is surely your destiny, Josephine. Such a talented actress as you are.



JO

A life on stage is a wonderful thought, but it cannot be possible to support a family through it.

AMY-LOU

Surely you are not trifled with such thoughts of post matrimony already, little sister.

BETH

I believe she means us sisters.

MEG

Us? Why would you think of...

JO

I simply cannot be an actress if Amy Lou is to write, Elizabeth to draw and you, Megan, have more talent than the three of us put together. You simply hear a piece of music and hold it inside. I know you do. And then when you think no one is listening, you sit at the piano in the study and play most beautifully and are so lost in the movement that you have never once noticed me. Listening.

MEG

*(Pause)*

Well, I shall never play again, Jo.

BETH

Oh, don't be angry Meg.

AMY-LOU

We have all heard you play, and I hate to admit it but Jo is quite right. You are most talented and no doubt will put the three of us to shame when you are the one who is remembered.

MEG

I will not be remembered. I refuse. I only play for myself.

JO

Well, that's just selfish and you know it is.

MEG

Well then let me be selfish and you turn off your ears.

JO

I shall not.

MEG

You must!

JO

I won't.

BETH

How do you expect gentlemen to take either of you seriously when you behave like animals?

MEG

She started it.

JO

I did not.

AMY-LOU

Enough, I declare that is quite enough. Meg you will return to your studies, you have not the energy to argue so passionately.

MEG

You aren't Mother, Amy Lou, and I am quite well enough to aggravate Josephine.

*(Pause and silence)*

AMY-LOU

Where is Mother?

JO

I assumed in here as this was where the ruckus...

BETH

Yes, we have quite forgotten why we all came in here.

MEG

Oh, Hannah has left tea and cake.

AMY-LOU

I have told you to return to the study, little lady.

MEG

*(Going to the window first)*

I wonder if they are perhaps on a jaunt with guests in the garden?

*They all follow to look out the window.*

THEODORE

*(Entering)*

That's not a garden; that's a field! *(Making the girls whip around in surprise and hold on to each other for bravery)*. And I've heard sisters falling out over clothes, makeup, boys but I have never heard an argument that, have I got this right, you all appreciate how well she can

THEODORE, *Cont'd*

play music and you don't like them listening. Why can't you just accept the compliment and don't be so shy, you've probably lived with these ladies all your life. You all look related. You can't be embarrassed at them listening to you sing or whatever, I bet you've seen each other's...

AMY-LOU

Who are you?

THEODORE

Errrrm?

AMY-LOU

Who are you?

BETH

And why are you in our parlour?

JO

Alone.

MEG

What are you wearing?

THEODORE

Oh, errrr. (*Scoffs*) Seriously? You weren't expecting me?

BETH

Not at all.

MEG

What are you wearing?

THEODORE

Errrm, fancy dress. Just been to a party out of town.

AMY-LOU

What's your name?

THEODORE

Laurie... Theodore Lawrence. But my friends call me Laurie.

JO

You're not? You can't be.

AMY-LOU

Teddy?

BETH

The boy that ran away?

THEODORE

Ran away? Who ran away?

BETH

Mr. Lawrence's grandson. Oh, I suppose he will be thrilled that you have returned. And just in time for the ball, too!

AMY-LOU

And yet there will be so many questions. How you have changed, Master Lawrence.

THEODORE

Wait a minute! I get it. Oh my [God]. This is embarrassing. It's Little Women. Little Women! I'm embarrassed to say I recognise it. But, well, actually it's a bit mixed up.

JO

Who are you calling little women?

THEODORE

No, it's a film, well I assume it's a book first but, but it, it's called Little Women. I did it, A LEVEL ENGLISH. (*Slow clap; looking about*) Bravo, Tony, a bit highbrow for you this, but well played. I think you might have mixed up some of the characters, though, and... I think Jo is the oldest or second, she's the one that writes the story, pretending it is a friend that's writing, not her. And it's Beth, the middle one who dies, she's the talented musician not... (*They all stare at him*) Why have you chosen a Little Women escape room? Tony?! Tony?!

AMY-LOU

Who is Tony?

THEODORE

Oh, he's just a dead friend when I get out of here...

JO

Why are you talking about dying so much?

THEODORE

Because I'm going to kill him. Okay...I'll play along. How long have I got to get out of this place?

MEG

Well, I can show you around the grounds if you like.

AMY-LOU

No you will not. You are going back to your studies and Josephine too. This way, come now, no more quarrels. (*Takes them both away*)

*There is a moment of awkward silence.*

BETH

Would you like me show you where you can get changed? You look rather uncomfortable.

THEODORE

Changed? Oh, right. I suppose jeans weren't invented when this was written. Yeah, sure. I haven't got anything else to wear, though, (*Taking the mick*) I mean I haven't sent for my carriage as I don't intend to stay very long.

BETH

But you have just returned, Master Lawrence. And if your grandfather has anything to say on the matter, I am sure that it will be that you should stay awhile.

THEODORE

Are you now?

BETH

You speak in a most peculiar fashion. Picked up on your travels? (*Pause*) I'll have Hannah find something suitable for you to wear. (*Exits and re-enters*) This way.

*BETH takes THEO's hand and drags him off stage.*

## SCENE 2

### Mr. March is sent away and Before the Ball

AT RISE: MR. MARCH Enters.

MR. MARCH

Now, young Lawrence, I must inform you that we have four young ladies in this household and they are not to be idly distracted by your presence. You would have been invited to dine with us tonight. However, there is a ball that the March family household has been summoned to attend and it is of the upmost importance that we do not waiver from the task in hand. Master Lawrence? Master Lawrence? Oh no. Hannah!

HANNAH

(*Enters*)

Yes, Sir?

MR. MARCH

Have you seen Master Lawrence?

HANNAH

Not since he was a baby, sir.

MR. MARCH

What? No, the gentleman that was laid here. He is also one Master Lawrence.

HANNAH

Thee Master Lawrence?

MR. MARCH

Yes, no, well I don't know, actually. Could he be?

HANNAH

Are you yourself, Mr. March?

MR. MARCH

I don't know. Have you seen him?

HANNAH

Yes, Sir.

MR. MARCH

Where?

HANNAH

He was on the rug in the parlour, Sir. You sat him in that chair.

MR. MARCH

Not then. No, I mean have you seen him more recently, after the tea?

HANNAH

*(Thinking)*

No, I haven't...

MR. MARCH

What about the girls? Did you manage to organise their entertainment elsewhere so that they didn't, you know, stumble upon him? Here?

HANNAH

*(Thinks)*

No, Sir.

MR. MARCH

*(Getting angry)*

I told you to—

HANNAH

Not to interrupt your raving, Sir, but I haven't seen the little women today. I presumed they must be out in the grounds enjoying the weather. And if they happen to stumble upon him, well, I think they would be quite safe, Sir. I'd feel sorry for the fella in fact. Finished with the tea?

MR. MARCH

What? Oh yes.

HANNAH

Good afternoon, Sir. *(Collects the tea tray and exits)*

MARMEA

*(Enters flustered)*

Josephine, Amy-Lou and Megan are in the study.

MR. MARCH

Thank goodness for that.

MARMEA

But Elizabeth is untracked. I cannot find her about the house, the kitchen nor the garden. Lucky that Master Lawrence has been sworn to this room only.

MR. MARCH

I fear the stars are not yet aligned in our favour, Mrs. March. Might I suggest another, more frantic search and place Hannah to guard the study? We must find this young man and return him whence he came.

*Both exit as THEODORE and BETH enter.*

THEODORE

I have never worn anything like this. I find it oddly comfortable though. Airy.

BETH

You do look a splendid picture, young sir. Perhaps one day I could paint you?

