

Father, I wanted to finish it before the babies came. Will you take it to Meg, please, and tell her that every stitch means love for her?

MR. MARCH. Yes, dear, I will.

(Takes jacket, rises, faces front, holding out jacket, looks at it, then at BETH, who has lain back on pillows, then exits upstairs.)

Jo. *(Enters with dish of crumbs, opens window)*
Here we are, dear.

(Sits back of BETH, holding her up. After BETH throws out crumbs, ROBIN chirps again.)

BETH. See, Jo, how tame he is. Dear little fellow. I hope he comes back next spring. *(BETH shivers and lies back)*

Jo. Oh, you're cold, dearie. *(Closes windows)*
Aren't you tired of sitting on the sofa, and sha'n't I tuck you up in the big chair by the fire?

BETH. Yes, please, and— *(Handing over the work basket)* Please put these things away. The needle is so heavy—and I am tired—

Jo. *(Turns armchair, throws pillows onto floor r.c., up to sofa, very gently lifts BETH—says:)*
Upsy daisy! *(Places BETH in chair, then pushes chair downstage to about r.c. a little r. in front of fireplace)* Now I'll give you a nice long ride. *(Puts pillows under feet and shawl over her legs. Lights change to light amber, dim foots and 1st border accordingly)* Are you all right now, little sister?

(BETH's lines must be spoken sweetly and happily—without tears or fear of death; trying to make it easy for others. Simplicity and faith the keynote.)

Beth (Monologue)

Start

BETH. Yes, thank you. *(Jo sits on floor at l. of chair—a little pause)* Jo, I thought of Meg all night long, as I lay awake. Dear, happy little mother in that room upstairs. I thought of the angel sent to show those little babies the way to this life and— *(Reaching for Jo's hand)* Jo—perhaps waiting to show some weary soul the way to—a more perfect life—how strange the coming and the going—and how beautiful—I think I've just been waiting to see Meg's babies. *(Jo looks quickly at her sister and shows that she understands at last the nearness of the parting. BETH smiles tenderly. Jo hides her face in BETH's lap. BETH smooths her hair. Jo sobs)* Jo, dear, I'm glad you understand. I've wanted to tell you, but I couldn't. Will you tell the others for me?

Jo. *(Quietly sobbing)* Beth! What are you saying? You're not going— God wouldn't be so cruel.

BETH. *(Holding her close, for a moment the stronger of the two)* Hush, Jo! This morning—I watched the sunrise. As the darkness faded into the gray and violet . . . I watched and waited. The sky got rosy and beautiful—, and then it seemed as if everything stood still—as if God's hand had rested on the earth for a moment—and then—the glory of the sun! It seemed like going through a long, dark passage—or a grave—and suddenly coming in to light, and, Jo, dear, I felt for the first time—the nearness of God. I knew that the Angel of Life was waiting for me. *(With radiant face)*

Jo. Beth! I'm not going to give you up—

BETH. But I sha'n't be far away. I'll go on helping all I can, dear. The only hard part is leaving you all. I'm not afraid—but it seems as if I should be homesick for you even in Heaven.

MRS. MARCH. *(Enters from dining room, comes r. of chair, speaking as she comes down)* Beth,

END