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AMY: (To MEG as she goes upstairs) I—I—almost drowned! Oh, Meg—I——

(MEG and AMY exeunt upstairs. Jo takes off her coat and hat and hangs them on the settle. Comes down into the room with MARMEE.)

MARMEE: Now, Jo—tell me all about it. (Sits in easy chair by fire.)

Jo: (Kneels at MARMEE's feet) Oh—Marmee! It was all my fault! Amy and I quarrelled—and then I went skating with Laurie. Amy followed us—but I wouldn't speak to her—because I was cross—— (Sobs.)

MARMEE: (Gently) Go on, dear!

Jo: Laurie told me the ice was thin in the middle of the river—and to keep near shore. I—I should have warned Amy—but I didn't. I skated off with Laurie—and—and the next thing we knew we heard Amy scream. She was in the middle of the river and the ice had broken. Oh, Marmee—my heart almost stopped! If it hadn't been for Laurie—Amy would have been drowned.

MARMEE: (Anxiously) Laurie's all right?

Jo: Yes. He left us at the gate to go home and change his wet clothes.

MARMEE: Did Laurie go in the river for Amy?

Jo: Almost. He got a fence rail and crawled out on the

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ice to Amy and got her out! Oh, Marmee—if she had drowned it would have been my fault. It's my dreadful temper! I try to cure it. I think I have—and then it breaks out worse than ever. Oh, Marmee—what shall I do? What shall I do?

MARMEE: (Gently stroking Jo's head) Watch and pray, dear! Never get tired of trying—and never impossible to conquer a fault.

Jo: You don't know—you can't guess how bad it is! It seems as if I could do anything when I'm in a passion. I get so savage, I could hurt anyone—and enjoy it. I'm afraid I shall do something dreadful some day—and spoil my life, and make everybody hate me. Oh, Mother, help me—do help me!

MARMEE: Jo, dear, we all have our temptations, some far greater than yours, and it often takes us all our lives to conquer them. You think your temper is the worst in the world—but mine used to be just like it.

Jo: (Looks up at MARMEE in surprise) Yours—Mother? Why, you are never angry.

MARMEE: I've been trying to cure it for forty years—and have only succeeded in controlling it. I am angry nearly every day of my life, Jo—but I have learned not to show it. And I still hope to learn not to feel it—though it may take me another forty years to do so.

Jo: Mother, are you angry when you fold your lips

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tight together, and go out of the room sometimes, when Aunt March scolds, or people worry you?

MARMEE: Yes. I've learned to check the hasty words that rise to my lips. And when I feel that they mean to break out against my will—I just go away for a minute, and give myself a little shake, for being so weak and wicked.

Jo: How did you learn to keep still? That's what troubles me—for the sharp words fly out before I know what I'm about. And the more I say the worse I get—till it's a pleasure to hurt people's feelings, and say dreadful things. Tell me how you do it, Marmee dear.

MARMEE: My good mother used to help me ——

Jo: As you do us ——

MARMEE: But I lost her when I was a little older than you are, and for years had to struggle on alone, for I was too proud to confess my weakness to anyone else. Then your father came, and I was so happy that I found it easy to be good. But, by and by, when I had four little daughters around me, and we were poor, then the old trouble began again—for I'm not patient by nature, and it tried me very much to see my children wanting anything.

Jo: (*Strokes MARMEE's hand*) Poor Mother! What helped you then?

MARMEE: Your father, Jo! He never loses patience——

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never doubts or complains—but always hopes, and works, and waits so cheerfully, that one is ashamed to do otherwise before him. He helped and comforted me, and showed me that I must try to practise all the virtues I would have my little girls possess, for I was their example.

Jo: (*Rises*) Oh, Mother, if I'm ever half as good as you, I shall be satisfied.

MARMEE: I hope you will be a great deal better, dear. But you must keep watch over your "bosom enemy"—as Father calls it—or it may sadden, if not spoil, your life.

Jo: (*Kisses MARMEE*) I'll try, Mother—I truly will!

(*AMY, wearing a bathrobe and slippers, comes down stairs and into the room.*)

AMY: (c.) Jo!

Jo: (*Turns and rushes to AMY*) Amy! (*Puts her arms around AMY.*)

AMY: Jo—I—I'm sorry I burnt your book. I ——

Jo: (*Kisses AMY*) Oh—Amy! I'm sorry I was cross. I ——

MARMEE: You had better come over here by the fire, Amy—where it's warm.

AMY: (*Crosses to hassock down L. and sits*) Oh, Marmee! You don't know how glad I am ——

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