THEODORE

The way you guys talk, you've got that really authentic, British, almost Crown like appeal. Is it fun acting like it's the 19<sup>th</sup> Century? I've always wondered what it would be like to be in one of those living actor scenes. But you see, unfortunately, I know for a fact, Little Women was based in America somewhere during the Civil War and there isn't a hint of an overseas

THEODORE, *Cont'd*

accent, Love. The attention to detail isn't perfect. I mean it's good, but it's definitely all conjured for some elaborate bet, or joke. You can come out now, Tony. I've learnt my lesson.

BETH

With whom do you speak, young Master Lawrence?

THEODORE

He's such a... you and your sisters, you are all...

BETH

Yes?

THEODORE

...but my friend has clearly not done his research well enough. He's mixed you all up. You aren't the real deal.

*The OTHER SISTERS enter.*

THEODORE, *Cont'd*

...well, I mean obviously you are real as in here right now, but your dad, Mr. March is away fighting in the American Civil War.

BETH

American Civil War? I hope Pa-pa never has to go to war. Perhaps you are unwell, sir, maybe some tea?

THEODORE

No, I don't need tea; I don't like tea. What is going on here?

JO

*(Brightly)*

I adore tea and cake; always makes me feel better on a glum day

AMY-LOU

You'd eat cake on any day no matter what the weather.

MEG

What's wrong with that? Hannah makes the best fruit sponge.

*HANNAH enters with a tray of tea and cake.*

HANNAH

That I do girls. Here's your tea, *(Forcing one into THEODORE's hand)*, and forgive me if I speak out of turn, but your parents seem beside themselves hunting all over the grounds for a lost article. Asked if I could guard the study. I have no idea what for.



BETH

I think I can probably guess.

*All look at THEODORE.*

HANNAH

*(Oblivious)*

It is so good to see you back, Master Laurie. You have grown up so much. Seen the world I imagine. Oh, your grandfather will be pleased. He's starting to not see very well and would benefit from your company again. I can call ahead and announce your arrival if you like. You and the March girls have a lot of catching up to do, too, I suppose.

AMY-LOU

That's a great idea, Hannah. Let Mr. Lawrence know at once. We shall be calling upon him presently.

JO

What about the ball?

MEG

We need to be preparing for the Fairmont's.

BETH

It wouldn't do to delay our preparations, would it Amy-Lou?

AMY-LOU

I suppose not. Hannah, perhaps we should re-arrange the Lawrence's rendezvous for another day.

*HANNAH curtseys and exits.*

JO

Yes, let's make haste and prepare ourselves for my first party. *(Exits with MEG)*

AMY-LOU

I still cannot abide you attending so young. Father must be having a... *(As she exits, too)*

THEODORE

What is going on?

BETH

A ball, Master Lawrence. Where you can dance with ladies under the watchful eye of the entire town and find a local suitor. And we get to wear gowns that financially cripple our dear Pa-pa.

THEODORE

Sounds...

BETH

Wonderful. Yes, it does. And it is, I assure you. (*Exits*)

THEODORE

This is crazy. (*Looks out the window again*) This house is definitely in the middle of a vast field. There's that cow again. And these ladies, well, they don't seem too concerned at my presence almost as if, well, they think perhaps they know me or have known me. (*Shakes it off*) How am I talking, crikey that rubs off quick, listening to posh princesses for five minutes and I start sounding like one. The March's; Grandfather Lawrence? What am I wearing?

*MR. MARCH enters.*

MR. MARCH

Good heavens, Master Lawrence, my wife and I have been frantic looking for you. Where were you?

THEODORE

Hannah was so kind to bring me a change of garment.

MR. MARCH

Right, of course, yes you do look better. So, you haven't met them?

*MRS. MARCH Enters.*

MARMEA

Oh good, you've found him.

THEODORE

Haven't met who, Mr. March?

MR. MARCH

There is a...

THEODORE

...party at the manor tonight?

MR. MARCH

Yes, how did you know that's what I was going to say?

THEODORE

Intuition.

MR. MARCH

Well, very good, yes, well, I wondered if you would be so kind as to attend as my wife and daughters' chaperone this evening as I cannot.

THEODORE

Chaperone? Why is that, Sir?

MR. MARCH

I am called upon for my country. I must away and support the cause. Do not inform the girls just yet.

THEODORE

Why?

MR. MARCH

Why must I away or why do I ask you to keep it from my daughters?

THEODORE

Both.

MR. MARCH

Because it is my duty on both accounts to protect and serve.

THEODORE

But there is no civil war here at the moment? I can't imagine it to be of absolute importance for you to leave now.

MR. MARCH

There are many battles in one's life worth making sacrifices for, young Laurie. You would do well to remember your duty when the time comes.

THEODORE

But if you go to the current war in England, in 1863, you know you are statistically more likely to die from being in a great mass of bodies, in unsanitary conditions, than dying chivalrously for the cause...

MR. MARCH

I do not intend to die for I am supporting the cause through chaplaincy, as is my god given obligation.

THEODORE

Oh! Right. Well in that case, it would be an honour to accompany them to the dance. Mrs. March, I'd very much like to meet your daughters if I may. Are they ready?

MARMEA

Well, I suspect they are getting... Let me hurry them along so we can away. (*Exits*)

THEODORE

If you are going away to war, then your daughters really are the writer, an actress, an artist and a musician of sorts, and we truly are in the middle of a field in a cottage manor. Tell me, is money or love more important?

MR. MARCH

Hmmm, well I would have thought that is obvious. Why it is love. Remind my wife of that, would you?

THEODORE

I will be sure to. And one more thing; did I happen to have a tutor called Mr. Brookes?

MR. MARCH

Why yes, you remember him? He stayed on as grounds keeper awaiting your return to study. He has been of great service to your grandfather. It has been a long time, Master Lawrence, but you really are the boy, aren't you? Well, that's settled. I know that my house will be well preserved with you in the neighbouring residence. Good luck with your studies and give my regards to your grandfather.

THEODORE

I will. And I know that if you follow your instincts, you will return to see your beloved wife and children once more; however bittersweet that time may prove to be.

MR. MARCH

Wise words from one so young. Good evening to you. (*Exits*)

THEODORE

Once more, bittersweet? What have I turned in to? This, whatever it is, can't be happening. It's impossible. Surely, I think I've gone mad.

*AMY-LOU enters dressed ready for the ball.*

AMY-LOU

Talking to one's self is certainly a sign of madness.

THEODORE

I believe the sign of madness when talking to one's self is when one awaits a response.

AMY-LOU

And what if one receives a riposte?

THEODORE

Well, that depends upon the satisfaction of the reply.

AMY-LOU

You seem different, Master Laurie, yet you are not changed. I shall write about you one day. Once I have explored your judgements, I will truly know what it is like to be you. I will therefore be well equipped to navigate a narrative from your understanding.

THEODORE

*(Laughs out of bewilderment more than anything)*

I have always wondered what it would really be like to be completely inside someone else's head. To truly see life entirely from their perspective. To be able to close a door and continue being present in them as though their voice in their head is that of mine.

AMY-LOU

I suppose that is why I write – to imagine a life as it could be from the safety of a fantasy inside the mind and expression of another.

THEODORE

How is it I understand everything you say even though I am not of this world?

AMY-LOU

Because we have known each other for a long time, Master Lawrence, and have come to understand the other's story. You were like a brother to me before you... [Ran away].

THEODORE

Oh no, not the friend zone.

AMY-LOU

But you are back now and I am eager to learn of your wanderings.

THEODORE

Enough about me, let me hear of your most recent scribblings. Tell me how you plan to become a great writer and earn enough to support your family whilst your father... [Is away].

