

**Little Women**  
By Louisa May Alcott  
Adapted for the stage by Matt Buchanan

**Characters** (in order of appearance)

Young Jo\*  
Young Amy\*  
Young Beth\*  
Young Meg\*  
Marmee  
Hannah  
Mrs. Gardiner\*\*  
Sally\*\*  
Boy Guest\*\*  
Young Laurie\*  
Servant\*\*  
Mr. Laurence  
Jenny Snow\*\*  
Mr. Davis\*\*  
John Brooke  
Aunt March  
Mr. March  
Older Amy\*  
Older Meg\*  
Older Laurie\*  
Lad\*\*  
Older Beth\*  
Mr. Scott\*\*  
Lotty\*\*  
Mr. Dashwood\*\*  
Professor Bhaer

\* The roles of Amy, Beth, Jo, Meg and Laurie may be divided at intermission so that one actor plays the character as a child and another as an adult, or they may be played by the same five actors throughout.

\*\*Indicates ensemble role that may be doubled.

*The basic setting is the living room and hearth of the March house. A fireplace, a wide raised platform before the fire, a rocking chair. Other locations in the story are indicated, if at all, by the addition of simple elements such as additional chairs, tables, etc. In this way the March hearth also serves as the Brooke hearth and that of Aunt March, and the March living room as everything from a ballroom to a garret.*

## ACT I

*The March hearth. Jo enters carrying a blue army sock she is knitting. She addresses the audience. As she speaks, Meg, Beth and Amy enter and sit by the fire.*

### JO

It was cold that December evening, but it was warm beside the fire in the little house. The four girls who sat around that cheerful blaze knitting socks for the Soldiers' Aid should have been content, but the prospect of the holiday about to take place seemed dismal. Jo was fifteen, and she was the tomboy and the tartar of the family. As usual she was the first to say what everyone was thinking.

*She joins the others by the fire.*

Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents.

### AMY

I don't think it's fair for some girls to have plenty of pretty things, and other girls nothing at all.

### BETH

We've got Father and Mother, and each other.

### JO

We haven't got Father, and we won't have him for a long time.

### MEG

You know the reason Mother proposed not having any presents this Christmas was because it's going to be a hard winter for everyone. We ought not to spend money for pleasure, when our men are suffering so in the army. We can't do much, but we can make our little sacrifices.

### JO

But I don't think the little we'd spend would do any good. We've each got a dollar, and the army wouldn't be much helped by that. I agree not to expect anything from Mother or you, but I did want to buy a book for myself.

### BETH

*(Quietly)* I planned to spend mine on new music.

### AMY

I shall get a nice box of drawing pencils.

### JO

Mother didn't say anything about our money, and she won't want us to give up everything. Let's each buy what we want, and have a little fun. I'm sure we work hard enough to earn it.

**MEG**

I know I do—teaching those tiresome children nearly all day. *(To Audience.)* Meg, who was sixteen, sometimes wished she could be a “real lady,” and spend her days “taking tea,” and “paying calls.” But with Mr. March far away in the army, all the girls had to make sacrifices. Meg worked as a Governess, and Jo spent her days as paid companion to their cantankerous Aunt March.

**JO**

How would you like to be shut up for hours with a fussy old lady?

**BETH**

It's naughty to fret, but I think washing dishes and keeping things tidy is the worst work in the world. My hands get so stiff, I can't practice well at all. *(To Audience)* Beth was the musician of the family. She was too shy to thrive at school, and did her studies at home as best she could. With her two older sisters away at their jobs and little Amy off at school, it fell to Beth to be the homemaker of the family, but if she complained this once, it was a rarity.

**AMY**

At least you don't have to go to school with impertinent girls, who plague you if you don't know your lessons, and laugh at your dresses, and label your father if he isn't rich.

**JO**

*(Laughing.)* If you mean libel, I'd say so, and not talk about labels as if Papa was a pickle bottle.

