

Callbale

Act III LITTLE WOMEN Act III



look in her face that I don't understand. It isn't like Beth—and it worries me.

Jo: Have you asked her about it?

MARMEE: I've tried once or twice—but she's either evaded my questions, or looked so distressed that I stopped. I never force my children's confidence—and I seldom have to wait for it long. *(She glances at Jo—then resumes her sewing.)*

Jo: I think she's growing up, and is beginning to dream dreams, and have hopes and fears and fidgets, without knowing why, or being able to explain them. Why, Mother, Beth's seventeen—but we don't realize it and treat her like a child.

MARMEE: *(Sighs)* So she is! Dear heart, how fast you do grow up.

Jo: *(Laughs)* Can't be helped, Marmee—so you must resign yourself to all sorts of worries, and let your birds hop out of the nest, one by one. *(Rises and crosses to r. of easy chair.)* I promise never to hop very far, if that is any comfort to you. *(Perches on the arm of MARMEE's chair.)*

MARMEE: *(Rests her sewing in her lap and takes Jo's hand tenderly)* It's a great comfort, Jo. I always feel strong when you are at home. All those months you were in New York writing I felt lost.

Jo: *(Kisses MARMEE)* Did you, Marmee?

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MARMEE: *(Nods)* Meg married and in a home of her own. Amy in Europe with Aunt March.

Jo: I won't go back to New York if you really need me, Marmee.

MARMEE: No, Jo—you must go back if you think it best. But before you go—well, I leave Beth to your hands. She'll open her tender little heart to her Jo sooner than to anyone else. Be very kind, and don't let her think anyone watches or talks about her. If she would only get quite strong and cheerful again, I shouldn't have a wish in the world.

Jo: Happy woman! I've got heaps.

MARMEE: My dear, what are they?

Jo: *(Shakes her head)* I'll settle Bethy's troubles—and then I'll tell you mine.

(HANNAH, a middle-aged, kindly-looking woman, wearing a black dress and apron, enters door L.)

HANNAH: Excuse me, Mrs. March, but the butcher's here and —

MARMEE: *(Rises and puts her sewing on the mantel-piece)* Oh, thank you, Hannah! I'll go right out and see him. *(She crosses up to door L. and exits.)*

Jo: Well, Hannah—how does it seem to have me home again?

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Act III LITTLE WOMEN Act III



HANNAH: Like old times, Miss Jo! The house has been mighty quiet with only Bethy.

Jo: Doesn't Laurie come over often the way he used to?

HANNAH: Not so much nowadays. He's busy with his college and I guess he don't get much time. I know Beth misses him. She often sits by the window there—looking so wistfully over to the Lawrence house—

MARMEE: (*Offstage L.*) Hannah!

HANNAH: (*Goes to door L.*) Yes, ma'am! (*Turns to Jo.*) Maybe you can cheer Beth up a bit, Miss Jo. (*She exits L.*)

Hannah rises— a thought suddenly strikes her. She speaks *half-aloud*) Mercy on me—Beth loves Laurie! I never dreamt of such a thing. What *will* Mother say? I wonder if he —? If he shouldn't love back again, how dreadful it would be. (*With sudden defiance.*) He must! I'll make him! (*Crosses hastily to window. Whistles shrilly. LAURIE, offstage R., whistles an answering call from a distance. Jo calls out window.*) Come over, Teddy! I want to see you!

LAURIE: (*Offstage R.*) I'll be right over, Jo!

Jo: (*Comes c., deep in thought and musing aloud*) Oh, dear, we *are* growing up with a vengeance! Meg married—Amy in Paris—and Beth in love. I'm the only one that has sense enough to keep out of mischief. (*Sits in easy chair. Thinks for a moment.*) Who