

Act II LITTLE WOMEN Act II



into any engagement at present—so please say no more, but let us be friends as we were." (Turns to Jo.) That's what I'd say.

Jo: (Rises) H'm! That's stiff and cool enough. I don't believe you'll ever say it—and I know he won't be satisfied if you do. If he goes on like the rejected lovers in books, you'll give in, rather than hurt his feelings. (Strolls up to window.)

Meg: (Firmly) No, I won't! I shall tell him I've made up my mind, and shall walk out of the room with dignity. I shall —

Jo: (Looks out window) Christopher Columbus! Look—out the window!

Meg: (Rises—startled) What —

Jo: (Comes c.) It's Brook! And he's coming to call.

Meg: (Frightened) Oh, my gracious!

Jo: Now then—we'll see!

Meg: Oh, dear!

(Door-bell tinkles offstage R.)

Jo: (Goes up to arch) I'll let him in. (Turns to Meg.) Remember now, Meg—what you're going to say!

Meg: (Thoroughly frightened) D-don't leave me, Jo! I — I —

(Jo exits down hall R. Meg hastily smooths her dress

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and pokes at her hair. After a moment Jo reënters hall with JOHN BROOK. Brook is a good-looking young man with a rather serious manner. He is dressed in neat-appearing clothes appropriate to the time of year and period.)

Brook: (To Jo—very nervously) Good-afternoon! I—er—I came to get my umbrella—er—that is, I mean—er—how is Beth to-day?

Jo: (Nervously confused) It's very well—she's in the rack—I mean—Beth's much better now, thank you! I—er—I'll get your umbrella. (She exits hastily down hall to L.)

(Brook enters the room.)

Brook: Good-afternoon, Margaret!

Meg: (Frightened—retreats from Brook) Mother'll be glad to see you. Please sit down—I—I'll call her. (Starts up to arch.)

Brook: (Gently takes Meg's hand and stops her) Don't go! (Softly.) Are you afraid of me, Margaret?

Meg: How—how could I be afraid of you when you've been so kind to Father and Mother? I only wish I could thank you for it.

Brook: Shall I tell you how?

Meg: (Frightened) Oh, no, please don't—I—I'd rather not.

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Call back

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BROOK: (*Tenderly*) I won't trouble you—I only want to know if you care for me a little, Meg. I love you so much, dear.

MEG: (*Softly—timidly*) I don't know.

BROOK: (*Persuasively*) Will you try and find out? I want to know so much. I can't go to work with any heart until I learn whether I am to have my reward in the end or not.

MEG: I—I'm too young —

BROOK: (*Eagerly*) I'll wait! And in the meantime—you could be learning to like me. Would it be a very hard lesson, dear?

MEG: Not if I chose to learn it, but —

BROOK: Please choose to learn, Meg. I love to teach, and —

MEG: (*Suddenly petulant—draws away from BROOK*) I don't choose. Please go away and let me be!

BROOK: (*Anxiously*) Do you really mean that?

MEG: Yes, I do! I don't want to be worried about such things. Mother says I needn't—it's too soon—and I'd rather not.

BROOK: Mayn't I hope you'll change your mind, by and by? I'll wait, and say nothing till you've had more time. Don't play with me, Meg—I didn't think that of you.

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MEG: (*With naughty satisfaction*) Don't think of me at all! I'd rather you wouldn't.

BROOK: Oh, Meg, I —

(AUNT MARCH suddenly enters the arch from the hall.)
AUNT MARCH is a peppery old lady of nearly seventy. She wears clothes that are old-fashioned even for that period. She carries a cane.)

AUNT MARCH: (*Sputtering as she enters*) What's the front door open for? I don't approve of doors being left open.

MEG: (*Aghast as she sees AUNT MARCH*) Why, Aunt March! Where—where did you come from?

AUNT MARCH: I came to see how Beth's getting on. I — Bless me! (*Stops short as she sees BROOK. Looks at him severely.*) Who's this? (*Turns to MEG.*) What are you doing alone in here with this young man?

MEG: (*Embarrassed—introduces BROOK*) This—this is Mr. Brook, Aunt March. Father's friend, you know. I—I'm so surprised to see you!

AUNT MARCH: (*Crisply*) That's evident! What has Father's friend been saying to you to make you look like a peony? There's mischief going on—and I insist upon knowing what it is. (*Taps her cane impatiently on the floor.*)

MEG: Why—er—we—er—were merely talking. Mr.

Brooke/hey

Callou