

# SIDE A

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LITTLE WOMEN:

Act I

woods. *(She observes the departure, totally believing and entranced, then turns back toward the chateau tower—and her reading.)* From one of the windows of the chateau tower, a boy's face looked out, full of eager longing. *(In a boyish voice.)* 'If I may not hunt, I'll away to Yvonne,' he declared. 'She can tell better tales than any in this weary book.' *(Still in boy's voice, but considering her writing.)* ...this...weary...book... *(Suddenly inspired, she writes as she speaks.)* '...the bane of my life!' *(Laughs, pleased with herself. Thinks, gets a sudden inspiration, then, in her own voice, still writing.)* Swinging himself out as if it were no new feat, he climbed boldly down. The moment he touched ground... he raced away to the meadow...where he was welcomed by a rosy, brown-eyed lass. *(In boy's voice, completely caught up in acting both roles.)* 'I will not waste such days poring over dull pages when I should be hunting like a knight and a gentleman.' *(In girl's voice, firm but good-humored.)* 'Nay, dear Gaston, but you ought, for obedience is the first duty of the knight, and honor of the gentleman.' "

MEG *(offstage)*. Jo, Jo, where are you?

JO *(shuts notebook with a sigh of satisfaction)*. Up here, in the garret.

*(JO waves notebook at MEG as she enters.)*

JO *(cont'd)*. There'll be a fine new role for you, Meg, when I've finished my latest story. Yvonne. *(In her boyish voice.)* I'll play Gaston, of course.

MEG. I don't mean to act anymore after the play for Christmas night. I'm getting too old for such things.

Act I

MEG, JO, BETH AND AMY

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JO *(alarmed)*. You're the best actress we've got, and there'll be an end of everything if you quit the boards.

MEG. Never mind that now. Come down. It's nearly time for tea.

JO. Is Marmee home?

MEG. Not yet. I'm sure she's on her way.

*(They exit together. LIGHTS down on garret. BETH is playing PIANO as LIGHTS come up to reveal the living room. AMY is hanging greenery. JO and MEG enter through archway. JO, seeing the decorations for the first time, is deflated by their meagerness. BETH stops playing as JO speaks.)*

JO *(flopping on the floor near the fireplace)*. Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents.

MEG *(primping up a bit of greenery)*. It's so dreadful to be poor.

AMY *(taking a critical look at her decorating efforts)*. I don't think it's fair for some girls to have plenty of pretty things, and other girls nothing at all.

BETH. We've got Father and Mother and each other.

JO. We haven't got Father, and shall not have him for a long time. Perhaps— *(She's about to say "never," and ALL know it.)*

MEG. Please don't say what you're thinking, Jo.

JO *(shrugs)*. It's only because he's far away, where the fighting is.

MEG *(taking on a grown-up tone)*. It's going to be a hard winter for everyone, and Marmee thinks we ought not to spend money for pleasure, when our men are suffering so in the army.

JO. Aunt March gave us each a dollar, and the army wouldn't be much helped by our giving that. I agree not to expect anything from Marmee or you, but I do want to buy the book *Undine and Sintram* for myself. I've wanted it so long.

BETH (*quietly*). I planned to spend mine on music.

AMY (*taking up her sketchpad and pencils: decisively*). I shall get a nice box of Faber's drawing pencils.

JO. Marmee won't wish us to give up everything. Let's each buy what we want, and have a little fun. I'm sure we work hard enough to earn it.

MEG (*in her complaining tone again*). I know I do—teaching those tiresome King children nearly all day, when I'm longing to enjoy myself at home.

JO. You don't have half the hard time I do. How would you like to be shut up for hours with Aunt March, who is never satisfied, and worries you till you're ready to fly out of the window?

BETH. It's naughty to fret, but I do think washing dishes and keeping things tidy is the worst work in the world.

AMY. I don't believe any of you suffer as I do, for you don't have to go to school with impertinent girls, who laugh at your dresses, and label your father if he isn't rich.