AMY-LOU

There are very few ways for women to earn money, Master Lawrence. My Aunt March always proclaims it. But I will do what I can to change that and I am educating myself and my sisters in the best way I know how. Our prospects will improve vastly as long as we remain modest until our time comes to [leave and] ... *(Pause)* Forgive my intrusion, but why did you run away, Laurie?

THEODORE

I don't think I did. I don't know why young Laurie would have run away, but he does go to Europe in the book – that's much later on in the story, though. *(Looking at AMY-LOU)* I mean, I don't think he was running away from anything, more running towards [you] – something. You know.

AMY-LOU

I believe I am non the wiser, but never mind. I am assured once you settle in you will feel completely obliged to bore the four of us with tales of your travels to France.

THEODORE

I haven't been to France yet. There's a lot more that needs to happen here first. We seem to be right at the start. Your father has only just been...errm... Your father has asked me to chaperone you all to the ball. I have foolishly accepted for I regret to admit to you that I cannot dance. Nothing suitable for this era anyway.

AMY-LOU

Nor can I. I have scorched my dress and Elizabeth made me swear not to allow the other guests to see it, otherwise she will...

THEODORE

Well, perhaps I can be of some assistance. A secret solution. (*Holds hand out*) here goes nothing.

*They start to duet dance, badly, in an Olde English sort of way, throwing in a few silly moves even by today's standards. They dance all around the parlour – laughing and bumping into each other until the sisters burst in wearing dresses.*

BETH

You were not permitted to practice, Amy-Lou March, and Master Lawrence should be reserving his energies for the...

JO

Let me have a go, Laurie, show me that dance step again. I've never been to a ball before, I feel quite unprepared.

THEODORE

This step?

*THEODORE does a silly move; all except BETH giggle and try to follow.*

BETH

That is most inappropriate for proper engagement.

MEG

Will you desist? Your constant quarrelling is enough to make me sick.

THEODORE

You should have some fun, Beth. Life's too short.

BETH

What's that supposed to mean.

THEODORE

Well look at me, I am here and I have no idea what is going on other than the... [Plot of Little Women]...but I am resolved, in this lunacy, to have some fun anyway. Make memories; have moments that can be recorded (*Looking at AMY-LOU*) and not simply fill the wastelands of forgotten history.

JO

You simply must write a part for Laurie in your next play, Amy-Lou. I fear he rivals for the lead against me, however.

AMY-LOU

Never, you are too proficient, Jo, more so than those at any theatre show.

THEODORE

She is quite right, I could never match the expertise of Jo in this discipline. I have seen the delivery of the witch and her wrath.

MEG

You were spying on us

THEODORE

Spying, never! (*Falsely accused/insulted*) Just inconveniently placed to observe from a distance. And different time period. My mum made me watch Little Women as a boy... (*Referring to the fact he has been forced to watch Little Women with his mum or something*)

AMY-LOU

Why do you speak in riddles so?

THEODORE

Riddles?

AMY-LOU

Yes, you seem to allude to knowing more than is available in the room and make comment on things yet to occur. I haven't delivered the play which you speak of to my sisters for rehearsal yet.

THEODORE

Oh, (*Realising that to them he sounds like the crazy one*) perhaps I remember it wrong from our younger days. I am rather tired, now, it has been a very long day. I should rest awhile

THEODORE, *Cont'd*

before this evening's festivities. Chaperoning four eligible maidens, I fear, may overwhelm me too far without sufficient rest.

JO

I will have Hannah bring you some tea.

*HANNAH enters immediately with tea and exits almost straight away.*

THEODORE

No more tea! Sorry, thank you, Hannah. If I may be permitted to rest now (*Suggesting they leave then goes to sit down and covers face with hands as the others exit – he then looks up from his hands*) When I wake up, I best be at home, Tony.

*THEODORE closes eyes and falls asleep.*  
**BLACK OUT.**

### SCENE 3 After the Ball

AT RISE: *HANNAH is on bustling about dusting; plumping cushions all around THEODORE. When he wakes, there is obvious confusion and annoyance that he is still there.*

HANNAH

Good morning, sir.

THEODORE

Have I been here all night?

HANNAH

Yes, sir. Mrs March said to leave you until the morrow as you looked so peacefully still.

THEODORE

That was kind of her. (*Pause and realise*) What about the Fairmont's Ball? Have I missed it? I was supposed to...

HANNAH

No matter, young Master Lawrence, the girls were well presented by their mother. This was more suitable methinks.



THEODORE

Oh, how?

HANNAH

Well, I don't mean to be frank, but they have hardly known you these past seven eons. You wrote, yes, I saw the letters, but never with a return address for them to communicate their wonderings as to your absence, sir. They need to be re-acquainted, I feel, more properly.

THEODORE

Quite so. I fear I have to be reacquainted with myself, too. I wonder, do you think they will forgive this disappearance?

HANNAH

The girls do not hold grudges. Yet they are not absentminded creatures and will protect themselves from heartache should it attempt to seek them out. *(Exits)*

JO

*(Enters)*

Laurie, I am in love.

THEODORE

Oh no, who is it you fall in love with?

JO

Mr. Brookes. I believe you should remember him. Such a gentle soul; well-educated and kind. We will marry hence.

THEODORE

I thought that was Meg who...well I suppose it is the actress that marries Mr. Brookes and happily lives a penniless life so it's not far off.

JO

You speak in riddles again, Master Lawrence.

THEODORE

I...do I? Theodore Lawrence, I mean. I was known for my boyish whims, wasn't I? It is rather fitting, I imagine, for me to seem a little quirky even if it is unintentional.

JO

Amy-Lou recalls you far better than I can. What I know of you I have learned from her.

THEODORE

*(Laughs)*

Well, I believe that puts the two of us very much in the same boat, Miss Jo.

JO

How so?

THEODORE

*(Quietly)*

It seems as though I could be a character conceived by Amy-Lou for one of her books.

JO

What did you say?

THEODORE

Oh! Well, am I to wait for Amy-Lou to describe yesterday evening in a play so I can learn of your encounter with Mr. Brookes or are you going to enlighten me further in your own words so I can learn about you, from you?

JO

I see. Well, when Mr. Brookes took my hand and led me to the dance floor, I knew in that very moment he would be the most— [dutiful/caring husband and father.]

BETH

*(Enters)*

Do you insist on telling everyone of you follies, Jo? One dance does not constitute a lifelong binding. *(Hugs her sisterly, swaying)*

JO

And yet through no achievement of my own I seem bound to you for a long eternity.

BETH

Not for much longer, dear sister, for our lady Aunt March proposed to me last night.

THEODORE

She did what?

BETH

Proposed that I accompany her to the continent.

THEODORE

Oh... not yet, though. That can't be yet, right?

BETH

She suggests that I enroll in an art course in Paris and pursue a career in it when I am a little older and Aunt March is ready to embark.

AMY-LOU

*(Enters)*

Aunt March ready to embark where? The continent? She always said I would be able to go to France with her someday... *(Pause; silence)* Is it not true?

THEODORE

Amy-Lou...

BETH

Aunt March has asked for it to be me who escorts her when she is ready.

AMY-LOU

You? But I thought...all those long hours I spent reading to her and caring for her company...It was supposed to me.

JO

You will get your chance, Amy-Lou. The world is much bigger than the continent. Aren't you always saying how you long to venture to the America's and write of your findings there?

THEODORE

Yes! That is exactly what you must do. You are to concentrate your mind on....

AMY-LOU

How can I support the family from America. It is too far.

JO

But you've...

AMY-LOU

Always desired to see the world?

JO

Yes.

