

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:

Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy, +
Hannah

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 HANNAH. (*Under to Meg, re: must chase my inspiration in Jo's outfit.*) You gonna do some-thing about this? breaks my spirit.

BETH. Where is Marmee, MEG. (*Under to Hannah.*) What 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!

AMY. Josephine is so childish, Meg. It is most aggregating.
MEG. (Amy—)

JO. "Aggregating"! That's a new one.

She pulls out a red notebook and writes it down.

MEG. You mean "aggravating," dear.

JO. "Aggregating."

AMY. Ow—

AMY. So what, Jo? A lady should seek to improve her vocabulary.
JO. Vocabulary!

AMY. Stop writing them down!

Jo holds up her book and flips the pages.

JO. Someday, I shall publish the collection!

AMY. You won't!

JO. Will.

AMY. Won't—Josephine.

JO. Will—!

AMY. WON'T—JOSEPHINE.

HANNAH. (*Entering, slams down the syrup.*) GIRLS. EAT. Soldiers are starving in the field!

The girls eat.

JO. (*Sighing as she takes enormous helpings of food.*) I have no appetite.

BETH. Poor Jo. It must be hard to wait on Aunt March all day.

JO. (*Mouth full.*) Torchewr.

She picks mustache out of mouth.

But come the new year, she'll take me to EUROPE!

She bangs on the table in a drumroll of excitement; they all have to steady cups.

MEG. I'd a thousand times rather sit with Aunt March than be the Mingotts' governess, with Mrs. Mingott— (*Putting on a Mingott air.*) of the Manhattan Mingotts—always talking down to me.

BETH. Poor Meg.

AMY. At least neither of you have to go to school, the days are quite intermintable—

JO. (*Pulls out book.*) "Intermintable"!

BETH. Poor Amy—

AMY. —girls laugh at my braids, and sniff because we're poor, and label Papa for being an abolitionist—

JO. "Libel." Labels are for pickle bottles.

MEG. We all got through school, AMY. (*To Meg.*) OW!

Amy, and you'll survive it, too.

AMY. Not Beth! Why did she get to stay home?

Amy's really crossed a line; Meg may smack her a little, lightly—Beth quails under the attention.

BETH. Because I am—stupid.

JO. (*Very very angry.*) Beth had nervous episodes!

AMY. I'M NERVOUS!

MEG. Amy, hush! *—*

~~AMY. Why does she get one thing and me another?~~

~~MEG. Different people need different things.~~

~~JO. And you need to go to school—for you have a terrible case of the (*Moron!*)~~

~~MEG. JO—~~

~~JO. —I don't know that it's curable!~~

~~AMY. You—YOU'RE THE MORON, YOU STUPID INKY STUPID OLD STUPID JOSEPHINE STUPID! When I grow up I am going to run away with a—a prince, that's all!~~

~~JO. "That's all!"~~
~~AMY. And I DON'T need school for that—~~

~~AMY. —and I shall NEVER spoil MY hands with working!~~

~~JO. My hands are inky because I am going to be a great writer and make my mark upon the world!~~

~~*She jumps up on the table to general consternation—"Jo, Jo!"*~~
~~*etc.*~~

~~—and then I'll buy Meg all the dresses she wants and you spelling primers—~~

~~* See overlapping dialogue at end of script.~~