

Jo & Beth

LITTLE WOMEN

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Over the set hangs a Civil War-era photograph of the March girls—on the cusp of being March women. A clock below the portrait ticks. Jo is writing in a red notebook. She is in a masculine outfit—her father's castoffs. Beth sits by Jo's desk, examining a flower. Here and there may be homely pots of flowers—well taken care of, but not too showy.

BETH. Tell me a story, Jo.

JO. (Still writing.) Now?

Beth nods. Jo pastes on a bad mustache.

Once upon a time, there was a WIZARD named RODRIGO, and he cast a TERRIBLE / (SPELL)

BETH. —not that kind of story.

JO. That's what I'm writing, Beth... (Assuming a big, masculine Rodrigo voice.) RODRIGO AND HIS DASTARDLY DEEDS of DEPRAVITY! In this chapter, he finds a beautiful, Scantly Clad, SCREAMING maiden, tied up to an ENORMOUS / (worm)

BETH. —A REAL one.

JO. Those are boring.

Beth stares at her expectantly. She may even pointedly clear her throat. Jo tries to ignore Beth, then—

Once upon a time, there was a little girl, who was being a pest.

BETH. Her name was Beth.

JO. And this little girl had a monster of a sister—

BETH. (Objecting.) Jo!

JO. —that's right, its name was Jo!

BETH. And Beth liked her monster very much. And?

JO. And there were two other sisters in there somewhere. And a mother, and a father.

She takes off the mustache and fiddles with it.

And this family lived in a small house in the shadows of a big city. And outside the city was an even bigger country—

BETH. And that country went to war.

JO. To war with itself.

But even though the father went to fight—

BETH. That was hard—

JO. —even if the world had split apart—that little girl and her monster: together, they felt whole.

BETH. What happened when they grew up?

JO. In this story, they never grow up. They just stay the same, and it lasts forever.

BETH. Nothing lasts forever, Jo.

Tell it again?

Offstage, a dinner bell rings. Both sit up—this means breakfast.

AMY. (Off.) —but I don't WANT to—

Jo may be about to get out of her masculine outfit and into a skirt draped over her chair—but, swiftly, reconsiders—pastes on the mustache again, and exits.

BETH. Jo!

Beth follows her into breakfast as we transition to:

Scene 2

Breakfast in the March household. December, 1861. Amy sits. Meg is doing her hair.

AMY. But I don't WANT to, Meg!

MEG. You're too young to turn your hair up, Amy!

HANNAH. (Off.) MISS AMY, YER NOT WEARING NOTHING BUT BRAIDS, YOU'RE TOO LITTLE!

AMY. I'M NOT LITTLE, HANNAH! I am PRACTICABLY A FULL-GROWN WOMAN!

Hannah barks laughter from the kitchen. Jo has entered in her mustachioed costume, Beth behind her.

—I'm more of a woman than Jo, anyway! (Re: her hair being braided.) OW!

Hannah enters, slams down a plate of breakfast—turns and sees Jo. An unpleasant moment.

JO. (With false innocence.) —what?

HANNAH. (Darkly.) Yer hands clean at least?

Jo turns up her hands, which are covered with ink.

MEG. Ink! Again!

JO. I was writing my play! / I must chase my inspiration in the morning before Aunt March breaks my spirit.

HANNAH. (Under to Meg, re: Jo's outfit.) You gonna do some thing about this?

BETH. Where is Marmee, Hannah? am I supposed to do?

HANNAH. Some creature came begging and your ma went off to see what was needed.

She bustles away.

MEG. Why are you wearing the costume, Jo? We're not rehearsing today.

JO. I'm man of the family, with Father away!