AMY-LOU

Josephine, what one desires and what one receives are clearly two different things entirely. *(Looking at BETH)* That much is clear. *(Exits)*

BETH

*(Sound of frustration)*

Why when she is angry with one of us can't she just come to blows. This would be much quicker than attempting to prise her away from her secret scribbles when her mind is in the mist. Why does she insist on pretending to care so little.

JO

She is upset that a chance has passed her by. She's just too proud to admit her disappointment. Perhaps she thinks she would appear weak if she properly confessed her distress to you.

BETH

Well, it is not my fault that Aunt March asked me instead of her. I will talk to her...

JO

Let her come to her senses alone, Elizabeth, she will not want to see you at—

BETH

I will make her see me. And if she will not be angry with me for taking her place to Europe, then I will do the one thing that will make me most visible to her. (*Exits*)

THEODORE

Oh no, wait Elizabeth!

JO

Laurie...

THEODORE

Yes?

JO

I am in love...

*BLACK OUT.*

#### SCENE 4

#### **The Witch and Her Wrath**

AT RISE: *HANNAH, JO, AMY-LOU, MEG and LAURIE are on all being prepped to act in AMY-LOU's play.*

AMY-LOU

In "The Witch and Her Wrath" you will play these pages, Jo, and Laurie you will play the hero who has been caught unawares. Hannah...

HANNAH

I'm not acting.

AMY-LOU

I haven't asked yet

HANNAH

And when you do the answer will be no.

AMY-LOU

Please/? (*Flutters eye lashes/cuddles her*)

HANNAH

No.

*AMY-LOU reacts – it was worth a try. HANNAH exits at some point that feels natural, after she has tidied up.*

MEG

I could fetch Elizabeth

AMY-LOU

No, you could not

JO

I cannot faint at the sight of Laurie and turn myself black and blue. I will swoon into a chair if I find that comes naturally at the moment.

AMY-LOU

You must fall to the floor, Josephine, and do it convincingly. No chairs.

MEG

I would prefer a nonspeaking part, Amy-Lou, if I must play along

AMY-LOU

It is nonspeaking, Meg. It is singing, and you shall do it most gaily—it will be as natural as breathing. I am sure you are up to the task or I would not insist. And what say you, Laurie? Can you commit to play the lost hero in this script?

THEODORE

I can certainly empathise with a character who finds himself elsewhere, in a state unlike that which he is used to.

AMY-LOU

Excellent. Make it believable that he is trapped under the power of the Witch until the very last moment.

THEODORE

Trapped? I will do my best.

AMY-LOU

Then let us play the moment and prepare for the annual children's Christmas showing.

MEG

Must we?

THEODORE

Oh no, I forgot you actually do this in front of children.

JO

What do you mean you forgot?

THEODORE

Errr, I mean, before I, you know, travelled away for awhile, before, when we were younger. I'd forgotten your, our...

JO

One does hope you shall be more fluently spoken when we attempt to act out this concern. I cannot be seen to be working with subpar players. Otherwise I shall have no future in this career at all.

THEODORE

Well, that's just rude, Josephine. And I think you'll find it is not I that halts your footsteps when dreaming of treading the boards but a certain significant other. One that you have already professed your love for since the Ball.

AMY-LOU

Do not encourage her, Laurie, she is still too young to be thinking of such things.

JO

I am nearly of age and you would do well to remember that. You cannot keep watch of me here forever.

*ELIZABETH enters reading a book and curls herself up in a chair ignoring the rest.*

AMY-LOU

You are right. I cannot keep watch of you when all of sudden, unfortunately, I cannot be in the same room as you.

*AMY-LOU exits as the others half attempt to reconcile her to stay (ad lib). When it goes quiet, ELIZABETH sniffs and turns a page – the others*

*then slowly look at their papers and try to arrange themselves as they think AMY-LOU would want them to stand and pretend to do a sword fight or something that is essentially from the play she is writing. After this has started to play out, and it is occurring naturally, and everyone is relaxed into it, AMY-LOU re-enters in an only semi-controlled state of anger, on the edge of raging.*

AMY-LOU

My papers have gone...has anyone taken my latest pages?

*The OTHERS are confused but BETH stays hidden behind her book and doesn't respond.*

OTHERS, *Except BETH*

No...

AMY-LOU

Elizabeth? (*Very shocked and very hurt at the clear possibility BETH has hidden them*) Have you hidden my pages?

BETH

No.

AMY-LOU

Look at me when you answer me.

BETH

I have not hidden your/ silly

AMY-LOU

/You have, haven't you. You cannot even bare to look at me'

*AMY-LOU snatches the book away and the OTHERS are on edge, ready to break up a fight. BETH stands to prevent AMY-LOU from having an advantage.*

BETH

I have not

AMY-LOU

Where have you hidden them?

*They start to argue aggressively with really girly slappy arms as AMY-LOU pushes BETH back down on to the chair. (Ad Lib) The noise attracts HANNAH until BETH screams a confession. [Actors notes: AMY-LOU must attack BETH to the point she can't stand it so that the confession comes at a breaking point.]*

BETH

*(Shouts loudly and clearly)*

I have burned them. I have burned them and I am glad of it...

HANNAH

What is all this? Your mother would be ashamed to see this fracas. Girls?

AMY-LOU

I shall hate you and I will never speak to you again.

*AMY-LOU cries and collapses into the chair. JO goes to comfort her almost as upset as AMY-LOU: big sister cries, little sister cries, that sort of connection.*

HANNAH

Elizabeth, what have you done?

*ELIZABETH exits followed by HANNAH. MEG kneels at AMY-LOU's side and briefly holds AMY-LOU's arm in comfort. THEODORE begins to speak but no one but MEG takes notice.*

THEODORE

I remember this bit. It ends quite badly. There's a day, must be soon after the fall out, Beth is going to get into danger following Amy-Lou. She nearly dies. Well, actually, in the original version, it is Amy that follows Josephine and Laurie onto the frozen lake and falls in— but the principle is probably the same here...

MEG

What frozen lake? It is only September.

THEODORE

September? *(In shock)* Jeez...she holds a grudge for awhile then. In the film it only seemed like the next day.



JO

What's a film?

THEODORE

Never mind. Listen, your mum and Beth will be back soon to explain. But you have to end this quarrel, Amy-Lou. Yes, it was important that it happened to help you redefine your friendship as sisters so you can perhaps let her go when the time comes. But more so that you, Amy-Lou, come to understand yourself and practice patience as your Marmee has practiced for 40 years. When Beth is made to apologise, just forgive her and move on. Otherwise you will regret it.

AMY-LOU

But why did she have to...

THEODORE

Because you upset her by being jealous of her opportunity. She wanted to hurt you in the only way she knew how to. The whole world knows that the only other thing that would bereave you is the loss of a sister, and not even Elizabeth could imagine bringing that about. So, she did it metaphorically. *(Pause)* 'Don't let the sun go down on your wrath' to coin a phrase.

JO

That's exactly what Marmee would say. Is it not, sisters?

MEG

To the letter...

JO

It's almost as if he...

*MRS. MARCH and BETH Enter.*

MARMEA

Now Amy-Lou, Elizabeth has something she would like to say and I beg that you listen most patiently... *(Pushing ELIZABETH towards AMY-LOU)* Go on.

BETH

*(Kneels down at AMY-LOU's feet – no contact)*

I was angry, so angry.

AMY-LOU

But why did you have to burn them?

BETH

I wanted to really hurt you. Truly I did. You were jealous that I finally had a chance to experience something without you, or instead of you. It's silly, but that's why. And I am now as sorry as I can possibly be, sorry as I have ever been. I'm sorry, Amy-Lou. *(Tearing up)*

MARMEA

Forgive your sister, Amy-Lou. ‘Don’t let the sun go down on your wrath’.