JO (*laughing*). If you mean "libel," you'd better say so, Amy, and not talk about "labels," as if Papa was a pickle-bottle!

AMY. I know what I mean, and you needn't be statirical about it.

JO. Statirical?

MEG (*as JO laughs even louder*). Don't peck at one another, children. (*AMY and JO desist, grumpily*.) Don't

you wish we had the money Papa lost when we were little, Jo? Dear me, how happy and good we'd be if we had no worries!

BETH. You said, the other day, you thought we were a great deal happier than the King children, for they fight and fret all the time, in spite of their money.

MEG (*softening*). So I did, Beth, dear. Well, we are a pretty jolly set, as Jo would say.

AMY. Jo uses such slang words! (*JO responds by jamming her hands in her pockets and whistling*.) Don't, Jo, it's so boyish.

JO. That's why I do it.

AMY. I detest rude, unlady-like girls.

JO. And I hate affected, niminy-piminy chits!

BETH (*sweetly, anxious to end their squabbling*). Birds in their little nests agree!

MEG (*motherly again*). Really, girls, you are both to be blamed. You're old enough to leave off boyish tricks, Josephine. It didn't matter so much when you were a little girl, but now you should remember that you're a young lady.

JO. I'm not! I hate to think I've got to grow up, and be "Miss March." I'm dying to go and fight with Papa! (*She collapses on the floor again, at BETH's feet*.)

BETH (*stroking her hair gently, calming her*). Poor Jo! You must try to be contented with making your name boyish, and playing brother to us girls.

MEG. And Papa isn't fighting, Jo! He's a chaplain, giving comfort to the soldiers. (*JO is chagrined by this*.) As for you, Amy, your airs are funny now, but you'll grow up an affected little goose, if you don't take care.



# SIDE B

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LITTLE WOMEN:

Act I

MARMEE (*gathering both JO and AMY close to her*). Jo, you look tired to death. (*To AMY.*) Come and kiss me, baby.

(*HANNAH enters with teapot and cups, sets them on table.*)

HANNAH. Here's tea, ma'am.

MARMEE. Thank you, Hannah.

(*HANNAH smiles and exits, returning several times through the following with food for their tea.*)

MARMEE (*cont'd. To GIRLS*). And now, girls, I've got a treat for you all. (*ALL gather close to the chair as MARMEE brings a letter out of her pocket.*)

JO. A letter!

MARMEE. Yes, a nice long letter. Your papa is well, and thinks he shall get through the cold season better than we feared.

(*LIGHT comes up at L, where MR. MARCH is seen writing the letter MARMEE holds in her hand.*)

JO. Don't I wish I could go as a drummer, or a nurse, so I could help him!

AMY. It must be very disagreeable to sleep in a tent.

BETH. When will he come home, Marmee?

MARMEE. Not for many months, dear, unless he is sick, and we won't ask for him back a minute sooner than he can be spared. He sends all sorts of loving wishes for Christmas, and a special message to you girls: (*Read-*

Act I

MEG, JO, BETH AND AMY

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ing.) "Tell them I think of them by day, pray for them by night—

MARMEE & MR. MARCH. —and find my best comfort in their affection at all times."

MR. MARCH (*reading his letter aloud as MARMEE mouths reading it to GIRLS*). "A year seems very long to wait before I see them, but I know that they will be loving children to you and will do their duty faithfully, so that when I come back to them I may be fonder and prouder than ever of my little women." (*LIGHT fades on MR. MARCH, who exits.*)

MEG (*tearfully*). Oh, Papa!

AMY (*sobbing*). I am a selfish girl! But I'll truly try to be better, so he won't be disappointed in me.

MEG. We all will! I think too much of my looks, and hate to work, but won't anymore—if I can help it.

JO. And I'll try not to be rough and wild.

MARMEE (*smiling gently*). Each of you told what your burden was just now, except Beth. I rather think she hasn't got any.

BETH. Yes, I have! Mine is envying girls with nice pianos, and being afraid of people.

