

ACT ONE**SCENE 1****#00 – Overture**

(MRS. KIRK'S NYC BOARDING HOUSE: #1 - January 1865.)

Lights come up on PROFESSOR BHAER, a German professor in his mid to late 30's. HE is quite proper. HE calls with authority.)

PROFESSOR BHAER

Miss March! Another letter has arrived for you! Miss March!

(JO MARCH, an impassioned girl of 19, shouts loudly from off stage. The PROFESSOR reacts)

JO

(Offstage)

Mrs. Kirk, the mutton you ordered is on the kitchen table!

(SHE rushes into the parlor)

Thank you, Professor!

(SHE grabs the letter)

Christopher Columbus! Another publisher.

(SHE looks at the Professor)

Another rejection?

PROFESSOR BHAER

I have no idea. I do not read your letters. But they keep arriving and I keep bringing them to you.

JO

And I keep hoping -

PROFESSOR BHAER

We all keep hoping for your success, Miss March. The entire boarding house keeps hoping. You have us all on edge.

JO

(SHE reads)

'My dear Miss March. I read your story.' Well, he's read it. 'Unfortunately... unfortunately I found your tale tasteless and vulgar. Not at all suitable for my readers. My advice to you-'

(SHE hands him the letter)

PROFESSOR BHAER

(HE reads)

'My advice to you is to return home and have babies. This is what women are made for. Sincerely F. Putnam.'

JO

Twenty-two.

PROFESSOR BHAER

Twenty-two?

JO

Twenty-two rejections since I've been in New York. They all say the same thing. Go home. Give up.

PROFESSOR BHAER

F. Putnam is an idiot. His words are stupid.

JO

F. Putnam is one of the most powerful publishers in the city.

PROFESSOR BHAER

You cannot lose faith, Miss March. There will be someone who will like your story. I am certain of it...

JO

Professor Bhaer? Is it possible I could read my story to you? I would so respect your opinion.

PROFESSOR BHAER

Yes. Of course.

JO

(SHE joyfully grabs her portfolio)

Actually, it's one of my best.

(SHE settles in: Reads)

'It's a mean and stormy night. The moors are bleak and bloody. Thunder claps! Lightning strikes!

#1 – An Operatic Tragedy

The fair Clarissa, her clothes in disarray, races across the wild coastal heath –

(CLARISSA appears on A WILD HEATH)

NOW SHE STOPS!

NOW SHE RUNS!

WILL SHE ESCAPE?