*MEG and JO exit discussing the fact that THEO said that same phrase.*

THEODORE

Well said, Marmea. *(Taking her aside)* Could I just ask you...

AMY-LOU

I can forgive you, *(Wiping BETH’s tears away)* but you must promise me/

BETH

/I will never, ever try to hurt you again, Amy-Lou. Cross my heart and hope to die

AMY-LOU

Please don’t do that.

BETH

*(Beat)*

I promise.

*They are reconciled and continue in mime until BETH exits. Then AMY-LOU, alone, appears quite sad because she is angry with herself.*

THEODORE

This may seem an odd question, but do you have any idea, erm. Do you understand why I am here?

MARMEA

Master Lawrence, I do not. I confess I do not know why any of us are here. All I know is I must love and cherish every living thing and when in life times are hard, we should receive these lessons/ gladly and grow...

THEODORE

/No I meant more specifically what I am doing here. I really don’t think I’m the real [Theodore Lawrence]. Am I even alive? I think I need a drink.

*MARMEA notices AMY-LOU has been left alone and looks discouraged. She begins to cross away from THEADORE.*

MARMEA

That is not the wisest way to search for answers, Master Lawrence. Have you tried confession instead of ale? I find that most refreshing when I am troubled. Sorry...would you excuse me, Laurie.

THEODORE

Of course... (*Noticing AMY-LOU's state, too*) I will just...

*THEODORE exits leaving MRS. MARCH and AMY-LOU alone on stage.*

MARMEA

I know she hurt you...

AMY-LOU

I could have never spoken to her again. She made me so angry. I could feel the rage boiling up inside of me and I couldn't stop it. If anything had happened to her, like Laurie said, it would have been my fault.

MARMEA

Nothing is going to happen to her.

AMY-LOU

It might, but I shan't let it.

MARMEA

*(Lightly because of the stubbornness showing through)*

You remind me of me.

AMY-LOU

You? You are never cross, or stubborn that way. Everyone says how—

MARMEA

I wasn't always so calm, my dear. I've had nearly 40 years to practice patience and kindness. It doesn't come as naturally as it may appear. It's exhausting, but worth it.

## SCENE 5 Christmas Day

AT RISE: *SFX: Bells jingling heard in the distance and children playing outside in the snow. BETH has a bandage on her hand. It is sore from an incident at school on the last day before Christmas. She tries to hide it until it becomes too painful and is later revealed at the end of Scene 6. JO enters greeting her mother.*

JO

Merry Christmas, Marmee

MARMEA

Indeed it is, Josephine.

*The OTHER SISTERS enter greeting their Mother in quick succession.*

JO

Where is papa?

MARMEA

*(Looking around at all the girls)*

He is away. Duty called some time ago and he didn't want you to worry.

MEG

What do you mean?

MARMEA

Your father is—

AMY-LOU

*(Cutting in)*

Working away, but he shall return. Isn't that right?

MARMEA

*(Only AMY-LOU can hear)*

I hope so.

*HANNAH enters with a telegram.*

HANNAH

Good morning, all – A telegram, Mrs. March.

MARMEA

Hannah, call me Marmee. Everyone else does.

HANNAH

If you insist, Marmee.

JO

It is from Papa?

MARMEA

Amy-Lou, read it for us.

AMY-LOU

It says he misses us all madly and is sorry he can't be here for Christmas day. But that we should count our blessings and be grateful for one another. Nothing more. All my love, Papa.

MARMEA

Well, that settles it then.

THEODORE

*(HANNAH shows him in as he enters)*

Settles what?

MARMEA

It is Christmas; we are reminded to be humble...

THEODORE

Christmas?!!! But yesterday it was still September!

MARMEA

Have you been drinking again, Master Lawrence?

THEODORE

I wish...No, I don't think I have. I wish I had never touched a drop in my life if this is what happens.

BETH

What is happening?

THEODORE

You'll see. So, it's Christmas day. Please forgive my intrusion, you will want it to be just family for Christmas breakfast, I guess.

MARMEA

Actually, Master Lawrence, we were about to pack the breakfast and some blankets and medicine...

*THE GIRLS react hungrily but try not to appear ungrateful.*

THEODORE

...for the Hummels. Yes! It is Christmas. I mean, no, don't do that...

AMY-LOU

It is a most generous idea, Laurie, and Papa would want us to do this happily if their need is greater than ours.

BETH

Agreed, let us help gather the supplies.

THEODORE

No... wait... I shouldn't, wouldn't want you to... get cold. Perhaps I could assist you in this merry task and deliver the belongings and message of good will for you, instead of you.

MARMEA

Such a kind offer, Master Lawrence, but really the girls should example the act of servitude for themselves. Off you go girls, the hampers are in the...

*THE GIRLS exit.*

THEODORE

Sorry to interrupt, but with respect, Marmea, the Hummel baby is very sick and I've lived through a pandemic so I really don't think it wise for these daughters of yours, especially the one with a weak heart, to expose themselves to unnecessary pathogens. She should stay away, keep her distance, all wash their hands a lot more and-and-and stay safe. In fact, if I and those who do attend it would be wise, I think for us to be equipped with masks. *(Pause)* face coverings – *(Pause)* – A scarf perhaps over your mouth and nose.

MARMEA

And you have learned of such things how?

THEODORE

Oh, erm, my travels, before now, there was, erm, Spanish flu? No, that's early 20th Century. Errrr, Russian Flu? Asiatic? No, that's probably after this actually...Or there was, I mean is Typhoid fever, of course. *(Good save)* And Mr. Brookes, who I assume I am very much reacquainted with if it's been three months, mentioned that the Hummel's baby cries most piercingly as he passes on his way to tutor me, which I think means it is rather distressed by a, an illness. I can help, perhaps. I have medicine from my voyages and it may sooth the baby. But please, your daughter who is prone to infection, is it Elizabeth?

MARMEA

Megan, the doctor said she nearly died of Scarlet fever just before you left.

THEODORE

Oh, yes, Megan... she needs to stay away from that household.

MARMEA

Your concern for Megan's welfare is remarkable. It is as though your thoughts never left them. Why did you stay away for so long, Master Lawrence? You were like a brother to my two eldest girls. How they missed you.

THEODORE

I don't believe it was me they were missing, exactly.

MARMEA

Whatever do you mean?

*THE GIRLS re-enter with travel coats or shawls carrying baskets and hampers of things for the Hummels. THEODORE makes a thing of picking up the medicine he emptied from his pockets earlier that no one has noticed and reading the dosages.*

MEG

Ready Marmee?

JO

You'll need an outer garment, Master Lawrence, if you are to brave the outdoors.

AMY-LOU

*(Hands him a shawl)*

Brings out your eyes.

MARMEA

Megan, I would like you to stay here with Hannah. Master Lawrence can go in your stead. You can help her prepare a morsel for ourselves when we return.

MEG

Oh, but Marmee, I wanted to...

MARMEA

No disagreements on Christmas Day, Megan. Let us go, girls. *(Ushering the others out)* Master Lawrence we are ready.

*LAURIE looks back at MEGAN and exits as well. BLACKOUT.*

## SCENE 6

### Later Christmas Day

AT RISE: *There is a table laid out with dishes and trays of food that has been delivered by Mr. Brookes from Mr. Lawrence.*

THEODORE

*(Reading a note to all THE MARCH'S and HANNAH)*

I heard tell of your generosity so have had Mr. Brookes *(JO reacts)* deliver a feast for your Christmas dinner upon your return. I am delighted that my grandson has returned. However, he is ill equipped for playing the piano as our sweet young lady once was. My granddaughter *(ALL react)* has been gone many years and it has left my piano rather neglected. If anyone would be so kind as to play it on occasion in order to keep it in tune, I would be most grateful. Cordially, Mr. Lawrence.

