

‘We are poor,’ said Meg, the eldest girl. ‘It is terrible.’ Meg was very pretty. She had large eyes and soft brown hair.

‘Other girls have lots of pretty things,’ said Amy, the youngest girl. Amy had golden hair and blue eyes.

‘I hate girls’ work and girls’ things,’ said Jo. She was tall and thin. She had beautiful, long red hair. ‘I don’t want to stay at home,’ she said. ‘I want to fight in the war.’

Then Beth spoke. ‘Yes, we are poor,’ she said. ‘But we are lucky too. We have Father and Mother and we have each other.’

Beth was very shy. She was afraid of strangers but she loved her family very much.

‘Yes, we have each other,’ said Jo. And the girls were happy again.

‘It’s six o’clock!’ said Meg. ‘Be quick, everybody! Mother is coming! We must get supper ready.’

Jo brought more wood for the fire. Meg lit the lamps. Beth and Amy put the food on the table.

The door opened and Mrs March came into the room. Mrs March was not beautiful but she was very kind and good. Her daughters had a special name for her. They called her ‘Marmee’.

‘How are you, my dears?’ said Mrs March. ‘Did you have a good day?’

‘Yes, thank you, Marmee,’ replied the four sisters.

‘Come. Sit down by the fire, Marmee,’ said Meg. ‘Supper is ready.’

After supper, Mrs March said, 'Girls, I have a wonderful surprise.'

Everybody was excited.

'Is it a letter from Father?' asked Jo.

'Yes,' replied Mrs March. 'Father has a Christmas message for all of you.'

The girls read their father's letter.



To my four little women

My dears,

I will not see you again for a long time. I think of you all every day. Take care of your mother. Be good and work hard.

Happy Christmas from your  
loving Father.

## A Wonderful Christmas

A few days later it was Christmas Day. On Christmas morning, the girls woke early. Each girl had one present – a book from their mother. They ran downstairs. They wanted to thank her. But Mrs March was not there.

A special Christmas breakfast was on the table. There was lots of food and everybody was hungry. But the girls waited for their mother. They waited nearly an hour. At last, their mother came home.

‘Merry Christmas, Marmee!’ the girls shouted. ‘Come. Sit down. Let’s eat breakfast.’

‘Merry Christmas, little daughters!’ said Mrs March. ‘Listen! I have something to tell you. There is a poor woman – Mrs Hummel. She lives in the town. She has seven children – one is a baby. The Hummels’ house is very cold and they have no food. Will you give them a Christmas present? Will you give them your breakfast?’

All the girls were very hungry. For a moment, nobody spoke.

Then Jo said, ‘Yes, we will, Marmee. Let’s take the food to them now.’

It was early morning and it was cold. The girls walked quickly through the snow. They carried baskets of food and wood for the fire.



The Hummel family lived in one small room. The room was in a house near a river. The windows of the room were broken and there was no fire. Mrs Hummel lay in her bed. She was ill. The baby was crying and the children were cold and hungry.

The Hummel children saw the March sisters and the baskets of food. They shouted happily.

‘Thank you, thank you!’ they shouted.

The girls made a fire and they put the food on the table. Mrs March made some tea. Soon the room was warm. The hungry children ate the food and they laughed.

Later, Mrs March and her daughters went home. They had bread and milk for breakfast. But they were very happy.

The March sisters often acted in plays. Jo wrote the plays. The girls acted in a small room at the top of the house. They put on brightly-coloured clothes and they





enjoyed themselves.

On Christmas evening, the girls acted in a play. All their friends came. Everybody enjoyed the play.

Later, their friends went home and the girls had a lovely surprise. Mrs March called to them.

‘Supper is ready,’ she said.

The girls ran downstairs. They saw lots of delicious food on the table – cakes, sweets, fruit and ice-cream.

‘Where did this lovely food come from, Marmee?’ Amy asked.

Mrs March smiled. ‘Old Mr Laurence sent it,’ she replied.

‘Old Mr Laurence, our neighbour?’ asked Meg. She was surprised. ‘But we don’t know him,’ she said.

‘He heard about your breakfast,’ said Mrs March. ‘He has sent you a special Christmas supper.’

The girls looked at each other.

‘This is a wonderful Christmas,’ Beth said.



## Laurie

Next to the Marches' small house, there was a large house. The sisters called this house, 'The Laurence House'. It belonged to their neighbour, Mr Laurence.