**AMY**

I know what I mean, and you needn't be satirical about it! *(To Audience)* Twelve-year-old Amy was the baby of the family, and she really did her best at school, but she was better at drawing than at vocabulary, and her schoolmasters always complained that she filled her primers with pictures of clouds and rabbits.

**BETH**

*(To Audience, and suiting her actions to her words.)* The clock struck six and, having swept up the hearth, Beth put a pair of slippers down to warm before the fire. Somehow the sight of the old shoes had a good effect on the girls. Mother was coming, and everyone brightened to welcome her.

*Jo picks up the slippers and holds them before the fire.*

**JO**

These are quite worn out. Marmee must have a new pair.

**BETH**

I thought I'd get her some with my dollar.

**AMY**

No, I shall!

**MEG**

I'm the oldest—

**JO**

I'm the man of the family now Papa is away, and I shall provide the slippers.

**BETH**

Let's each get her something, and not get anything for ourselves.

*They pause in thought.*

**MEG**

I shall give her a nice pair of gloves.

**JO**

Army shoes, best to be had!

**BETH**

Some handkerchiefs, all hemmed.

**AMY**

I'll get a little bottle of cologne. She likes it, and it won't cost much, so I'll have some left to buy my pencils.

**JO**

Let's let Marmee think we are getting things for ourselves, and then surprise her. We must go shopping tomorrow afternoon. There's so much to do about the play for Christmas night.

**MEG**

I'm not acting any more after this time. I'm getting too old for such things.

**JO**

Ha! You won't stop acting as long as you can trail round in a white gown with your hair down, and wear gold-paper jewelry. *(Jo stalks around in a parody of elegance and they all laugh.)* You are the best actress we've got, and there'll be an end of everything if you quit.

**MARMEE**

*(Entering.)* Glad to find you so merry, my girls. There was so much to do, getting the boxes ready to go tomorrow, that I didn't come home to dinner. Has anyone called, Beth? How is your cold, Meg? Jo, you look tired to death. Come and kiss me, baby.

*The girls rush to hug and kiss Marmee. She addresses the audience as she sits by the fire. The girls scurry around, then join her. Meg brings on a little tea table.*

While making these maternal inquiries Mrs. March got her wet things off and her warm slippers on, and settled down to enjoy the happiest hour of her busy day. The girls flew about, trying to make things comfortable, each in her own way. Meg arranged the tea table. Jo brought wood

and set chairs, dropping, over-turning, and clattering everything she touched. Beth trotted to and fro between parlor kitchen, quiet and busy, while Amy gave directions to everyone. (*To the girls.*) I've got a treat for you.

*Beth and Amy clap their hands.*

**JO**

A letter! A letter! Three cheers for Father!

**MARMEE**

Yes, a nice long letter. He is well, and he sends all sorts of loving wishes for Christmas, and a special message to you girls.

**JO**

(*To Audience.*) Letters were all the March women had of their father that hard winter, but as hard as his absence was to bear, they knew his trials were much worse. Yet this was a cheerful, hopeful letter, full of lively descriptions of camp life, marches, and military news, and only at the end did the writer's heart over-flow with fatherly love and longing for the little girls at home.

**MARMEE**

(*Reading.*) Give them all my dear love and a kiss. Tell them I think of them by day, pray for them by night, and find my best comfort in their affection at all times. A year seems very long to wait before I see them, but I know they will remember all I said to them, that they will be loving children to you, do their duty faithfully, and conquer themselves so beautifully that when I come back to them I may be fonder and prouder than ever of my little women.

**AMY**

I am a selfish girl! But I'll truly try to be better, so he won't be disappointed in me.

**MEG**

I think too much of my looks and hate to work, but I won't any more.

**JO**

I'll try and be what he loves to call me—a "little woman"—and not be rough and wild, but do my duty here instead of wanting to be somewhere else.