HANNAH

How can anyone refuse such a request when one is delivered with an abundance of gratitude in advance.

*They look at MEGAN.*

MARMEA

Only if you want to, Meg.

MEG

*(To LAURIE)*

I would only be able to assist if it will not disturb any of the household with my coming and going.

THEODORE

My grandfather would be most pleased if you accept.

MEG

And no one will be able to hear, will they? I do not wish to take away from the accustomed silence of your grandfather's house.

*THE GIRLS are quietly excited that MEG will go and play. HANNAH exits.*

THEODORE

It will be a most agreeable alteration. I find, to study a language in silence, an oxymoron. And, as Mr. Brookes is not the most forceful/ of Latin teachers

JO

/do not speak ill of Mr./ Brookes

THEODORE

/the silence has allowed me to gaze upon the love of this family/ through the window instead of study a dying dialect.

AMY-LOU

if you neglect to educate yourself/ Laurie

THEODORE

/And I have learned one important thing.

AMY-LOU

What's that?

THEODORE

*(To JO; quietly)*

That Mr. Brookes will be the most gentle of fathers, Josephine.

*THEODORE is referring to the future twins she would have with Mr. Brooks if this was the accurate Little Women story.*

THEODORE, *Cont'd*

*(Almost as an aside but THE OTHERS are listening)*

Theodore lost his parents at such a young age, I can see now how Mr. Brookes is appropriately placed to relieve some of this burden and represent a father figure for young Laurie. His Grandfather, however compassionate and loving he actually is, does come across a little crabby and intimidating at first as all wealthy men probably did in the 1860's.



*THEODORE catches himself, realising they are listening and he's been thinking out loud.*

THEODORE, *Cont'd*

I mean now. (*Silent pause*) Would you excuse me? I need a little fresh air.

*Without waiting for a reply, THEODORE exits and AMY-LOU and BETH both make to follow.*

MARMEA

Girls, I think it might be best to let Master Lawrence alone a while.

BETH

He doesn't seem himself, Marmea

AMY-LOU

He often speaks with premonition, as if he has experienced the present situation. He baffles me so as he speaks so clearly in third person. As if, well, as if he were the author of a story already inscribed...

*HANNAH enters with a Telegram.*

HANNAH

Mr. March. is ill and sends for you.

JO

Papa?

MARMEA

What? Mr. March.

AMY-LOU

Father is ill, Marmea, you must travel...

MARMEA

Of course, of course I must away at once. But girls...

HANNAH

They will be fine, Mrs. March. They have had good teachings. I will ensure they maintain the path of moral obligation.

MEG

We won't forget our duty to Mr. Lawrence, or the Hummels, Marmea. Go and be with Papa.

MARMEA

Thank you. I will prepare to leave on the first available train. Hannah, could you go to the station and discover a route?

HANNAH

Of course, Marmea.

*ALL but BETH exit. She unwraps her hand to reveal a redness and a slash mark. BETH curls up in the chair and sobs at the mess. LAURIE enters thinking the room has emptied.*

BETH

... My hand...

THEODORE

What happened, Beth?

BETH

Yesterday, at school, I drew a picture and the teacher...He...saw it and he hit me.

THEODORE

Was the picture unkind?

BETH

I didn't intend it to be.

THEODORE

What was it of, to anger your teacher so?

BETH

Just him...

THEODORE

*(Laughs)*

Sorry, I know I shouldn't laugh but kids in my school used to do that all the time and they'd add things like... errm *(Stopping himself from saying rude things)* Sorry, I shouldn't laugh. It does look sore. I should probably fetch Marmea.

BETH

No! I cannot show Marmea, she will...

AMY-LOU

*(Enters)*

Cannot show Marmea what?

BETH

My/ [hand]

AMY-LOU

/Beth your hand? What happened?

BETH

My teacher...

*BETH bursts into tears again as AMY-LOU looks on gently.*

THEODORE

Look, trust me, Elizabeth, this is going to be a lot easier if we just tell everyone all together.

BETH

No, please, Laurie./ Don't!

THEODORE

Everyone! March women, come to the parlour! (*THE SISTERS and MRS. MARCH start entering*) Hannah, you might as well hear it, too...No, she's gone to the station, that's right. Okay.

MARMEA

Elizabeth, what happened to your hand?

THEODORE

Elizabeth, as you all know is a great artist and she drew, on her slate, a picture of Mr. – Oohhh eerrmm, whatever his name is – that useless teacher at the all-girls school. Anyway, I believe, she owed some other girls some limes? And couldn't deliver. So, in exchange for her debt they agreed, no, they bullied her into drawing a portrait of that sad excuse for a teacher and when he saw how talented she was, must have gone wild with jealousy and, rulered her hand. End of Story. Well, that part of it anyway.

MARMEA

(*To ELIZABETH who is still whimpering*)

Is this true?

THEODORE

Of course it is, why would she lie? You have brought her up better than that, Mrs. March. Just pull her out of school and teach her here instead. (*Indicating AMY-LOU*)

*The room is silent.*

MARMEA

Elizabeth, I cannot abide a man striking a child. I will write and inform the school that you are being removed from their care. And, as Laurie has wisely stated, he can educate you here.

THEODORE

Me? No, I thought Amy-Lou would be best placed to...

MARMEA

As I am to be away awhile Amy-Lou will be busy tending my duties as well as already teaching Jo and Meg.

THEODORE

(*Aside*)

Oh, this is definitely not an accurate plot point. What on earth can I teach her without the internet.

MARMEA

You are all not to forget to call on the Hummels. And Meg, you have promises to Mr. Lawrence, too. I don't know how long I will be absent...

THEODORE

You're going away because Mr. March is sick?

MARMEA

Correct

THEODORE

Oh, that's good.

MARMEA

I beg your pardon?

THEODORE

What? No not good that he's ill, of course not. I meant that it must be calming to know that your daughters will all be happily engaged with their duties and properly cultured whilst you are away and errrr...

*HANNAH enters.*

HANNAH

There is a train leaving tonight, Marmee. You must make haste.

MARMEA

Yes, but of course.

*MARMEA and HANNAH exit quickly as  
LIGHTS FADE OUT.*

END ACT ONE

## ACT TWO

### SCENE 1

#### Meg is ill

AT RISE: *THEODORE is asleep on the seat. He starts to fidget then suddenly wakes up and shouts.*

THEODORE

Jumanji! (*Looks around in shocked silence*) I'm still here. I thought it might be like that film "Jumanji" where you have to keep playing until the end no matter how perilous the journey and shout the title of the game on top of a mountain with a gem in your hand. (*Looking out the window and thinking*) I don't revel in the idea of climbing that manor house and yelling from the roof top "Little Women!" when one of the sisters agrees to marry me. It seems a little archaic...Uggh, marriage? I have been swept into this life without living it and yet I seem to know it so well. I wonder what day it is as yesterday, by my memory, it was Christmas day. (*Looking back out the window*) But of course, the cow's had a calf. It must be early spring. Every time I wake up we've jumped three months! Is Mrs. March still away? What is going on here? I am so lost. (*Thinks*) Is it my job to steer the story onward? I, ohhh, if that is the case, Oh man! I've got to be rejected in a marriage proposal and then I go on to... Oh what else happens?

*THEODORE appears confused and frustrated as AMY-LOU and BETH enter.*

AMY-LOU

Are you sure you are prepared for a whole year away with Aunt March?