JO (*hugging BETH sympathetically*). Oh, Mouse!

MARMEE (*suddenly serious*). Our burdens are here, our road is before us, and the longing for goodness and happiness is the guide that leads us through many troubles and mistakes. (*A thoughtful pause, then.*) Girls, not far away lies a poor woman, Mrs. Hummel, with a newborn baby. Her children are huddled in one bed to keep from freezing, for they have no fire. There is nothing to eat over there, and they are suffering hunger and cold. Will you give them your tea as a Christmas present?



# SIDE C

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LITTLE WOMEN:

Act I

*back and chairs set up facing the arch for an audience of friends—SALLIE, KITTY and ANNIE—and MARMEE and AUNT MARCH. There is much rustling and giggling behind the blanket as MUSIC fades.)*

AUNT MARCH. Are we ever to see this foolishness—or shall we be kept waiting straight into the new year?

MARMEE. I'm sure the performance will begin very soon, Aunt March.

AUNT MARCH. Good! Sooner begun, sooner done.

*(Ever-patient MARMEE leads AUNT MARCH to a chair. ANNIE, SALLIE and KITTY quickly move to another part of the room.)*

KITTY *(whispering)*. Who is that cross old woman talking to Mrs. March?

ANNIE. Be quiet, Kitty. She'll hear you.

KITTY. Is she the witch in Jo's play?

ANNIE. No! Hush!

SALLIE *(confidentially)*. That's Aunt March. She's very wealthy.

ANNIE *(also confidentially)*. Meg said that when the troubles came—

KITTY *(a bit too loudly)*. When Mr. March lost all his money?

ANNIE. Hush! Yes, trying to help an old friend. Aunt March offered to adopt one of the girls and was offended when her offer was declined.

SALLIE. "Rich or poor," Mr. March told her, "we will keep together and be happy in one another."

KITTY. Imagine if Amy had to live with her!

Act I

MEG, JO, BETH AND AMY

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*(They are shaking their heads and clucking over this when HANNAH enters from behind blanket and signals BETH, who plays a series of chords to announce that the performance will begin.)*

ANNIE. It's time! We'd better find seats!

KITTY *(as ANNIE pulls her toward where AUNT MARCH sits)*. Do we have to sit near the witch?

ANNIE. Do you want to miss Jo's play?

KITTY. No...

ANNIE *(as JO appears in front of archway curtain)*. Then sit!

*(GUESTS are seated. AUNT MARCH admires JO and enjoys the play far more than she would ever admit. The playing area extends DR to include the fireplace. Throughout the performance, HANNAH helps out with costumes, set pieces, etc. All should appear "homemade.")*

JO. "The Witch's Curse," by Jo March. Act One: A gloomy wood.

*(JO disappears behind curtain. BETH plays appropriate MUSIC while MEG appears as HAGAR, the Witch. She cackles and goes to the fireplace, removing the lid from a kettle. Steam pours out. After a moment of oohing and aahing from OTHERS, JO appears as HUGO, the villain, in a long black cape, and paces threateningly.)*

JO *(cont'd)*. By the light of the full moon, I, Hugo, vow that this night I will kill Roderigo, and win the heart of the lovely Zara. *(Calling.)* Hagar! Come forth, witch! HAGAR. What dost thou want of me, Hugo?

HUGO. Two potions: one to ensure Zara's love; another, to destroy Roderigo!

HAGAR. It will be done, my lord. *(Goes to pot and stirs, reciting dramatically.)*

Hither, hither, from thy home,  
Airy sprite, I bid thee come!  
Bring me here, with elfin speed,  
The fragrant philter which I need!

*(AMY enters through arch, a lovely elf, bearing a clear vial, as BETH plays "a soft strain of MUSIC.")*

AIRY SPRITE.

Hither I come,  
from my airy home,  
Afar in the silver moon.  
Take my spell,  
And use it well,  
Or its power will vanish soon.

