



## **Heather Lynn**

Adapted from the comedy *Quality Street* by J.M. Barrie  
Illustrations by Hugh Thomson

**BIG DOG PUBLISHING**

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**BIG DOG PUBLISHING  
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## *Bright, Thoughtless and Merry*

**COMEDY.** As the years go by, Phoebe tires of being a dowdy schoolmistress, so she gives herself a makeover and poses as the young, flirtatious “Miss Livvy,” her imaginary niece. When Captain Brown returns from war, he is quickly captivated by “Miss Livvy” and persuades her to accompany him to the ball. At the ball, many gentlemen vie for the affections of “Miss Livvy,” much to the dismay of the other girls in attendance. However, unknown to Phoebe, Captain Brown is secretly in love with Phoebe, not “Miss Livvy.” Unfortunately, Phoebe finds that getting rid of “Miss Livvy” is much harder than creating her! There are nonstop laughs and twists and turns galore in this hysterically funny comedy. Adapted from the comedy “Quality Street” by J.M. Barrie.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 75-90 minutes.



From left to right: J.M. Barrie (1860-1937), Maude Adams as Phoebe in the 1901 Broadway production, and Seymour Hicks as Valentine Brown (illustration).

## *About the Story*

J.M. Barrie is a Scottish novelist and playwright who is best known for his 1904 play *Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*, which he later adapted into the children's novel *Peter and Wendy* (1911). Barrie was ninth of 10 children and his father was a weaver. Barrie was shy and introverted and stood at just 5'3" tall. As a child, Barrie loved to read books and set his mind to becoming an author, which his family discouraged. Barrie worked as a journalist before publishing his first novel, *Auld Licht Idylls*, in 1888. Barrie's comedy, *Quality Street*, opened in 1901 in Toledo, Ohio. It then ran for 64 performances on Broadway at the Knickerbocker Theatre and starred Maude Adams as Phoebe. In 1902, the play was performed at the Vaudeville Theatre in London and starred Seymour Hicks as Valentine Brown and Ellaline Terriss as Phoebe. Before his death in 1937, Barrie had written dozens of novels and plays and had a host of literary friends including Robert Louis Stevenson, George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, Thomas Hardy, and Arthur Conan Doyle.

## *Characters*

(8 M, 10 F, 1 flexible, extras)

(With doubling: 6 M, 8 F)

**MISS PHOEBE THROSSEL:** She thinks Valentine Brown is going to propose to her but when he heads off to war instead, she becomes a prim, staid schoolmistress who looks and acts much older than her years; wears a schoolmistress gown and bonnet/cap that hides her hair in Act II; female.

**VALENTINE BROWN:** Genial, witty man who is secretly in love with Miss Phoebe; after the war, he has facial hair suitable for that time period, some gray in his hair, and wears a uniform; male.

**MISS SUSAN THROSSEL:** Phoebe's older sister; wears a schoolmistress gown and bonnet/cap in Act II; female.

**PATTY:** Phoebe and Susan's cheeky maid who is yearning for an admirer; wears a uniform; female.

**MISS MARY WILLOUGHBY:** Gossipy, young woman who lives with her sister Fanny across the street from Phoebe and Susan; female.

**MISS FANNY WILLOUGHBY:** Mary's gossipy sister; she and Mary are known as "The Old Maids of Quality Street" as they are still unmarried; female.

**MISS HENRIETTA TURNBULL:** Friend of the Willoughby sisters; female.

**ENSIGN BLADES:** Young officer smitten with "Miss Livvy"; had been a pupil at Phoebe and Susan's school; male.

**MISS CHARLOTTE PARRATT:** Pretty young woman in love with Ensign Blades; female.

**RECRUITING SERGEANT:** Spreads the news that a gentleman of the town has enlisted; wears a uniform and has muddy boots; male.

**LIEUTENANT SPICER:** Young officer who attends the ball and is smitten with "Miss Livvy"; male.

- HARRIET:** Young woman who attends the ball hoping to find romance; female.
- GALLANT:** Young gentleman who attends the ball and loves the attention of the ladies; wears a uniform with a sword; male.
- OLD SOLDIER:** Old soldier, a Waterloo veteran, who attends the ball; wears a uniform with a sword; male.
- ARTHUR WELLESLEY TOMSON:** Pupil at Phoebe and Susan's school who is punished for getting into a fight with another boy; male.
- ISABELLA:** Pupil at Phoebe and Susan's school whose father would like her to learn algebra; thin and wiry; female.
- WILLIAM SMITH:** Older boy at Phoebe and Susan's school who likes to stick his tongue out; large stature; nonspeaking; male.
- GEORGY:** A pupil at Phoebe and Susan's school; nonspeaking; flexible.
- MISS BEVERIDGE:** A pupil at Phoebe and Susan's school; nonspeaking; female.
- EXTRAS:** As a passing Soldier and Lady, Gentlemen and Ladies at the ball, and Pupils at Phoebe and Susan's school.

### *Options for Doubling*

- ARTHUR WELLESLEY TOMSON/ GALLANT (male)  
ISABELLA/ HARRIET (female)  
WILLIAM SMITH/LIEUTENANT SPICER (male)  
GEORGY/OLD SOLDIER (male)  
MISS BEVERIDGE/ CHARLOTTE PARRATT (female)

## *Setting*

Susan and Phoebe Throssel's home, London, 1799-1815.