BETH

I am ready, thanks to your teaching. I am off to "Viva la France" (*Laughing*) even if it has to be with Aunt March. But I will be at the college mostly so I can endure. (*Smiling*) I have had years of practice with you, dear sister.

AMY-LOU

Do not jest so, for it was supposed to be I entrusted with the task of accompanying Aunt March, as well you know. All those hours spent reading and tending to her...

BETH

Please don't be jealous for I am sure you recall my unkindness the last time this was mentioned... (*Quickly cosying up to her*) ...for which you completely and absolutely forgave me, remember?

AMY-LOU

*(Deep breath)*

Yes, I do remember. Which is why I was simply enquiring as to your preparedness for such a tedious adventure.

BETH

Amy-Lou?

AMY-LOU

I am happy for you. Okay? I said it. I am happy that you're going. I suppose I have no choice since you'll turn my papers into cinders...

BETH

Please don't retell this event. *(Pause)* This was my most melancholic moment and I am embarrassed that you had to suffer it. You may have forgiven me, but I am not sure I can ever truly forgive myself.

AMY-LOU

Oh, you must Elizabeth, you were young and I was... Well, it wasn't a very good play anyway so I think you did the rest of us a favour actually.

*BETH laughs a little; close to tears remembering the shame she felt for burning the manuscript.*

BETH

Oh, Amy-Lou, I will miss you...

*BETH and AMY-LOU hug as JO enters followed by MEG who looks ill.*

MEG

I have been going these last months alone to tend to the Hummels and the baby has not improved. I fear the worse. *(Coughing)*

JO

We all said we would take a break from our pilgrimage just for a few weeks. It cannot be helped if you are too stubborn in your charity...

MEG

Marmea said to continue in our care of, *(Coughs again trying to respond)*, care of the...

*MEG can't carry on – THEODORE preps himself to catch her.*

AMY-LOU

Meg, you are unwell

MEG

No, I'm just/ a little...

BETH

/Did you say the Hummels Baby is still sick?

MEG

Very.

BETH/JO

Oh dear.

MEG

We all promised Marmee we would all—

THEODORE

Oh sh [shit]...

*MEG collapses into LAURIE. He catches her and struggling, helps her to the chair.*

THEODORE, *Cont'd*

...Help me get her into the chair. Hannah! Megan, don't do this, please. Why do we have to do this part of the story?

*MEG is not responding in her collapsed state. HANNAH enters.*

HANNAH

Megan? Is she not quite herself?

BETH

Laurie, what is happening?

THEODORE

Strep A. Send for a Doctor. Now! Please Hannah.

*HANNAH nods and starts to exit.*

AMY-LOU

To check on the Hummels?

THEODORE

No! for Meg. But, yes actually, the Hummels too. I mean the baby is, the baby will already be d— [Dead]... Hannah, send Mr. Brookes to the Hummels and ask my Grandfather to call for a Doctor for here right away.

HANNAH

Yes sir, of course. (*Exits*)

THEODORE

*(Asking himself)*

What happens now? Which one of you hasn't had Scarlet fever before? (*Checking MEG's temperature and pulse*)

AMY-LOU

*(Shocked and worried)*

Scarlet fever?

THEODORE

Josephine. It must be, in this one, it's got to be Jo, the youngest.

BETH

Jo has never had the illness.

THEODORE

Right, well she must go away, I mean live away for a week or two. She can go to Aunt March's.

JO

Not Aunt March's!

BETH

Oh, but we are supposed to be—

AMY-LOU

Of course she can if that is for the best. Jo. *(Beckoning her off)* I will make the arrangements with Hannah when she returns with the Doctor. Come, Josephine, you must prepare items to take. Quickly. *(Ushers JO off)*

BETH

But what about France?

AMY-LOU

It can wait, can it not?

BETH

But you said you were happy for me.

AMY-LOU

Don't be self-centred, Beth. *(Pointedly)* Look at Meg. Don't you remember what happened last time?

BETH

Yes, but she got better, didn't she? She'll get better again whether I'm here or not.

AMY-LOU

Sometimes the right choice is the hardest choice. Jo will go to Aunt March's and your jaunt can wait.

BETH

Oh, but Amy-Lou...

AMY-LOU

Stop this whining at once and think of your sister.



*BETH turns to sit with MEG. AMY-LOU and THEO look very concerned.*

THEODORE

I will send for your mother, she should be here.

MEG

*(Pipes up weakly)*

Please don't concern her.

*THEO shushes and comforts her.*

THEODORE

I have to, Megan; you are very sick. I don't think any of you quite realise how... I told Marmea not to send her to the Hummels household because I knew that...

JO

*(Fighting her way back in with a small bag)*

Knew what?

AMY-LOU

What did you know, Teddy?

THEODORE

That illnesses like the one the Hummel baby has are very contagious and that one of you would be very likely to get sick from it, too.

AMY-LOU

How could you possibly have known that? Specifically, that it was going to be Megan that became ill? How could you have known this?

THEODORE

Well initially I thought it would be... [Beth; like in the original story]... Statistically speaking, it's, well...Megan was more likely to contract the illness for sure from having direct contact at the source of sickness. All of you were likely to become carriers but Megan was... *(Realising they all know this)*...She was ill before and really badly with it. You all knew that and you still let her go?

AMY-LOU

I, she...Megan has a mind of her own...If Marmea suggested...and she can be persistent and quiet in the completion of her, our, given tasks. Oh, no. Is this our fault?

THEODORE

You are never to think that. Take Josephine away, Amy-Lou. It is not safe in here. *(JO and AMY-LOU exit concerned)* I will send for Marmea. Megan, she should be here.

MEG

*(Delusionally)*

I am fine... I just need to...

THEODORE

Megan you are unwell. Rest a while.

*THEODORE goes to exit as HANNAH rushes in.*

HANNAH

The Doctor has been sent for.

THEODORE

Good. Let her rest until he is here. Elizabeth can sit awhile with her.

*HANNAH exits. BETH looks annoyed towards MEGAN then goes to her side as well and mellows. THEODORE watches this and then exits – his next aim is to write to MRS. MARCH to come home.*

BETH

Bad timing, little sister. (*Comforts her as MEG whimpers*) Shhh, it's okay. You're going to be fine.

*AMY-LOU listens, unseen, from the doorway, holding blankets for MEG.*

MEG

I am sorry, Elizabeth.

BETH

(*Joking*)  
Will you be quiet for once.

MEG

(*Laughs very weakly*)  
You can go with Aunt March soon. I promise. I know it won't be long until I die. I can feel it.

BETH

What do you mean?

MEG

I hear the whispers. All of you say I am weak...

BETH

We are not being... We are only concerned.

MEG

It is alright Beth. I feel it too. I sensed it the last Autumn. The quiet grip of death's hand.

BETH

Don't talk like that, little sister. If the others were to hear you talking like this, I cannot imagine how she would... (*MEG coughs painfully as BETH comforts her*) Now, now, Marmee will be here soon.

MEG

Can you tell them, Papa and Marmee? So I do not have to?

BETH

I shall tell them you insist on improving with the care of Laurie and Amy-Lou/ and

MEG

/Please. I cannot bear to. (*Momentary pause*) Look after them when I am gone.

BETH

No, stop...

MEG

Tell them It is God's will...

BETH

God's will hasn't met mine yet...

MEG

They should be contented. You all should. Go on living, Elizabeth. I know my life has held very little meaning but you can make sure...

BETH

Stop talking like that, Meg. (*Getting angry and sad but stopping herself*) You must rest.

MEG

I am quite exhausted. I shall just close my eyes. Will you stay by me awhile till I am asleep? (*Falls asleep half way through sentence*)

BETH

Of course, dear sister. Sleep now.