**BETH**

(*To Audience.*) Beth said nothing, but wiped away her tears with the blue army sock and began to knit with all her might.

*The girls hug Marmee, yawning, and exit. Marmee pauses for a second, reading over some part of the letter to herself, then smiles and exit, taking the tea table with her. Lighting signals the passage of time. After a pause, Hannah enters the kitchen.*

**HANNAH**

When the four girls came downstairs that Christmas morning they found only old Hannah. She had lived with the family since Meg was born, and was considered by them all more as a friend than a servant.

*The girls enter. Meg carries a basket of gifts.*

**MEG**

Where's Mother?

**HANNAH**

Goodness only knows. Some poor creature came a-beggin', and your ma went straight off to see what was needed. There never was a woman like her for giving.

**JO**

Here she comes! Hide the basket, quick!

*Marmee enters in her outdoor things.*

**GIRLS**

Merry Christmas, Marmee! Many of them! *(Etc.)*

**MARMEE**

Merry Christmas, little daughters. Come gather close. I want to say a word before we sit down. Not far away from here lies a poor woman with a little newborn baby. Six children are huddled into one bed to keep from freezing, because they have no fire. There is nothing to eat over there. My girls, will you give them your breakfasts as a Christmas present?

*Pause, as they contemplate going hungry.*

**JO**

I'm so glad you came before we started to eat!

**BETH**

May I go and help carry the things to the poor little children?

**AMY**

I shall take the cream and the muffins.

**MARMEE**

*(Pleased.)* I thought you'd do it! You shall all go and help me.

*During the following, the girls scramble around putting together baskets of food, and carry it off. Marmee addresses the audience.*

It was a very happy breakfast, and when they went away, leaving comfort behind, I think there were not in all the city four merrier people than the hungry little girls who gave away their breakfast on Christmas morning.

*Marmee exits as Jo enters and addresses the audience as the girls set up for the "performance." Additional girls may enter and sit in the "audience."*

**JO**

The morning charities took so much time that the rest of the day was devoted to preparations for the evening. Being still too young to go often to the theater, the girls put their wits to work, and, necessity being the mother of invention, made whatever they needed. On Christmas night, a dozen girls piled onto the bed, which was the dress circle, and the OPERATIC TRAGEDY began.

*Jo runs off and almost immediately re-enters as Hugo, the villain. After sawing the air with her wooden sword for a moment or two, she strikes a pose.*

**JO/HUGO**

What ho, minion! I need thee!

*Meg enters as Hagar, the witch, with a "cauldron."*

**MEG/HAGAR**

My lord Hugo! What can'st old Hagar, thy miserable servant, do for thee?

**JO/HUGO**

Ah, Hagar, my faithful minion. Hear me well, for I have need of thee. Can'st thou brew a potion that wilt make the fair Zara adore me?

**MEG/HAGAR**

With the greatest ease, master.  
(*Chanting.*) Hither, hither, from thy home,  
Airy sprite, I bid thee come!  
Bring me here, with elfin speed,  
The fragrant philter which I need.

*Beth appears as a lovely Fairy. She is obviously nervous, and speaks (or sings) quietly.*

**BETH/FAIRY**

Hither I come,  
From my airy home,  
Afar in the silver moon.  
Take the magic spell,  
And use it well,  
Or its power will vanish soon!

*She drops a bottle at Meg's feet and vanishes.*

**JO/HUGO**

Ah, faithful Hagar! Is that the potion that will win my love's heart for me?

**MEG/HAGAR**

Aye, 'tis the love potion.

**JO/HUGO**

Thanks, repulsive crone! But I have further need of thee. The varlet Roderigo threatens to upset my plans and carry off my love.

**MEG/HAGAR**

Ah, there can't I truly help you, master.  
*(Chanting.)* Approach now darkly from beyond,  
Come from bog and swamp and pond,  
Bring to me, with awful haste,  
Poison—death at slightest taste.

