

MRS. KIRKE. What will Miss March think of us, I shouldn't wonder! *[JO has come out into the hall as well!]* Josephine, here are my girls: Minnie and Kitty. Say hello to Miss March.

GIRLS. Hello...!

MRS. KIRKE. And this is Professor Bhaer. He's in the second floor rear room.

BHAER. I must apologize for my rude behavior, Miss March.

JO. Not at all. I do a pretty good bear impersonation myself.

BHAER. You, see, Mrs. Kirke, the children were teasing me again about my name. *[To JO]* Professor Bhaer... is a bear, they say. And so I become bear for them.

MRS. KIRKE. I've told you girls to leave the Professor alone when he is working. Thank goodness you've come, Josephine, before my girls become as wild as horses. Now off and get your tea, girls. Mrs. O'Conner set it out in the kitchen half an hour ago! *[The GIRLS exit noisily]* They are not bad girls, Josephine...

BHAER. Bad girls? No, not at all. But very spirited.

MRS. KIRKE. That's the word. Spirited. The Professor knows.

BHAER. But I must not intrude any further. Good afternoon, Miss March. I hope you will like it here.

JO. I'm sure I will.

BHAER. Good. Now I must return to my room. *[He makes a slight bow then exits up the steps]*

MRS. KIRKE. *[Going back into the sitting room]* He's a dear man. From Berlin. Very learned and good but poor as a church mouse. He takes in pupils and does some translating. But in Europe he was quite the scholar, they say. It's a sad story. Now let me show you to your room. Right this way. It's got a fine view of the church tower...

[They exit as LIGHTS fade on the scene]

JOSEPHINE. And so began my career as a governess. As for my other career, New York was both a stimulating and discouraging place. I submitted a new story to a weekly newspaper only to be told that it was not sensational enough. It wasn't until I added gypsies, duchesses, bandits, and murderers that they liked it. So I became a New York writer of sorts... but at what a price!

Bhaer + Jo

Scene Four

[LIGHTS up on BHAER in the sitting room]

JOSEPHINE. I soon learned that Professor Bhaer was indeed a scholar, as Mrs. Kirke had said. This German knew more literature in English than I'd ever imagined knowing.

[JO enters the sitting room]

BHAER. Ah, Miss March...!

JO. Professor?

BHAER. I have been anxious to show you something so I wait here because I know you will come.

JO. What is it, Professor?

BHAER. I have found the Emerson that I mentioned to you yesterday *[shows her a book]*. It was hiding in my room with all the books and papers that make such a mess. But I find it and I give it to you *[hands her the book]*.

JO. Thank you. I shall return it as quickly as I—

BHAER. No, no. For you to keep. You are a young writer and I give it to you because this book says what is in my heart about writers.

JO. Why, thank you, Professor.

BHAER. Read what is written in inside.

JO. *[Reading inside book cover]* "To Miss Josephine March. May all your words be as extraordinary as the field you have chosen. Friedrich Bhaer." Oh, Professor, I don't now what to say.

BHAER. Then say nothing. It makes me happy to give it.

JO. These words shame me, Professor.

BHAER. Why do you say that?

JO. Well, I've yet to write anything... extraordinary. I'm just a scribe. And a pretty ordinary one at that.

BHAER. Perhaps sometime you will let me see?

JO. Read my stories? Oh, I'd be too embarrassed. You know so much—

BHAER. I will read them not like a teacher but like... a friend.

JO. Well... all right. I promise. Someday.

BHAER. Good. Now you must tell me what you thought about the Goldsmith novel...