*BETH snuggles into her and falls asleep, too, as  
LIGHTS FADE.*

## SCENE 2

### Marriage proposal

AT RISE: *AMY-LOU Enters from her watchful position to make MEG a little more comfortable. THEODORE enters with water for her to drink, placing it close by. They put her feet up. She seems asleep. BETH sleeps uncomfortably next to her on the floor.*

AMY-LOU

You have been so good to this family since your return. It is as though you never left.

THEODORE

*(Staring out the window – could be summer now)*

I feel as if I shall never leave again.

AMY-LOU

Is that such a bad thing?

THEODORE

Maybe not. Life here is, enjoyable, even if a little predetermined.

AMY-LOU

How do you mean?

*THEODORE thinks how to not upset AMY-LOU. It won't be easy. How is he to explain that their social norms meant everything was planned out from the moment their gender was identified at birth?*

THEODORE

Well, a lot of the things that happen in the March family are just very stereotypical of the time in which they live. All the things that take place here – is probably because – that is just how it is supposed to be.

AMY-LOU

Are you insinuating that our lives are predictable?

THEODORE

Well...in a way, yes, but not because—

AMY-LOU

And it is because I am a woman? And my sisters and I should act in a certain manner and take our place in society in a foreseen—

THEODORE

It isn't only women that have probable outcomes, it is all people. Men have for years had to—

AMY-LOU

Do you have the audacity to tell me that men away at war are only there because it is their duty, their place, what is expected, not their own honourable course of action in order to protect—

THEODORE

Isn't it expected of them? Are they given a choice when there is a war on whether they go and fight or stay home and be what they are needed to be more directly for their family?

AMY-LOU

Well, no, not exactly...

THEODORE

No, they only feel that sense of duty because every man before them played the same part. History tends to repeat itself, Amy-Lou. The story is always the same. Someone rich wants more riches. Someone in power upsets the peace and is overthrown. You misunderstand my statement. History is not all bad and an orthodox way of living has its appeal, I imagine. The customs of today are the foundations on which tomorrow is built. You may think I say you are playing a part, as a woman, but playing your part as Amy-Lou is a more vital role that you must play.

AMY-LOU

You often address me in a way most peculiar...I am quite sure frowning this much is no good for one's complexion.

THEODORE

My mum always said "the wind'll change and it'll stay like that".

*They both calm down a bit and connect enough that THEODORE can propose.*

AMY-LOU

You remember your parents well?

THEODORE

How could I forget them? Oh, you mean in this, from the... [story]. Yes, I think I remember them. Can we change the subject?

AMY-LOU

I meant no harm.

THEODORE

I know you didn't. I just...I don't remember much about them, that's all. And Laurie's...My Grandfather doesn't speak of them. I don't think he liked the mother. In fact I can't recall meeting Mr. Lawrence until I was sent here after the parents...[died]. He has been kind but if ever I ask him about my father he calls for Mr. Brookes to help me continue in my studies, declaring I must fill my head with "more meaningful ways of distraction." I don't know what he's saying when he says that really.

AMY-LOU

*(Takes his hand)*

Perhaps he struggles to talk about his feelings for the simple reason he is a man. Or that he has also suffered the loss of his son against the natural order of things? I cannot begin to imagine what it must be like for a father to lose a son.

THEODORE

*(Absentmindedly)*

Or a daughter... *(Looks at AMY-LOU intently)*

AMY-LOU

Why are you looking at me like that, Teddy?

THEODORE

*(Aside)*

Here goes nothing. *(To AMY-LOU)* Do you think it possible, Amy-Lou, that we could ever be more than friends?

AMY-LOU

Why you are like a brother to us all, Teddy, and we are well-matched in that friendship.

THEODORE

Don't say that, Amy-Lou. It makes it...weird. I have to ask, would you consider, if you have no other, alternative... what I mean to ask is...Will you one day become my wife?

AMY-LOU

Yes!

THEODORE

What?!

AMY-LOU

I said yes! I will marry you.

THEODORE

What?! That wasn't supposed to happen. Was it? I don't remember her saying yes...

AMY-LOU

I'm joking. *(Pause)* You are joking? Of course I won't. *(You daft sod)* You are my best friend and I will not allow society to force marriage upon us merely through the chance that you are a boy and I a girl. Why cannot we simply be friends? You know not every maiden wishes to marry. We are quite suited to a life separate from all of that. Aunt March may not be a fine example, but she is an example of one lady in our life who makes the dream possible for women to stand on their own two feet and satisfy their own needs without having a brooding husband to mollify. *(Pause)* I will, of course, keep you be my side all my life...but to marry you? I am sorry, I cannot. Do not be shunned by this matter for we are very good friends, Master Lawrence. I cannot imagine it any other way.

THEODORE

*(Beat)*

Thank God for that. You, you got me then. Well said. I don't understand why people feel the need to marry anyway ...

*JO bursts in with utter excitement.*

JO

Mr. Brookes and I are engaged!

AMY-LOU/THEODORE

Now what?!

JO

I could not stand living with Aunt March another moment. I sent her gardener to fetch Mr. Brookes at once to save me from her tedious conversation.

AMY-LOU

You did what? I have a good mind to...

JO

Please don't rebuke me, Amy-Lou. For you would have run a mile if you heard of her opinions. Aunt March was discussing her wealth and how there are very few ways for a woman to make money. She promised me that if I married for money she would look kindly upon me in her will. But as she spoke, I could only think of Mr. Brookes and penniless love. So, I called for him to rescue me. Is that so bad?

THEODORE

No, this is good! This is great!

AMY-LOU

Is it? Mother will not allow this... Jo, you are only—

THEODORE

Old enough to marry if she wants to. Just because we are not well-suited, we do not have to be bitter for those that do enjoy the cage of wedlock if it calls to them, Amy-Lou. Let her be conjugal with your blessing and do not allow anger to guide your judgement. I can vouch for Mr. Brookes. Even you, Amy-Lou, must admit it sounds rather sweet, actually, him rushing to a lady's aid. Do tell Miss Jo, are you planning to marry soon?

BETH

*(Wakes up)*

Who's getting married?

JO

I am. And I really want to. He is ever the gentleman, Amy-Lou. And has waited all these months. Listen to me, sisters, he had already arranged it with Papa before father left. We are allowed to marry. The only condition set down by Papa was that it had to be if I wanted it to be so.

BETH

And you do

JO

Yes

AMY-LOU

*(Pause)*

If you are to marry, Josephine, we will lose you.

JO

*(Almost laughing)*

You will not. Once a delegate of a secret society, however long ago it was formed, always a member.

THEODORE

The Pickwick Club!

MEG

*(Wakes up and proclaims weakly)*

Here, here.

JO

Megan! *(Hurrying over)* Are you better? I have missed you. Staying with Aunt March was fiendish without you all for company.

MEG

I am well enough to stand and take a stroll. *(Tries)* If someone will assist me.

*They all rush to help her as MRS. MARCH and MR. MARCH ENTER.*

MARMEA

Megan... *(Hurrying to hug and help her)* You should be resting in bed, my dear.

MEG

I have rested and can perhaps walk awhile before I retire.

*MARMEA leads MEG to MR. MARCH. He takes her hand, reassuringly.*

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**

**CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE FOR PROPS LIST**



**PROPERTIES**

*(Additional props may be added)*

Little parcels from Theo's pockets

Tea tray, tea cups etc is a motif repeated throughout,

Telegrams

Books

Plates of toast and boiled eggs

A table laid out with dishes and trays of food (Delivered by Mr Brookes from Mr Lawrence)

Blankets

Glasses of water

Baskets

Shawls

Small Christmas Decorations