

MRS. MINGOTT. Now stay right there.

*She flips up her fan and sails away, commanding:*

STAY!

JO. Meg, you can't see without your glasses!

MEG. I can so!

JO. How many fingers am I holding up?

MEG. Don't be ridiculous!

*She reaches out to slap the fingers down and misses entirely:*

JO. You're blind!!!! Half-naked and blind.

MEG. Don't talk to me like I'm Amy, Josephine, I am your elder, and what's more, I am ACTING like a LADY!

*She flips open her fan, and, blind, hits herself in the face with it.*

Ow.

*She gropes her way to a wall, then stands. Jo holds her up.*

MRS. MINGOTT. Miss March, Miss Marrich! Look, Cinderella—I have conjured up a wobbly old Prince!

*They bow/curtsy; Meg barely makes it back up.*

JO. It's Mr. Brooks, Meg.

*Meg, who can't see, has no idea who that is.*

MEG. (Mouthing it, unvoiced.) (Who?)

JO. The Laurence boy's tutor.

MRS. MINGOTT. As Miss March is our governess, you two should have PLENTY to talk about— (Struggling to come up with what that is.) lesson plans, and trigonometry, and—and chalk. I insist that you fearsome scholars take a turn about the room, now! Oop!

*She gives an additional tug to Meg's bosom.*

BROOKS. Madame.

*Meg, quite bewildered, curtsies. Still blind, grasps his arm, and is led away onto the dance floor. Mrs. Mingott backs Jo against the wall.*

MRS. MINGOTT. And Miss Josephine! Hm hm hm HM.

*She sizes her up, disdainfully, punctuating each "hm" by hitting imagined flaws with Meg's glasses.*

Jo + Laurie - Ball

(Darkly.) I'll dig up some creature for you, somehow—some way (Jo grabs Meg's glasses.) You stay right there! STAY!

*Mrs. Mingott marches away. Jo, horrified, slides against the wall, trying not to be caught moving, until she reaches a curtained recess. She escapes inside—to find Laurie, who is also hiding.*

JO. Oh!—please excuse me!

*She prepares to back out as speedily as she bounced in. They're very awkward.*

LAURIE. No! Stay.—and I'll go.

*He starts to leave.*

JO. —if I disturbed you, I'm sorry—

LAURIE. I only ducked in here to—to. You know.

JO. Escape?

LAURIE. A fellow refugee, then.

*Pause.*

JO. Don't go away.

—Unless you'd rather.

*Neither of them is sure what to do.*

LAURIE. I think I've had the pleasure of seeing you before, madame.

JO. I believe you live next door. "Sirrah."

*They both almost laugh a little.*

LAURIE. Funny how stiff one gets in these situations. Drag me to a social and I'm a cat on a leash.

JO. (Points to herself.) Dead cat on a leash.

LAURIE. How is your little sister, Miss March?

JO. She's fine, Mr. Laurence. But I'm not "Miss March."—I'm Jo.

*She sticks out her hand in a businesslike manner. Laurie, taken aback, takes it.*

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

*She shakes his hand with great vigor; it is a very new experience for him.*

JO. Laurie Laurence. That's terrific.

LAURIE. My real name is Theodore, but the boys called me Dora, so I thrashed 'em into saying Laurie instead. (*That's not true.*)

JO. (*Impressed.*) Really?

LAURIE. —No.

I've never, um, thrashed anybody. (*Trying to be impressive.*) Yet.

JO. Tell you a secret? —I hate Josephine too.

Do sit?

LAURIE. Thanks awfully. These pumps hurt like the devil.

JO. These boots are dainty little tortures—but as Aunt March says, Let Us Be Elegant Or Die.

*They sit.*

~~LAURIE. ...who's Aunt March?~~

JO. I'm a businessman—lady, I mean, so I wait on my great-aunt for wages, and she's a nasty old cat. But she's taking me to Europe in the new year! Wouldn't bring me along 'til I could pay for my own board, but I've finally saved up enough to go.

And who knows what I can become in Europe?

LAURIE. ...I know something about doing the bidding of cross old people.

JO. D'you work?

LAURIE. No, I get tutored. My grandfather has great plans for me, and bought me out of the draft. I am someday to be a tedious titan of industry! So I must grind away 'til college, where I will learn how to do what I don't wish to do in order that I may do MORE of what I don't like in the future.

JO. Lucky!

LAURIE. What?

JO. —lucky to go to college! How can you complain of that?

*He looks at her.*

—I'm sorry I'm being—I'm so awkward, I always talk too openly. If Meg was here she'd cough herself into a fit over me being boyish.

LAURIE. No, I... I like it.

JO. I'm not very good at being a, you know, a "lady."

LAURIE. I'm not very good at being a "gentleman."

So perhaps we should—be ourselves.

*Pause. She's being very bad by saying this:*

JO. Do you mind if I take these boots off? They're killing me.

LAURIE. —May I do the same?

*They're being very bad. They sit on the floor and take off their boots.*

JO. (*With great relief.*) Christopher Columbus.

*They compare feet.*

Look at them, side by side!

*They wiggle their toes; their feet are almost the same. Perhaps they compare sizes. A happy moment.*

LAURIE. I'd rather be a girl than a boy.

JO. You wouldn't!

LAURIE. Then I wouldn't have to do all the things that men are supposed to: waste away life in billiards and business, march off to war, be as unfeeling as granite!

If I were a lady, I'd compose on the piano all day, and nobody would bother me.

JO. Nobody would bother you except to tell you to wash the dishes, or tend the children, or catch a man before you become an old maid. At least your grandfather has plans for you! I'd like to be a—great writer, or a famous actor, or a soldier alongside my father, but I'm scarcely let out of the house without being told what a disgrace I am! If I were a boy, people would care more about what I *could* do than what I *should* do, and I'd be thought a tremendous talent instead of a—big ugly stone in the flower garden.

LAURIE. Not ugly at all.

(*Getting suddenly shy.*) I mean. I like your—gloves. They're spandy.

JO. "Spandy"!

*She pulls out her notebook and writes in it.*

LAURIE. What's that?

JO. My notebook—I always carry it with me, to write down words for my great novel someday! "Spandy."

*She writes it and puts it away.*