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LITTLE WOMEN

小妇人

露易莎·梅·奥尔科特 著
保琳·弗兰西斯 改编



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Little Women

CHAPTER ONE	<i>A merry Christmas</i>	7
第一章	快乐的圣诞节	12
CHAPTER TWO	<i>Neighbours</i>	15
第二章	邻居	19
CHAPTER THREE	<i>Amy gets into trouble!</i>	22
第三章	艾米遇到了麻烦!	26
CHAPTER FOUR	<i>Meg is vain</i>	29
第四章	梅格爱慕虚荣	32
CHAPTER FIVE	<i>Lazy days</i>	34
第五章	懒散的日子	38
CHAPTER SIX	<i>Day dreams</i>	40
第六章	白日梦	43
CHAPTER SEVEN	<i>Secrets</i>	45
第七章	秘密	48
CHAPTER EIGHT	<i>Mrs March goes away</i>	51
第八章	马奇太太走了	53
CHAPTER NINE	<i>Dark days</i>	55
第九章	黑暗的日子	58
CHAPTER TEN	<i>A surprise Christmas present</i>	60
第十章	令人吃惊的圣诞礼物	63

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CHAPTER NINE *Dark days* 55

第九章 黑暗的日子 58

CHAPTER TEN *A surprise Christmas present* 60

第十章 令人吃惊的圣诞礼物 63

Introduction

Louisa May Alcott was born in Philadelphia, America, in 1832. She is best remembered for *Little Women*, which was published in 1868. It was the first children's book in America to become a classic.

Louisa was the second of four daughters. When she was young, the Alcott family lost a great deal of money. So as soon as she was old enough, Louisa helped her family by running a small school, taking in sewing and becoming a tutor to an invalid girl. Later, she wrote horror stories for magazines and newspapers. Then she began to write stories for girls.

Little Women was the first of these stories and it was very successful. The second part, known as *Good Wives*, was published a year later. *Little Women* tells the story of the March girls — Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy — during the American Civil War. This war was fought between the Northern states of America (where the March family lived) and the Southern states, from 1861 to 1865. The story tells us little of the war itself, but it describes the ups and downs of the family's life. It is a moral story — it tells the reader clearly what is right and wrong.

Louisa May Alcott wrote other books about the March girls when they were grown up. She died in 1888.



露易莎·梅·奥尔科特 1832 年生于美国费城。她最著名的小说是 1868 年出版的《小妇人》，这是美国第一部儿童经典著作。

露易莎在四姐妹中排行老二，小时候家里损失了一大笔钱，所以她很早就开始帮家里做事，管理一所小学校，接针线活，给一个生病的女孩做家教。后来她为杂志和报纸创作恐怖小说，就这样开始写一些女孩们的读物。

《小妇人》是这些故事中的第一部，并且获得了极大的成功。一年以后该书的第二部出版，名为《好妻子》。《小妇人》讲述了美国内战期间马奇一家的女孩们——梅格、乔、贝思和艾米——的故事。1861 年至 1865 年，马奇一家所在的美国北方和南方诸州之间发生了一场战争。故事对战争本身讲得很少，主要描绘了这家人生活中的起起落落。这是一个教会读者明辨是非的道德故事。

露易莎·梅·奥尔科特还写了其他几部小说，描写马奇家的女孩们长大以后的故事。作者于 1888 年去世。

CHAPTER ONE

A merry Christmas

“Christmas won’t be Christmas without any presents,” Jo grumbled.

“I don’t like being poor,” Meg sighed, looking down at her old dress. “I wish father hadn’t lost all his money. Then I wouldn’t have to teach those dreadful children every day.”

“You don’t have to spend all day with bad-tempered old Aunt March!” Jo said. “She has me running after her all day long.”

“I don’t think it’s fair for some girls to have pretty things, and other girls nothing at all,” Amy complained. “The girls at school laugh at my dresses.”

“We’ve got father and mother and each other,” their sister Beth said quietly.

“We haven’t got father,” Jo said sadly. “And he will be away for as long as the war lasts.”

The four sisters sat knitting while the snow fell softly outside. Margaret, the eldest, was sixteen. She was plump and fair-haired and very pretty. She was proud of her hands, which were soft and white.

Jo, one year younger than Meg, was very tall, thin and brown. She had a determined look on her face and sharp grey eyes. Jo’s long thick hair was her one beauty but she usually kept it pinned up out of the way. Her hands and feet were big and she looked like somebody who was growing too fast and didn’t like it.

