

MEG. You MUST come with me, Jo—

AMY. (*Waving her hand; ripping off her bandage, miraculously healed.*) I will, I will—

MEG. You're too little, Amy!

JO. Meg—

AMY. ERNGH!!!!

MEG. Jo, no no—I work all the time and I want to have an evening in—
you know I can't go unchaperoned—

MEG. And we're growing up now, and that means we must appear in society! I want it—I NEED it so much! PLEASE!!!!

Jo looks at Marmee.

JO. —But I'm the rock.

Amy stomps off. They transition into the ball. Meg nervously adjusts herself.

Mrs Mingott, Jo, Meg Scene 6

The ballroom of Mrs. Mingott—of the Manhattan Mingotts. Meg and Jo—aware that they are considered charity cases—are on painful, conscious, anxious display here.

MEG. Do I look all right?

JO. Don't ask me for womanish opinions, Meg, I never say the right thing.

MEG. Just keep it simple, as: "Oh, Jo, your hair looks so well."

JO. (*She's bad at this.*) Oh, Meg, I—like—your...dress.

MEG. (*Playing with it.*) Marmee says I may have a silk when I am married—but I'll be so old by the time that happens!

JO. I should hope so. (*Off of Meg's look.*) —What?

MEG. Why are you holding your pop* like that?

JO. There's a rip in the seat.

* "Pop" is short for "poplin," the fabric used for the March sisters' dresses.

MEG. Can't you hold your gloves over it?

JO. I spilled lemonade on 'em.

MEG. And WHAT is THIS?

JO. A burn. I think.

MEG. Jo, just—stand against the wall, so nobody sees you. But don't put your hands behind you. Or say "Christopher Columbus." Or stare, or bounce, or breathe—(or)

JO. MEG! Tell you what: if you see me doing anything wrong, give me a poke.

MEG. Poking isn't ladylike. I'll give a cough! Like this—

She gives a horrible, hideous cough.

JO. —really?

MEG. —here comes Mrs. Mingott! Jo— (*Fluttering.*) —just stand there normally—

Jo lounges, whistling.

NOT normally! NOT NORMALLY, JO. APPROPRIATELY.

MRS. MINGOTT. Miss Josephine!

Jo salutes bouncily; Meg coughs frantically.

And dear Miss March!

Meg is still hacking away at Jo.

—are you all right?

MEG. Oh! Yes.

MRS. MINGOTT. The governess at the ball! (*This is not a good thing.*) And my heavens, don't you look...smart.

MEG. Thank you?

MRS. MINGOTT. Cinderella before the godmother! Well, poof—here I am: I'll make a princess yet. Oop, (*Adjusts Meg invasively.*) there, there, (*Looks at Meg's glasses.*) no— (*Steals them.*) —and put THESE, just—so— (*Pushes Meg's dress down so her bosom is far more exposed.*) Alakazam.

Jo whistles—not a good whistle. Meg, barely able to see, looks down at her exposed décolletage.

MEG. Oh!

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 Marrrrch! 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 HMM!

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

(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. Now 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.