*(She hands vial to HAGAR, and exits.)*

HAGAR *(resumes her chant, with a darker edge this time).*

Hither, hither, from thy home,  
Darkling sprite, I bid thee come!  
Bring me here, with impish speed,  
The fetid philter which I need!

*(AMY, now an imp, to BETH's accompaniment).*

DARKLING SPRITE.

Hither I come,  
From my dismal home.

Afar in the dark of the moon.

Take my spell

And use it well,

Or its power will vanish soon.

*(She hands HAGAR a cloudy vial, and exits.)*

HAGAR *(to HUGO)*. Sire, thy wishes are granted. Take these vials and do with them as thou wilt.

HUGO *(placing vials in his boots)*. Many thanks, old crone. I go now to Zara's love—and Roderigo's death! *(He exits, laughing evilly, cape swirling.)*

HAGAR *(to audience)*. He thinks to have his way with them both, but it is my way he'll have and no other. In times past, he killed my companions. At last, I will have my revenge!

*(She, too, exits with a laugh and a swirl of her cape. BETH plays interval MUSIC, while OTHERS in audience whisper and giggle together, and a great deal of hammering is heard from behind the archway curtain, along with an "Ow!" or two and hushing sounds. Finally, JO appears.)*

JO. Act Two: The Tower.

*(Archway curtain opens to reveal part of a tower, with AMY as ZARA at a "high" window. Appreciative applause from the audience. MUSIC becomes romantic.)*

ZARA. Oh, that Roderigo would come and free me from this dreary tower prison!



# SIDE D

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LITTLE WOMEN:

Act I

MEG. Jo! Your gown is burnt in back!

JO. Oh, dear, I forgot. Whatever shall I do?

MEG. You must sit still all you can, and keep your back out of sight.

JO (*examining gloves with dismay*). My gloves are spoilt with lemonade. I shall have to go without.

MEG. You must have gloves!

JO. Well, I can't get any new ones! I'll hold them crumpled up in my hand, so no one will know how stained they are.

MEG. I shall be mortified!

JO. Wait! Here's how we can manage: We'll each wear one good one and carry a bad one!

MEG. Your hands are bigger than mine. You'll stretch my glove dreadfully.

JO. Then I'll go without.

MEG (*stands and frantically hands over a glove*). You may have it, you may! Only don't stain it, and do behave nicely. Don't stare, or whistle, or say "Christopher Columbus"!

JO (*with exaggerated primness*). I'll be as prim as I can. (*To BETH and AMY*). Good night, girls.

AMY. You'll tell us all about it?—

MEG. First thing tomorrow. (*She blows them a kiss as she and JO exit.*)

AMY (*picks up invitation and reads*). Mrs. Gardiner would be happy to see the Misses Margaret and Josephine March at a little dance on New Year's Eve. (*Dance MUSIC sweeps over them; AMY holds her arms out to BETH, feigning elegance.*) May I have this dance, Miss Josephine?

Act I

MEG, JO, BETH AND AMY

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BETH (*giggling, she allows herself to be swept into a waltz*). Of course, Miss Margaret!

(*They circle the D area, waltzing gaily and clumsily, then run off R, laughing. MUSIC continues as LIGHTS fade on R, come up L of C, where two far more elegant chairs sit. LAURIE is seated dejectedly on one of them when JO backs in from L, nearly knocking the other over.*)

JO. Christopher Columbus! (*Turns and sees LAURIE, who leaps to his feet. MUSIC continues softly under their dialogue.*) Dear me! I didn't know anyone was here.

LAURIE. Don't mind me. Stay, if you like. (*He offers her a chair. They sit.*) I only came here because I don't know many people, and felt rather strange.

JO. So did I. (*Realizing who he is.*) You live near us, don't you?

LAURIE. Next door.

JO. But you've not been there very long?

LAURIE. No. I was raised abroad, but will go to college here.

JO. We had such a good time over your Christmas present.

LAURIE. Grandpa sent it, Miss March.

JO. But you put it into his head, didn't you, Mr. Laurence?