*Enter Amy as an Imp. She runs frantically around the others several times, tosses a small bottle into Jo's outstretched hands, and exits.*

**JO/HUGO**

At last! This elixir will free me of mine enemies forever! Roderigo, prepare to meet thy doom!  
Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! *(To Audience.)* Jo's sisters considered her a regular Shakespeare for the exciting stories she wrote. By the time this one was over the girls were hungry indeed.

*A table laden with food is wheeled on by Hannah and Marmee.*

**HANNAH**

Just then old Hannah appeared, with Mrs. March's compliments, and would the ladies walk down to supper. This was a surprise even to the actors, and when they saw the table, they looked at one another in rapturous amazement. It was like Marmee to get up a little treat for them, but anything so fine as this was unheard of.

**AMY**

Is it fairies?

**BETH**

Santa Claus.

**MEG**

Mother did it.

**JO**

Aunt March had a good fit and sent the supper.

**MARMEE**

All wrong. Old Mr. Laurence sent it.

**MEG**

The Laurence boy's grandfather?! What in the world put such a thing into his head?

**MARMEE**

Hannah told one of his servants about your breakfast party. He knew my father years ago, and he sent me a polite note this afternoon, saying he hoped I would allow him to express his friendly feeling toward my children by sending them a few trifles in honor of the day.

**JO**

That boy put it into his head, I know he did! He's a capital fellow, and I wish we could get acquainted. He looks as if he'd like to know us but he's bashful, and Meg is so prim she won't let me speak to him when we pass.

*Meg sticks her tongue out at Jo, who turns to address the audience as the others clear away the Christmas party.*

“The Laurence boy,” as the girls had taken to calling him, was destined to become one of their closest friends, but although he lived next door, he and the girls were to have their first real meeting in another place altogether. It began a few days after Christmas, when Jo and Meg received—

**MEG**

*(Excited)* An invitation! A regular note of invitation from Mrs. Gardiner for tomorrow night!  
*(Reads)* “Mrs. Gardiner would be happy to see Miss March and Miss Josephine at a little dance on New Year's Eve.” Marmee says we can go, now what shall we wear?

**JO**

What's the use of asking that, when you know we shall wear our poplins, because we haven't got anything else? *(To Audience)* After various mishaps with her hair and her dress, Meg was ready for the ball, and by the united exertions of the entire family Jo's hair was got up and her dress on.

*During the above, the family dress Meg and Jo for the ball. As the younger girls, Marmee and Hannah exit, Mrs. Gardiner, Sally, and various other Gardiners and guests, including Laurie, enter.*

**MRS. GARDINER**

Mrs. Gardiner, a stately old lady, greeted them kindly and handed them over to Sally, the eldest of her six daughters. *(To Meg and Jo.)* Welcome, my dears. So glad you could come. Sally will introduce you ‘round.

*Dance music.*

**SALLY**

*(To her friends.)* Oh, we all know lovely Meg. And this is her sister, Josephine.

**BOY GUEST**

May I have this dance, Meg?

*They whirl away, joined by most of the others. Jo is not asked to dance and she drifts downstage and away from the others. Laurie drifts in a similar way and at the end of the following speech they find themselves together.*

**JO**

*(To Audience.)* Meg knew Sallie and was at her ease very soon, but Jo felt as much out of place as a colt in a flower garden. She saw a big red headed youth approaching her corner, and, fearing he meant to dance with her, she slipped into a curtained recess. *(To Laurie.)* Dear me, I didn't know anyone was here!

**LAURIE**

*(A little shy.)* Don't mind me, stay if you like. I only came here because I don't know many people and felt rather strange at first, you know.

**JO**

You live near us, don't you?

**LAURIE**

Next door. *(Laughing.)* I've seen you ever so many times. And how is your cat, Miss March?

**JO**

Nicely, thank you, Mr. Laurence. But I am not Miss March, I'm only Jo.

**LAURIE**

I'm not Mr. Laurence, I'm only Laurie.

