

**Scene 2: Gifts and Quarrels**

*(Lights up on JO in the garret, writing in her storybook.)*

*(Out the window, AMY and BETH can be seen throwing snowballs—BETH is animated but AMY shows boredom.)*

**JO.** And the genie said, I grant you no money, nor pretty dresses, but instead, the spirit to trust your own efforts. There! That'll show Meg! Oh, drat—can't show her 'til tomorrow. She's off overnight to one of her parties! The End. Signed, Josephine March. *(Blows on page to dry the ink.)* All done! A whole book of stories! Bethy's going to love it.

*(Lights up downstairs. OLD MR. LAURENCE, BROOKE and HANNAH quietly set in place a new piano for Beth, then all three quietly exit.)*

*(JO comes downstairs and spots the new piano.)*

**JO.** Well, my word. Laurie said his grandfather might...and they've gone and done it! Bethy, this is your day! *(Places the storybook atop the piano. Calls offstage:)* Marmee! Bethy!

*(MARMEE, BETH and AMY enter. BETH sees the new piano. Gasps.)*

**BETH.** Marmee! The piano!

**MARMEE.** Oh, my heavens.

**BETH.** Do you think it's real?

**MARMEE.** Why don't you go and find out?

**JO.** There's a note here, Bethy. It's to you.

**BETH.** Here. *(Hands note to MARMEE, approaches piano slowly.)*

**MARMEE.** *(Opens note and reads.)* Well, glory be! It's yours.

**JO.** Go, ahead, Bethy. Go ahead!

**BETH.** *(Depresses keys. Plays arpeggio.)* Oh! *(Turns to MARMEE, takes the note.)* "For the little musician, from Old Mr. Laurence." What's this? *(Picks up storybook.)* From Jo?

**AMY.** *(Disgruntled.)* It's not even her birthday.

**JO.** Oh, open that later!

**BETH** (*Breathless.*) My book of stories from Jo. Thank you, Jo, oh thank you! (*Places book atop piano.*) But how can ever I thank *him*?

**MARMEE.** Unless I'm very much mistaken, *he* is hovering near a window, waiting to hear you play.

**BETH.** What shall I play? Oh! Oh! (*Plays.*)

**AMY.** (*Bored at the window, suddenly straightens up.*) Look! Here's Meg! But she's supposed to be at her party.

(*MEG and LAURIE enter.*)

**LAURIE.** Her ladyship! Home from the wicked world—

**MARMEE.** Home early, Meg?

**MEG.** Yes. I've had a beastly time.

**LAURIE.** Oh, now, Meg. I can't believe that. Do you realize that Meg knows *all the dances*? She kicks her heels, she bats her eyes, she fans her low-cut gown.

**JO.** Wait a minute. Meg doesn't own a low-cut gown.

**LAURIE.** And what was that sparkly stuff in the glass, Meg?

**MEG.** Be quiet, Laurie. What would you have me do? Stand with my back to the wall in my dowdy frock—Meg the Freak from the poor, eccentric, bookish family?!?

**JO.** Oh! Are you ashamed of us, Meg?

**MEG.** I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. I'm so glad to be home.

**LAURIE.** No, Meg, I'm the one who's sorry. Ah, Bethy—you have your piano! I'll go congratulate Grandfather.

**MEG.** It's all right, Laurie. Thank you for fetching me home.

**LAURIE.** Good-bye, then. (*Hands JO envelope.*) Here, Jo. This should fix things. Open it now—it's for today. (*Exits.*)

**MEG.** I didn't mean any of that, Jo. Marmee, I want to 'fess up. It's true. I romped, I flirted, I drank champagne—

**JO.** You flirted? But we discussed that. We said no flirting!

**MEG.** I let them dress me up in borrowed frippery—

**AMY.** You wore a low-cut gown?

**MEG.** But then, standing at the punch bowl, I started to feel peculiar. The gossip! They all think that you have “plans” for us, Marmee, that you want us to know Laurie because he has money so he’ll marry us—I mean, one of us—

**BETH.** How peculiar.

**JO.** It’s not peculiar, it’s ridiculous. You don’t have any “plans” for us, Marmee. I’ll tell Laurie. Won’t he shout?

**MEG.** You mustn’t tell! Have you no pride?

**MARMEE.** Of course she won’t tell.

**JO.** All right, I won’t. (*Opens the envelope Laurie gave her.*)

**MARMEE.** Listen, Meg, shall I tell you who you are? You are a fine young girl, the daughter of a family not rich nor inclined to follow fashion. And, as it happens, Jo, I do have plans for my girls. (*Gathers her girls in her arms.*) I want my daughters to be accomplished and good...to have a happy youth, to be well and wisely married—

**JO.** Or to be splendid old maids!

**MARMEE.** That’s right, Jo. And either way, to be ready for duty and capable of joy. Beth and Amy, shall we fetch tea?

**AMY.** (*To herself, practicing.*) “I had a beastly time.” (*Shrugs.*)

**JO.** Meg? Did you really flirt?

**MEG.** I tried. I don’t know if I succeeded.

**JO.** You won’t get silly on me, will you Meg? You won’t turn all stupid and blank, and pine after young men?

**MEG.** Hmmm.

**JO.** Because Laurie’s invited us to the theater this very afternoon! Here’s my kind of social occasion!

(*BETH and AMY enter with tea things.*)