

(Lights up in the garret, where JO reads on the couch and eats apples. LAURIE ascends the stairs, throws himself down beside her and bites into an apple.)

LAURIE. It's going to be a romantic Christmas.

JO. Harumph.

LAURIE. Seriously, Jo, you're just grumbling out of habit. Put your book down. We aren't little children any more.

JO. I don't like the look on your face. We're only sixteen.

LAURIE. And Meg is seventeen.

JO. Which is very much too young for—for anything.

LAURIE. There's something I must say. Must ask you.

JO. I have a suspicion what it is. Laurie, don't!

LAURIE. I must. We've got to have it out.

JO. Well, I don't plan to listen.

LAURIE. You must. Think of all we are to each other. We do everything together. Jo, I've loved you ever since I met you.

JO. Well, I love you, too, of course, Laurie, but not love with a capital L. That's not—

LAURIE. Oh, but I mean love with a capital L.

JO. I never meant to entangle you—

LAURIE. I want to be entangled.

JO. But you know my views on—on—

LAURIE. Marriage. You say you're against it. But girls are so strange you never really know. So I must ask, will you, Jo?

JO. Don't say it—

LAURIE. Marry me, Jo.

JO. I can't say "Yes" truly, so I won't say it at all. I'm happy as I am and love my liberty too well and not only that—

LAURIE. What? Say it all!

JO. I have to stay home with Father and Mother. I can't go off on my own and leave them. I promised Beth.

LAURIE. Why, Jo, why? You aren't made for that!

JO. I promised. Not only that—I don't think I'll ever marry.

LAURIE. Oh, there'll come a time when you'll care for somebody and love him tremendously and live and die for him. You will, it's your way, and I shall have to stand by—

JO. Oh, I doubt that very much. I've done my best. I'll never marry you and the sooner you believe it, the better for both of us—so now we've had it out!

(LAURIE storms down the stairs. JO repairs to the garret.)

Scene 5: Homecoming

(FATHER and MOTHER enter; LAURIE exits the house and meets them outside.)

FATHER. Just a moment! Where are you going, young man?