

JO. Everything can be just as it was, Meg.

MEG. ...what about John?

JO. Forget him! It never happened! Stuffy old—
Brooks has entered.

Brooks.

BROOKS. Meg—I'm. I'm sorry, I've been working so hard, and I was very—cruel, very—

JO. Stuff.

BROOKS. Rigid, yes—unfeeling, very—

JO. Stuffy?

BROOKS. Very stuffy.

Please come home, Meg. I need you. The babies need you.

MEG. No.

—Not stuffy, John.

JO. Meg—

Meg puts her hand on Brooks' cheek.

MEG. Please forgive me, Jo, I was just being—childish.

JO. Didn't you want to talk to—

MEG. Jo. I'm the Marmee, now.

Meg and Brooks leave, hanging on to each other.

JO. O what end of a maiden's art!

She shakes it off, goes back to her book.

I have to write.

She writes in the novel. The next scene is set up behind her as she writes. The clock ticks.

Lights shift. Beth's head hurts.

BETH. Jo? You've been working so hard for months, won't you come out—and talk to me—

Jo slams the book shut.

JO. (Singing.)

Glory glory Hallelujah

Glory glory Hallelujah

Dashwood + Jo

BETH. Jo!

JO. (Dances around her, shrugging on a coat.) I'm done! I'm done! If everything changes, then I'll change everything!

Glory glory Hallelujah!

My Truth is marching on!

We are finished transitioning into:

Scene 5

Her red book in hand, Jo enters the publisher's office, humming—a dark, smoky den. A few gentlemen sit outside. It's pretty seedy. Jo has put on a maroon silk cravat for the occasion, carefully tied. She walks up to the publisher's door, knocks.

Note: This is the first time we have ever really seen Jo out in the "real world." Jo knocks again.

MR. DASHWOOD. (A very thick voice.) Enter.

Jo hesitates.

ENTER.

Jo enters.

Whosat?

He's a bit drunk.

JO. It's Jo. Jo March.

She holds her hand out to shake in a businesslike fashion. He doesn't move.

MR. DASHWOOD. Who?

JO. We met last year? You published my short story in your paper? ... "The Spell of Rodrigo"?

MR. DASHWOOD. I buy a lot of stories.

Pause.

You bring another?

He lights a cigar as she talks.

JO. —I brought something better! My very first, WORLD PREMIERE novel!

MR. DASHWOOD. ...Novel?

JO. A whole work about Rodrigo. An epic! It has everything: love, tragedy, swordfights—pirates, mermaids, dragons, and, and death and birth, and—heavy themes. And it's set—all over Europe! So.

He picks up the book. Pause.

MR. DASHWOOD. I'm not in the market for ladies' novels.

JO. But—you have a press downstairs, with books in the window—

MR. DASHWOOD. Those are works of literature. Not sentimental pieces.

JO. This is—serious. I've worked on it for years.

As he speaks, he casually taps the novel with his cigar—getting ash on it. He eyes her outfit.

MR. DASHWOOD. I assume you're a woman?

She doesn't answer.

Then this is a ladies' novel. Doesn't matter how you dress it up.

He pokes an exploratory finger at her outfit—Jo shies away.

Listen, Miss March—there's a legitimate place for women's voices—bring me another sweet little story, it helps sell powder if I run it next to the ads.

JO. This is a whole book—

MR. DASHWOOD. Fifteen for a story. Put some heaving bosoms in it.

JO. Fifteen?

Last time you paid me thirty.

MR. DASHWOOD. Meow.

He looks her up and down.

—Seems to me that last time, you had a cooler head negotiating for you. Where's your "agent"?

Jo, humiliated, reaches for her book—he pulls it out of her reach. He may catch her hand.

Some gentlemen won't pay a lady at all—but I'm forward-thinking. She can't leave without the book—it's her baby. He leers.

Miss March—a little advice: Next time you step into this world, you bring that "agent"—or your father—or your husband.

He puts his hand on her rear—matter-of-factly, almost casually—she needs the book.

Remember—I'm one of the good ones.

He gives her the book and releases her.

We transition back to the Marches' attic. Beth enters. Jo cradles her book like a baby. She tries to hold herself together. The clock ticks.

~~BETH. How did it go?~~

~~JO. They didn't want me—it.~~

~~*She takes off the cravat—maybe crumpling it up, or very carefully folding it, as if she'll put it in a box and never wear it again.*~~

~~BETH. Are you all right?~~

~~JO. I was just being—childish.~~

~~BETH. Do you want to... do you want to write? Will that make you feel better?~~

~~JO. My stories are lightweight, sentimental—they don't MEAN anything—~~

~~BETH. Oh Jo. Maybe if you tried—writing something real, something from your life—~~

~~JO. My life is—it's—nobody wants to read about that, about a house full of stupid naive little girls, about someone like me, someone awkward and deluded and not a real—a real woman, or—~~

~~BETH. That's not true—~~

~~JO. It is, and wishing it was different won't change anything!~~

~~BETH. Do you want to put on a play, or—~~

~~JO. I'm too old for all that now.~~

~~BETH. Will you tell me a story? A real—~~

~~JO. Beth. STOP.~~