

EXCERPT FROM LOUISA AND HER LITTLE WOMEN

CAST 2: Louisa May Alcott, wants to be a writer (20)

Henry David Thoreau – an unsuccessful writer and naturalist (30-ish)

TIME: 1852

PLACE: Concord, MA

(LOUISA is outside with HENRY DAVID THOREAU.)

LOUISA

I've never known the cobwebs to get so big. They dwarf the flowers. I should sweep them away.

THOREAU

Don't do that. Think of them as a handkerchief from a fairy. Maybe the fairies spread them around to protect the flowers.

LOUISA

That idea is a bit whimsical for a naturalist, don't you think?

THOREAU

To appreciate nature, you need a good eye, a background in biology and a bit of whimsy.

LOUISA

I am sure you did not stop by for a fanciful discussion with a schoolgirl. Should I get my father?

THOREAU

On the contrary, I absolutely did come to speak with "the schoolgirl." I read your poem.

LOUISA

And? No. Don't say anything. Let me imagine that you were thrilled and think me wildly imaginative and handsomely talented and –

THOREAU

Actually

LOUISA

Not a word. I am not ready for criticism.

THOREAU

What I found was –

LOUISA

Do not speak!

(THOREAU motions to “speak. LOUISA nods her head
“no.” SHE paces. She takes a deep breath.)

LOUISA (cont’d)

All right. Now.

THOREAU

It’s quite good.

LOUISA

Truly? Do you really think so? Really? Truly? Honestly? Frankly?

THOREAU

The beginning is perfection.

“It comes from its faraway home in the sky,
And it gladdens each heart, it brightens each eye.
It enters the casement, it enters the door,
A welcome guest to the wealthy and poor.”

And then when you switch to peeping over the mountains and waking up the flower fields, we
can see the journey of a day in the summer sun.

LOUISA

I am – gratified, humbled, indulged, fulfilled –

THOREAU

But of course –

LOUISA

Oh the dreaded “but.” But of course there is the dreaded “but.” No writer can get away from the
dreaded “but.”

THOREAU

To continue... after the mountains, you go to the forest and the sea but then you just drop your
audience there. We don’t want to drown! How can you end it so we feel that the ending also
brings a new beginning?

LOUISA

I could... no ... maybe there should be no ... actually, I have no idea.

THOREAU

Of course you don’t. That’s a huge twist I threw at you. Solutions don’t have to come fast.

LOUISA

But I’m used to writing quickly until there’s nothing left in me but a wasted spirit.

THOREAU

Spend time with the idea. Let it fill you up. Solutions can sneak up on you. Especially when you are not looking for them.

LOUISA

It's so different from the way I usually work.

THOREAU

Then it will be a useful exercise for you. (Beat.) I will miss teaching you.

LOUISA

Miss teaching me? Are you going somewhere?

THOREAU

I thought ... maybe I thought wrong. Don't think on it.

LOUISA

Do you not know me? It's all that I will think about. What do you know?

THOREAU

The one thing I have learned in my wanderings, is I know so very little.

LOUISA

You're side-stepping.

THOREAU

Maybe. Maybe not. Time will tell. Now, I do need to leave. Today I am both a tutor and a surveyor.

(THOREAU exits.)

LOUISA

Something's afoot.

(SHE exits as the lights dim to black.)

END OF EXCERPT