

(Music.)

MEG. Marmec's asleep. May I close my eyes a minute, Jo?

JO. Please do. I'm quite awake.

(Music.)

BETH. Jo?

JO. Yes, Beth! It's me!

BETH. Hello, Jo.

JO. Oh, Beth, do you recognize me? Are you with us again?

BETH. Jo, I—I—

JO. Beth, please stay with us. I'll love you ever so much more than before. Don't go! I'd miss you too terribly.

BETH. Oh, Jo. And I'll miss...

JO. Yes? What will you miss?

BETH. I'm going to miss, oh, the piano, and sun on the trees.

JO. You must think of what you will miss. You must fight.

BETH. I'm going to miss you, Jo.

JO. Don't. Listen, Beth. I'll stay right with you. Yes, we'll be the stay-at-home daughters and keep house for Father and Mother in their old age—think how nice that will be—*please*.

BETH. Sshh, Jo. Don't wake the others.

JO. Or a journey? I'll take you to lands far away. I mean it.

BETH. I know you do. It's just that I'm so very tired.

JO. A sunny place where you can get better—

BETH. There is a place, Jo. But I think I have to go alone.

JO. No, Beth. Don't say that.

BETH. I can't.

JO. I'll even put aside my wildness and my silly writing. I promise, Beth. Only don't go tonight. Oh, Beth, stay.

BETH. I can't—someone is calling me—

JO. Oh, Beth. Listen to the music. Laurie and his grandfather are playing for you. Do you hear?

(No answer. BETH dies.)

JO. Good-bye, Beth, Good-bye.

(Kisses BETH. Goes to wake MARMEE and MEG.)

Mother? Meg? She's gone.

(Lights down.)

Scene 4: Love and Heartache

(Winter. The house is in mourning. JO sits at the piano, trying to summon her patience to play, gives up and goes.)

(AMY enters, sets a vase of flowers on the piano, sits down, plays with ease. HANNAH rushes in with pipe and pipestand sets them on the mantle.)

AMY. I've been practicing Beth's carol. Laurie's helping me.

(AMY picks out melody: "Pat a Pan.")

HANNAH. I've cleaned Father's study, dusted all his books.

AMY. He won't arrive home today, Hannah. His letter said he'd arrive at Christmas.

HANNAH. A mere two weeks! *(Exits.)*

AMY. *(Takes pipe and sniffs it.)* Father's tobacco!

(AMY returns to the piano. BROOKE enters.)

AMY. Mr. Brooke!

BROOKE. Forgive me for barging in—

AMY. You're home, Mr. Brooke! Is Father with you?