**JO**

Laurie Laurence. What an odd name.

**LAURIE**

My first name is Theodore, but I don't like it, because the fellows called me Dora, so I made them say Laurie instead.

**JO**

I hate my name, too. How did you make the boys stop calling you Dora?

**LAURIE**

I thrashed 'em.

**JO**

I can't thrash Aunt March, so I suppose I shall have to bear it.

**LAURIE**

Don't you like to dance, Miss Jo?

**JO**

I can't, because I told Meg I wouldn't, because—you won't tell?

**LAURIE**

Never!

**JO**

Well, I have a bad trick of standing before the fire, and so I burn my frocks, and I scorched this one, and though it's nicely mended, it shows.

*Meg has left the main body of dancers and stands frantically motioning to Jo.*

**MEG**

Jo! JO!

**JO**

*(To Meg.)* All right! *(To Laurie.)* I'm sorry. Will you excuse me?

*He bows and the two girls withdraw to another corner. Laurie joins the main throng of dancers. Meg speaks in a harsh whisper.*

**MEG**

I've sprained my ankle. That stupid high heel turned. I don't know how I'm ever going to get home.

**JO**

I knew you'd hurt your feet with those silly shoes. Maybe Mr. Laurence—

**MEG**

No! Don't ask or tell anyone.

**LAURIE**

*(Entering. To Audience.)* “Can I help you?” said a friendly voice. And there was Laurie, with a full cup in one hand and a plate of ice in the other. Jo led the way, and Laurie drew up a little table and was so obliging that even particular Meg pronounced him a “nice boy.”

**LAURIE**

Please let me take you home. It's on my way, you know, and it's starting to rain.

**JO**

It's so early! You can't mean to go yet?

**LAURIE**

I always go early. I do, truly! *(To Audience.)* And that settled that. Soon “The Laurence boy” would be practically one of the family.

*The dancers exit, leaving Jo on one side of the stage and Laurie on the other. During the exchange that follows, both actors face front, Jo looking up at an imaginary Laurie and Laurie looking down at an imaginary Jo.*

One day Jo found herself shoveling paths in the wide expanse of snow between her little house and the Laurence's stately mansion. She could see young Laurie gazing from his window in a forlorn kind of way.

**JO**

*(To herself, really, and the Audience.)* That boy is suffering for society and fun. His grandpa doesn't know what's good for him, and keeps him shut up all alone. He needs a party of jolly boys to play with, or somebody young and lively. I've a great mind to go and tell the old gentleman so!

*She bends down and forms a snowball, and tosses it at the imaginary Laurie in his "window." The real Laurie "opens the window" and looks down.*

How do you do? Are you sick?

**LAURIE**

*(Hoarsely)* Better, thank you. I've had a bad cold, and been shut up a week. It's dull as tombs.

**JO**

Have someone come and see you then.

**LAURIE**

There isn't anyone I'd like to see. Boys make such a row, and my head is weak.

**JO**

Isn't there some nice girl who'd read and amuse you? Girls are quiet.

**LAURIE**

Don't know any.

**JO**

You know us.

*She stops and covers her mouth, surprised at her own boldness, but then she can't help laughing at herself, and Laurie laughs too.*

**LAURIE**

So I do! Will you come, please?

**JO**

I'm not quiet and nice, but shut the window, like a good boy, and wait till I come. *(To Audience)* With that, Jo shouldered her broom and marched into the house. Laurie was in a flutter of

excitement at the idea of having company, and flew about to get ready, brushing his hair, putting on a fresh collar, and trying to tidy up the room.

*Jo approaches the "door." A surprised-looking Servant stands before her, but relaxes at Laurie's line, bows her in and exits. Jo has somehow acquired a basket laden with gifts.*

**LAURIE**

All right, show her up. It's Miss Jo!