Elizabeth — or Beth as everybody called her — was a bright-eyed

girl of thirteen. She was shy and always peaceful. She seemed to live in a happy world of her own. Amy was the youngest of the four. She was very beautiful, pale and slim. Her yellow hair curled over her shoulders and her eyes were blue.

The clock struck six and Beth put a pair of slippers to warm by the fire. Meg lit the lamp. Amy got out of the armchair without being asked, and Jo held the slippers closer to the fire to warm. Their mother, Mrs March, would be home soon.

Later, as they gathered around the table to eat, Mrs March patted her pocket.

"I've got a treat for you after supper," she smiled.

"A letter!" Jo cried. "A letter from father!"

"Yes, and a nice long one," her mother said.

As soon as they had finished eating, Mrs March took out the letter and read it to her daughters: "... Give the girls all my love and a kiss," she finished. "Tell them I think of them every day and night. I know they will be loving children and do their duty so that, when I come home, I may be even prouder of my little women."

"When will he come home, marmee?" Beth whispered.

"Not for many months, dear," her mother replied. "The soldiers need him more than we do."

Jo was the first to wake up on Christmas morning. No stockings hung at the fireplace. But their mother had given each of them a book and the girls read quietly. When they went downstairs, Hannah, who had lived with the family since Meg was a baby, was in the kitchen.

"Where is mother?" Meg asked.

"Goodness only knows," Hannah sighed, her face worried.

"A young boy came begging at the door early this morning and your ma



went back with him to see what was needed. ”

They waited at the table for more than an hour, eager for breakfast. At last, the front door banged.

“Merry Christmas, mother,” the girls shouted. “Thank you for our books. We shall read them every day!”

“Merry Christmas, little daughters,” Mrs March called. “Now listen. Not far from here lies a poor woman with a newborn baby. Six other children are huddled in one bed to keep warm. My girls, will you give them your breakfast as a Christmas present?”

At first, nobody spoke. Then Meg fetched a basket and they all put in the food from the table. That was a very happy breakfast, though they didn’t get any of it.

On New Year’s Eve, Meg and Jo went to a party.

“Now what shall we wear?” Meg asked her sister.

“What’s the point of asking?” Jo muttered. “You know we shall wear our old cotton dresses because we haven’t got anything else. ”

“If only I had a silk dress,” Meg sighed.

When the time came for their sisters to get ready, Beth and Amy pretended to be maids. There was a great deal of running up and down, laughing and talking. Then, suddenly, a strong smell of burning filled the house.

“Should the curling tongs on Meg’s hair smoke like that?” Beth asked.

“It’s the dampness drying,” Jo replied. “You’ll see, Meg will have a beautiful row of ringlets across her forehead when I take off the tongs. ”

Jo removed the tongs, but no cloud of ringlets appeared. Instead, Meg’s hair came with them.

“What have you done?” Meg wept. “Oh, my hair! I can’t go to the party! I can’t. ” But she did go, and she and Jo looked very pretty in

their simple dresses.

"If you see me doing anything wrong, just remind me with a wink, will you?" Jo asked.

"No, winking isn't lady-like," Meg told her. "I'll lift my eyebrows instead."

At the party, Jo felt out of place. When the dancing began, she saw a red-headed youth coming towards her and hid behind a curtain. Unfortunately, another shy person was already there. Jo came face to face with a boy.

"Stay if you like," the boy laughed. "I only came here because I don't know many people."

"So did I," Jo said politely. She stared at him.

"I think I have had the pleasure of meeting you before," she said even more politely. "You live near us, don't you?"

"Next door," he replied. There was a long silence.

"How is your cat, Miss March?" he asked at last.

"Well, thank you, Mr Laurence," she replied. "But I am not Miss March, I'm only Jo."

"And I'm not Mr Laurence. I'm Laurie," he laughed.

"Laurie Laurence," Jo said. "What an odd name!"

"My first name is Theodore, but I don't like it," Laurie told her.

"The boys try to call me Dora, so I make them say Laurie instead."

As they talked like old friends, Jo took several good looks at the Laurence boy. Curly black hair, brown skin, big black eyes, handsome nose, fine teeth, small hands and feet, and taller than her! How Jo enjoyed the rest of the evening! And how sorry she was when it ended!

"I don't believe rich young ladies enjoy themselves any more than we do," she whispered to Meg as they went to bed, "in spite of our burnt hair and old gowns."

And I think she was right.