Mr Laurence was old and he was very rich. His house was very beautiful. He lived in the house with his grandson. His grandson was fifteen – the same age as Jo. Sometimes the March sisters saw Mr Laurence's grandson. But the boy was always alone.

A few days after Christmas, Jo was in her garden. She was wearing boots and an old coat. Jo was busy. She was sweeping snow from the path with a broom. Jo looked up at the Laurence House. She saw a face looking out of a window. It was Mr Laurence's grandson.



‘The boy is sad. He is lonely,’ thought Jo.

Then she had an idea. She took some snow and she made a ball with it. She threw the ball at the window. The boy laughed and he opened the window.

‘Hello!’ called Jo. ‘Are you ill?’

‘I was ill last week,’ said the boy. ‘I’m better now, but I’m very bored. I am not doing anything.’

‘I’ll visit you!’ said Jo.

‘Yes, please come,’ said the boy.

A few minutes later, Jo knocked on the door of the Laurence House. She was carrying a small basket. The basket was full of apples and cakes.

The boy opened the door and Jo gave him the basket.

‘These things are for you,’ she said. ‘They are from my mother.’

‘Thank you very much,’ said the boy. ‘Please come in. My name is Laurie. And you’re Jo, aren’t you?’

‘Yes,’ said Jo. She was very surprised. ‘How do you know my name?’

‘I know your name,’ said Laurie. ‘I know all your sisters’ names. You call to each other in your garden.’

‘Sometimes, I see you with your mother,’ Laurie said sadly. ‘I have no mother. My parents are dead. So I live here with my grandfather. But my grandfather is not at home today.’

‘Laurie is rich but he’s very lonely,’ thought Jo. ‘I am poor. But I have a family and I have a happy home.’

‘Please visit us,’ said Jo. ‘We are neighbours. Let’s be friends too.’



Jo and Laurie talked all afternoon. Jo talked about her family. Laurie talked about his life. He did not go to school. A teacher, Mr Brooke, came to the house every day. Mr Brooke taught Laurie his lessons.

‘Come into our library,’ said Laurie. ‘We have many fine books in the library.’

The library was a beautiful room with big windows. There were hundreds of interesting books on the shelves. There were many fine pictures on the walls.

‘What a wonderful room!’ said Jo.

Suddenly, Laurie and Jo heard a noise.

‘Grandfather has come home,’ said Laurie. ‘I must go to him. Please stay here.’

Laurie went out of the library. Jo stood by the fire. There was a picture of old Mr Laurence on the wall. Jo looked at the picture. The door of the library opened but she did not turn round.

‘Laurie,’ she said. ‘Mr Laurence – your grandfather is not handsome. But he has a kind face. I like him.’

‘Thank you,’ said a voice.

Jo turned round quickly. Mr Laurence was standing near the door.

‘Oh—’ she said. ‘I am sorry.’

‘So, I’m not handsome?’ asked Mr Laurence.

‘Well – no, sir.’

‘But I have a kind face?’

‘Yes, you do, sir,’ replied Jo.

Mr Laurence laughed. ‘I knew your grandfather,’ he said. ‘He was a good man. Now, have some tea.’



Laurie was very happy. Laurie and Jo drank tea and they talked. Mr Laurence watched them.

‘My grandson is happy,’ he thought. ‘He was lonely. He must have some friends.’

Later, Jo went home. She told her mother and her sisters about the Laurences’ beautiful house.

‘Marmee, please let Laurie visit us,’ she said.

‘Yes, dear,’ replied Mrs March. ‘Your new friend Laurie will be welcome in our house.’

## A Present for Beth

Laurie and the March sisters became good friends. They visited each other often. They had many happy days together.

Everybody liked Laurie and his grandfather. Meg, Jo and Amy all went to the Laurence House. Meg loved flowers and gardens. She liked the garden at the Laurence House very much. It was winter and there were no flowers. But there was snow on the trees. They were very beautiful.

Jo wrote plays and stories. And she loved books. She liked the library at the Laurence House. Amy liked the library too. She painted pictures. She liked the paintings on the library walls.

But Beth did not visit the Laurence House. She was very shy. She was afraid of old Mr Laurence.

Beth did not go to school. She learnt her lessons at home. Beth's life was quiet, but she was very happy. She helped her mother with the housework. She learnt her lessons every day.

Beth loved music. The Marches had a piano, but it was very old. Beth tried to play the piano. But the music did not sound very good.

One day, Mr Laurence spoke to Mrs March.

'Do your daughters play the piano?' he asked.

'Beth plays the piano,' Mrs March replied.