

(BROOKE enters.)

MEG. Mr. Brooke. Hello, Mr. Brooke!

BROOKE. Forgive me — I seem to have left my umbrella —

(JO tosses him his umbrella.)

JO. Come, Amy — something's burning on the stove. (*Aside to MEG:*) Remember what you plan to say.

(JO exits with AMY.)

BROOKE. Hello, Margaret. What do you plan to say?

MEG. (*Backing away.*) Mother will like to see you. I'll call her.

BROOKE. Your mother's not home. I saw her in the village. Are you afraid of me, Margaret?

MEG. (*Stops herself.*) No, of course not. Welcome home, Mr. Brooke. You've been so kind to Marmee and Father.

BROOKE. Margaret, while I was away, your letters meant so much to me.

MEG. Yes. We're all so grateful to you, Mr. Brooke.

BROOKE. Lovely letters — so full of home! (*Takes her hand.*)

MEG. (*Drops his hand.*) Oh, no — please don't!

BROOKE. I only want to know if you care for me a little.

MEG. I don't know... I'm all flustered. Please go away!

(AUNT MARCH enters.)

AUNT MARCH. What's all this?

MEG. Hello, Aunt March!

(BROOKE flees to the dining room.)

AUNT MARCH. I came to call on your father.

MEG. Father's not yet home. I'm so surprised to see you.

AUNT MARCH. That's evident. And who was that?

MEG. It's Father's friend.

AUNT MARCH. And what is "Father's friend" saying to make you blush like a peony?

MEG. Mr. Brooke came to get his umbrella.

AUNT MARCH. That boy's tutor? Making a proposal?

MEG. Hush! He'll hear you.

AUNT MARCH. You don't mean to marry this tutor? If you do, not one penny of my money goes to you.

MEG. I shall marry whom I please, Aunt March.

AUNT MARCH. Highty tighty! He's poor, I'll wager, and has no rich relations.

MEG. No, but he has many warm friends—

AUNT MARCH. He knows *you* have got rich relations.

MEG. Aunt March, how dare you? John is above such meanness. My John wouldn't marry for money any more than I would. We're used to being poor and we are willing to work. I shall be with him and he loves me—

AUNT MARCH. Well, I wash my hands of the whole affair! I'm done with you— with all of you forever!

(AUNT MARCH *exits*. BROOKE *enters*.)

MEG. Oh!

BROOKE. Thank you for defending me. You *do* care for me?

MEG. I didn't know how much, 'til she insulted you.

BROOKE. (*Embraces her*.) So you won't send me away, but let me stay and be happy? May I?

MEG. Yes, John.

BROOKE. And shall we tell them all at Christmas?

(JO *enters*.)