第一章 快乐的圣诞节

“没有礼物的圣诞节就不是圣诞节了。”乔嘟囔着。

“我真不想当穷人，”梅格叹了一口气，低头看着自己的旧裙子，“真希望父亲没有损失掉所有的钱，那样我就不必每天去教那些可怕的孩子了。”

“可你用不着整天和坏脾气的马奇老姑婆待在一起啊！”乔说，“她让我整天跟在她后面跑来跑去。”

“我觉得这不公平，有的女孩子有很多漂亮的东西，而另外一些女孩子却什么都没有。”艾米抱怨道，“学校里的女孩子都笑话我穿的裙子。”

“我们有父亲、母亲和姐妹们啊。”她们的姊妹贝思平静地说。

“我们没有父亲。”乔悲哀地说，“只要战争不结束他就回不来。”

四姐妹坐在那里编织，这时房子外面缓缓地飘着雪花。大姐玛格利特16岁了，体态丰满，一头金发，长得非常漂亮。她引以为豪的是那双柔软而白皙的手。

乔比梅格小一岁，个子很高，身材瘦削，棕色皮肤。她的脸上有一种果决的神情，还有一双锐利的灰色眼睛。乔最漂亮的地方是那一头浓密的长发，但她平时用发夹把头发别了起来，免得碍事。她的手和脚都很大。她像那种不愿长大却又长得太快的人。

伊丽莎白——或者贝思，大家都这么叫她——是一个长着一双明亮眼睛的13岁女孩。她很怕羞，总是安安静静的，好像生活在一个属于自己的快乐世界里。艾米是四姐妹中最小的一个，她长得很漂亮，皮肤白皙，身材苗条，她的金发卷曲着披在肩上，眼睛湛蓝。

钟敲6点，贝思把一双拖鞋放在炉火边烤着，梅格点着了灯，艾米不等人吩咐就拉出一张扶手椅，乔把拖鞋向炉边挪近了一点。她们的母亲，马奇太太就快回家了。

她们围着桌子吃饭的时候，马奇太太拍了拍口袋。

“晚饭后我有一件好东西给你们。”她微笑着说。

“一封信！”乔叫道，“父亲来的信！”

“是的，而且是一封很长的信。”母亲说。

他们一吃完饭，马奇太太就拿出信来，读给女儿们听：“……把我所有的爱和吻带给女儿们。”最后她念道，“告诉她们我每日每夜都想念着她们。我知道她们都会成为充满爱心、尽职尽责的孩子，那么等我回家的时候，我会为我的女人们感到更加自豪。”

“妈咪，爸爸什么时候能回家呢？”贝思轻声地问。

“亲爱的，用不了几个月他就回来了，”母亲回答说，“士兵们比我们更需要他。”

圣诞节早上，乔是第一个醒来的。壁炉上没有悬挂着长袜，但是她们的母亲送给每人一本书，姑娘们静静地读了起来。下楼时，仆人汉娜正在厨房里，她从梅格还是婴儿的时候就住在她们家了。

“母亲在哪儿？”梅格问道。

“天知道。”汉娜叹了口气，一脸担心的样子，“有个小男孩今天一大早就来乞讨，你妈和他一起去他家看看需要什么。”

她们在餐桌旁等了一个多小时，很想吃早饭。终于，前门砰的一声响了。

“圣诞快乐，母亲。”姑娘们大声说，“谢谢你送的书，我们以后每天都会读！”

“圣诞快乐，小女儿们，”马奇太太大声说，“现在听着，离这儿不远的地方，有一个贫穷的女人和她刚出生的婴儿躺在床上，其他6个孩子挤在一张床上取暖。我的姑娘们，你们愿意把早餐送给他们作圣诞礼物吗？”

一开始，没有人说话，后来梅格拿来一只篮子，她们都帮着把桌上的食物放了进去，那是一顿非常快乐的早餐，尽管她们什么也没吃到。

新年前夕，梅格和乔去参加一个聚会。

“现在我们要穿什么呢？”梅格问妹妹。

“问有什么用？”乔咕哝着，“你知道我们只能穿旧棉裙，因为我们没有别的可穿。”

“如果我有一件丝绸裙就好了。”梅格叹了一口气。

在两个姐姐做准备的时候，贝思和艾米扮作侍女。她们在屋里楼上楼下跑啊，笑啊，说啊。突然，房子里弥漫着一股浓浓的什么东西烧焦了的味道。

“梅格头上的髻发卷是那样冒烟的吗？”贝思问道。