**JO**

Here I am, bag and baggage. Mother sent her love, and was glad if I could do anything for you. Meg wanted me to bring some of her blancmange. She makes it very nicely. And Beth thought her cats would be comforting.

**LAURIE**

Is Beth the rosy one who stays at home most of the time and sometimes goes out with a little basket?

**JO**

Yes, that's Beth. She's my girl, and a regular good one she is, too.

**LAURIE**

The pretty one is Meg, and the little one is Amy, I believe?

**JO**

Yes, but how—

**LAURIE**

I often hear you calling to one another, and when I'm alone up here, I can't help looking over at your house. You always seem to be having such good times. I beg your pardon for being so rude, but sometimes you forget to put down the curtain at the window where the flowers are. And when the lamps are lighted, it's like looking at a picture to see the fire, and you all around the table with your mother.

**JO**

We'll never draw that curtain any more, and I give you leave to look as much as you like. I just wish, instead of peeping, you'd come over and see us. Wouldn't your grandpa let you?

**LAURIE**

I think he would, if your mother asked him. He's very kind, though he doesn't look it, and he lets me do what I like, pretty much—only he's afraid I might be a bother to strangers.

**JO**

We're not strangers, we're neighbors, and you needn't think you'd be a bother.

**LAURIE**

You see, Grandpa lives among his books, and doesn't much care what happens outside. Mr. Brooke, my tutor, doesn't stay here, and I have no one to go about with me, so I just stay at home.

**JO**

That's bad. You ought to make an effort and go visiting everywhere you're asked, then you'll have plenty of friends and pleasant places to go to.

**LAURIE**

*(To Audience.)* Laurie opened his mouth to ask a question, but remembering just in time that it wasn't manners to make too many inquiries into people's affairs, he shut it again, and looked uncomfortable. But Jo liked his good breeding, and didn't mind having a laugh at Aunt March, so she gave him a lively description of the fidgety old lady, her fat poodle, and the parrot that talked Spanish. When she told about the prim old gentleman who came once to woo Aunt March, and in the middle of a fine speech, how Poll had tweaked his wig right off, the boy lay back and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. *(To Jo.)* Oh! That does me no end of good. Tell on, please!

**JO**

Much elated with her success, Jo did "tell on", all about their plays and plans, their hopes and fears for Father, and the most interesting events of the little world in which the sisters lived. Then they got to talking about books, and to Jo's delight, she found that Laurie loved them as well as she did.

**LAURIE**

If you like them so much, come down and see ours. Grandfather is out, so you needn't be afraid.

**JO**

I'm not afraid of anything.

**LAURIE**

I don't believe you are! So come on, then.

*He takes her hand and leads her to another part of the stage, where she looks around her in utter amazement.*

**JO**

What richness! Theodore Laurence, you ought to be the happiest boy in the world.

**LAURIE**

*(Shrugs.)* A fellow can't live on books.

*A door slams offstage.*

**JO**

Mercy me! It's your grandpa!

**LAURIE**

Well, what if it is? You're not afraid of anything.

**SERVANT**

*(Entering.)* The doctor to see you.

**LAURIE**

Would you mind if I left you for a minute? I suppose I must see him.

**JO**

Don't mind me. I'm happy as a cricket here.

*Laurie and Servant exit. Jo addresses the Audience.*

Laurie went away, and his guest amused herself in her own way. She was standing before a fine portrait of the old gentleman when the door opened again, and without turning, she said, "I'm sure I couldn't be afraid of him. He's got kind eyes, though his mouth is grim, and he looks as if he had a tremendous will of his own. He isn't as handsome as my grandfather, but I like him."

*But it isn't Laurie who has entered—it is old Mr. Laurence himself. Jo jumps when he speaks.*

**MR. LAURENCE**

Thank you, ma'am. *(He gives her a moment to recover.)* So you're not afraid of me, hey?

**JO**

Not much, sir.

**MR. LAURENCE**

And you don't think me as handsome as your grandfather?

**JO**

Not quite, sir.