LAURIE. I'm not Mr. Laurence. I'm only Laurie.

JO. Laurie Laurence—what an odd name!

LAURIE. My first name is Theodore, but I don't like it, for the fellows call me Dora, so I made them say Laurie instead.

JO. I hate my name, too—so sentimental! I wish everyone would say Jo, instead of Josephine. How did you make the boys stop calling you Dora?

LAURIE. I thrashed them.

JO (*laughing*). I can't thrash Aunt March, so I suppose I shall have to bear it.

LAURIE. Don't you like to dance, Jo?

JO. I like it well enough if there's plenty of room. In a place like this I'm sure to upset something, so I keep out of mischief, and let Meg sail about.

(*MUSIC changes to a lively polka.*)

LAURIE. With Mr. Brooke, my tutor! She's very pretty.

JO. Yes, she is. (*Hardly able to keep her toes from tapping to the MUSIC.*) That's a splendid polka. Why don't you go and try it?

LAURIE. I will if you come, too.

JO. I can't.

LAURIE. Why not?

JO (*a beat, then*). Promise you won't tell?

LAURIE. Never!

JO. Well, I have a bad trick of standing too close to the fire, and so I burn my frocks. I scorched this one—(*Shows him burned spot on her dress.*) Meg told me to keep still, so no one would see it. (*LAURIE struggles not to laugh.*) You may laugh if you want to. It is funny. (*They both laugh.*)

LAURIE. We could dance here. No one will see us.

JO. All right!

(*He rises and extends his hand. JO takes it. They polka giddily until the MUSIC fades, then LAURIE returns her to her chair with exaggerated elegance. They sit.*)

JO (*cont'd*). I suppose you'll be going to college soon?

LAURIE. Not for another year or two.

JO. How I wish I was going!

LAURIE. Do you like school?

JO. Don't go to school. I wait on my Aunt March, and a dear, cross old soul she is, too. With a fat poodle, and a nasty parrot that talks Spanish. Once, a prim, old gentleman came to woo her and, in the middle of a fine speech, the parrot tweaked off his wig! (*They both laugh, then continuing, more seriously.*) But Aunt March does have the most wonderful library.

LAURIE. Grandpa lives among his books. If you like them so much, come and see ours.

JO. Thank you! I adore books!

LAURIE. I know. (*Shyly.*) I beg your pardon for being so rude, but sometimes you forget to put down the curtain, and it's like looking at a picture to see the fire, and you and your sisters—with your mother. I haven't got a mother, you know. Or father.

JO. We'll never draw that curtain anymore, and I give you leave to look as much as you like. I just wish, though, you'd come over and see us.

(*MR. LAURENCE enters L. He is surprised to see them, but watches with amusement. They are unaware of his presence at first.*)

LAURIE. Grandpa's afraid I might be a bother to strangers.



# SIDE E

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LITTLE WOMEN:

Act II

*the bed beside BETH. MEG enters with a bowl of water and washcloth.)*

MEG. Jo? Is there any change?

JO. Hmmm? *(Glances toward BETH; touches her face.)*

No. The fever's still very high.

MEG *(bathing BETH's face)*. You must get out a bit, Jo. You've been in this room for days. How can you bear it?

JO *(takes cloth and continues bathing BETH's face)*. I have my sweet, unselfish Beth for company.

MEG. Everyone misses her so—the milkman asks about her every morning. Laurie haunts the house like a restless ghost, and poor Mrs. Hummel came by to beg pardon for her thoughtlessness—and to get a shroud for Minna.

JO. Is Minna gone, too?

MEG. Yes.

JO *(stands and hands MEG the cloth)*. We'd better send for Marmee. Dr. Bangs told us to do it if we could.

MEG. But how can she leave Papa now? He's had a relapse.

JO. Oh, I don't know! But we must do something!

MEG. I wish I had no heart; it aches so.

