

**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?