**MR. LAURENCE**

And I've got a tremendous will, but you like me in spite of it?

**JO**

Yes, I do, sir.

*He takes her under the chin and examines her face carefully.*

**MR. LAURENCE**

You've got your grandfather's spirit, if you haven't his face. He was a fine man, my dear, but what is better, he was a brave and an honest one, and I was proud to be his friend.

**JO**

Thank you, sir.

**MR. LAURENCE**

Think the boy needs cheering up a bit, do you?

**JO**

Yes, sir, he seems a little lonely, and young folks would do him good perhaps. We are only girls, but we should be glad to help if we could, for we don't forget the splendid Christmas present.

**MR. LAURENCE**

Tut, tut, tut! That was the boy's affair. I shall come and see your mother some fine day. Tell her so.

*A bell rings.*

There's the tea bell. Come down and go on being neighborly.

*He offers her his arm and they exit together, as Marmee enters. She addresses the audience as her daughters enter and surround her.*

**MARMEE**

When all Jo's adventures had been told, the family found themselves eager to go visiting. Mrs. March wanted to talk about her father with the old man who had not forgotten him. Meg longed to walk in the conservatory. Beth sighed for the grand piano, and Amy for the fine pictures and statues. Everyone liked Laurie, and he privately informed his tutor that the Marches were regularly splendid girls. He was tired of books, and found people so interesting now that Mr. Brooke was obliged to make very unsatisfactory reports.

**BETH**

*(To Audience.)* But Beth, though yearning for the grand piano, could not pluck up the courage to go to the "Mansion of Bliss," as Meg called it. She went once with Jo, but the old gentleman, not being aware of her infirmity, stared at her so hard from under his heavy eyebrows, and said "Hey!" so loud, that she ran away, declaring she would never go there any more, not even for the dear piano.

**MR. LAURENCE**

*(To Audience, as he joins them)* No persuasions or enticements could overcome her fear, 'til the fact coming to Mr. Laurence's ear in some mysterious way, *(he glances at Jo, who looks away innocently)* he set about mending matters. *(To Marmee.)* You know, that boy neglects his music now, and the piano suffers for want of use. Wouldn't some of your girls like to run over, and practice on it now and then, just to keep it in tune, you know, ma'am?

*Though still terrified, Beth involuntarily takes a step forward. But Mr. Laurence pretends not to notice.*

They needn't see or speak to anyone—just run in any time. I'm shut up in my study at the other end of the house, Laurie is out a great deal, and the servants are never near the drawing room after nine o'clock. *(Rising to leave.)* Please, tell the young ladies what I say, and if they don't care to come—

*Beth quietly slips her hand into his, and speaks very softly.*

**BETH**

Oh sir, they do care, very much!

**MR. LAURENCE**

Are you the musical girl?

**BETH**

I'm Beth. I love it dearly, and I'll come, if you are quite sure nobody will hear me, and be disturbed.

**MR. LAURENCE**

Not a soul, my dear. The house is empty half the day, so come and drum away as much as you like.

**BETH**

How kind you are, sir!

*Mr. Laurence gazes into her face for a moment. Then he bends and softly kisses her on the forehead.*

**MR. LAURENCE**

I had a little girl once, with eyes like those. God bless you, my dear! *(To Marmee.)* Good day, madam.

*He exits in a great hurry. Beth addresses the audience.*

**BETH**

After that, the little brown hood slipped through the hedge nearly every day, and the great drawing room was haunted by a tuneful spirit that came and went unseen. She never knew that Mr. Laurence opened his study door to hear the old-fashioned airs he liked. She never saw Laurie mount guard in the hall to warn the servants away. *(To Marmee.)* Mother, I'm going to make Mr. Laurence a pair of slippers. He is so kind to me, always, and I must thank him, and I don't know any other way. Can I do it?

**MARMEE**

Yes, dear. It will please him very much, and be a nice way of thanking him.