*(BETH moans and mutters to herself.)*

JO *(with a surge of hope)*. Beth? *(BETH turns away, delirious, still muttering. To MEG:)* She doesn't even know us. Oh, Meg, if life is often as hard as this, I don't see how we ever shall get through it. I can't give Beth up. I can't!

Act II

MEG, JO, BETH AND AMY

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*(LAURIE enters quietly.)*

LAURIE. Jo?

JO *(goes to him)*. Laurie! You mustn't come in here.

*(They step away from bed. LIGHTS dim on MEG and BETH.)*

LAURIE. Brooke has sent word. Your father's improving again.

JO. Oh, I'm so glad!

LAURIE. There's more: I telegraphed your mother yesterday. She'll be here tonight.

JO *(throws her arms around him and kisses him impetuously)*. Oh, Laurie! *(Pulls herself back, coming to her senses.)* Oh! Oh, how dreadful of me! But you were such a dear to go and do it that I couldn't help flying at you!

LAURIE *(grinning broadly)*. I don't mind! *(More soberly.)* I got fidgety, you see, and so did Grandpa. We thought your mother would never forgive us if Beth—well, if anything happened. The late train is in at two a.m. I shall go for her.

JO. Laurie, you're an angel! How shall I ever thank you!

LAURIE *(a beat, then, slyly)*. Fly at me again. I rather like it.

JO *(laughing, and embarrassed)*. Don't tease, but go home and rest, for you'll be up half the night. *(LAURIE smiles at her and exits.)* Bless you, Laurie. Bless you.

*(LIGHTS fade on R as JO returns to BETH's side. LIGHTS come up at L, on AMY at AUNT MARCH's house. AMY*



# SIDE F

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LITTLE WOMEN:

Act II

*enters with her doll and sketchbook, poses doll and begins to sketch the "portrait of Joanna" she will later give to BETH.)*

AMY (*sings to the doll forlornly*).

Oh, dear, what can the matter be?

Dear, dear, what can the matter be?

Oh, dear, what can the matter be,

Johnny's so late at the fair.

(AUNT MARCH enters unseen by AMY, during the next part of the song.)

AMY (*cont'd*).

He promised he'd buy me a basket of posies,

A garland of lilies, a garland of roses,

A little straw hat to set off the blue ribbons—

(AUNT MARCH breaks in, surprising AMY, who snaps shut her sketchbook, grabs her doll, and stands up.)

AUNT MARCH. Very well, girl, I see you, too, suffer from the bad effects of home freedom and indulgence. I must take you in hand and teach you as I myself was taught years ago. You will wash the cups every morning, and polish up the spoons, the teapot, and the glasses till they shine. (*Sweeping AMY offstage before her.*) Then you must dust the room, feed Polly, and comb the dog...

(LIGHTS fade L and come up R. BETH lies very still; JO stands facing away from her, as if at a window.

Act II

MEG, JO, BETH AND AMY

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MEG is kneeling beside BETH, resting her head on the bed.)

JO. How dreary the world looks in its winding-sheet of snow! (MEG suddenly starts, stands up, bends over BETH.) What is it, Meg?

MEG (*horrified; barely able to speak*). She's so... still!

JO. Oh, no! Get Hannah! Hurry! (MEG rushes off. JO bends over BETH, clutches and kisses her hand.) Oh, my Bethy! Oh, Beth, goodbye, goodbye.

(As she is weeping, HANNAH rushes in ahead of MEG and feels BETH's forehead and neck.)

HANNAH (*a beat, then*). The fever's turned. She's sleepin' natural. Praise be given!

JO. Oh, Hannah!

(The sound of sleigh bells is heard in the distance.)

MEG. Listen!

JO (*runs to the window*). It's Marmee!

HANNAH. She's come!

(MEG and HANNAH hurry off. JO kneels beside BETH, takes her hand again and whispers joyfully.)

JO. Beth, dear? It's Marmee. She's home!

(Bells grow louder as LIGHTS fade. LIGHTS come up again on BETH's room. BETH is asleep, with MARMEE