## *Sets*

**Blue-and-white room in Susan and Phoebe Throssel's home on Quality Street.** Everything in the room is either white or blue. Through a window at the back activities on Quality Street can be seen. There is a rug, a settee, an ottoman, chairs, tables, and drapes for the window that can open and close. There is an unseen adjoining room.

**Blue-and-white room, 10 years later.** The room has been transformed into a school. It is still blue and white, but many of the beautiful furnishings are gone and have been replaced by grim scholastic furniture: desks, a globe, a blackboard, maps, etc. Younger students are taught in the unseen adjoining room, which had been the spare bedroom.

**Canvas pavilion for ball.** The pavilion is fantastically decorated and lit with lanterns and there are several card tables with chairs. Through an opening in the back of the pavilion, glimpses of shrubbery can be seen as well as gentlemen and ladies intermingling and dancing. There is coming and going through this opening and also through slits in the canvas.

## *Synopsis of Scenes*

**ACT I:** Blue-and-white room.

**ACT II:** Blue-and-white room, 10 years later.

**ACT III:** At the ball.

**ACT IV:** Blue-and-white room.

## *Props*

Caps/bonnets, for Ladies	Algebra book
Book	Lamp
Knitting needles and yarn, for Susan	Bottle of "medicine"
Sewing project (making garments for Soldiers)	Veil that opens and closes like curtains when she pulls a string, for Henrietta
Cloaks, for Mary	Cotton twill dress (bombazine), shawl, and bonnet, for Susan
Cloak, for Fanny	Cloak, for Charlotte
Hand bell	2 Swords, for Old Soldier and Gallant
Tea tray with tea set	Small bowl
3 Teacups	Poem on a small piece of paper
Wedding gown, for Phoebe	Dressing gown, for Phoebe
Trunk	Several wraps
Flags to decorate Quality Street	
Schoolmistress gown and cap, for Susan	
Schoolmistress gown and cap, for Phoebe	

## *Special Effects*

Knock at the door	to make it appear as if it is missing.)
Martial music	A commotion
Band music	Banging door
Captain Valentine loses his left hand in war (his left hand is concealed by his uniform jacket	Door banging shut

*Bright, Thoughtless and Merry*

9

*"'Tis all jealousy to the bride  
and good wishes to the corpse."*

*—Miss Susan*



## ACT 9

(AT RISE: Susan and Phoebe Throssel's home on Quality Street, London, 1799-1815. Susan and Phoebe's blue-and-white room. Everything in the room is either white or blue. Through a window at the back Quality Street, a broad street, can be seen. There is a shop in which a bell rings every time the door opens. Through the window, Ladies are seen passing by and then a Recruiting Sergeant in uniform walks by. Mary Willoughby, Fanny Willoughby, Susan, and Henrietta Turnbull are present. Susan and Mary are wearing caps. Fanny is reading aloud from a library book while the others sew or knit. They are making garments for soldiers away fighting.)

FANNY: (*Reads.*) "...And so the day passed and evening came, black, mysterious, and ghost-like. The wind moaned unceasingly like a shivering spirit, and the vegetation rustled uneasily as if something weird and terrifying were about to happen. Suddenly, out of the darkness, there emerged a man. The unhappy Camilla was standing lost in reverie when, without pausing to advertise her of his intentions, he took both her hands in his. (*By this time, the knitting has stopped, and all are listening as if mesmerized.*) Slowly, he gathered her in his arms—"

SUSAN: Oh!

FANNY: (*Reads.*) "And rained hot, burning—"

MARY: (*Admonishingly.*) Sister!

FANNY: (*Reads.*) "On eyes, mouth—"

MARY: (*Sternly.*) Stop! Miss Susan, I am, indeed, surprised you should bring such an indelicate tale from the library.

SUSAN: (*With a slight shudder.*) I deeply regret, Miss Willoughby— (*Sees Fanny reading quickly to herself.*) Oh, Fanny! If you please, my dear.

(*Susan takes the book from Fanny.*)

*Bright, Thoughtless and Merry*

12

MARY: I thank you. *(Continues knitting.)*

FANNY: *(Tattling.)* Miss Susan is looking at the end.

*(Guilty, Susan slams the book shut.)*

SUSAN: Forgive my partiality for romance, Mary. I fear 'tis the mark of an old maid.

MARY: Susan, that word!

SUSAN: 'Tis what I am. And you also, Mary, my dear.

FANNY: Miss Susan, I protest!

MARY: *(Sternly.)* Nay, Sister, 'tis true. *(Sighs.)* We are known everywhere now, Susan, you and I, as "The Old Maids of Quality Street."

*(Awkward pause. General discomfort in the room.)*

SUSAN: I am happy Phoebe will not be an old maid.

HENRIETTA: *(Wistfully.)* Do you refer, Miss Susan, to V.B.?

SUSAN: *(Smiling.)* "Miss Phoebe of the Ringlets" as he has called her.

FANNY: Other females besides Miss Phoebe have ringlets.

MARY: I do not approve of Miss Phoebe at all.

SUSAN: Mary, had Phoebe been dying, you would have called her an angel. "'Tis all jealousy to the bride and good wishes to the corpse." *(Her guests rise, hurt.)* I beg your pardon.

MARY: With your permission, Miss Susan, I shall put on my shoes.

*(Haughtily, Susan gives permission, and Mary and Henrietta retire to the adjoining room. Fanny remains with Susan.)*

FANNY: A bride? Miss Susan, do you mean that V.B. has proposed?

*Bright, Thoughtless and Merry*

13

SUSAN: Fanny, I expect it soon. (*Phoebe enters in her bonnet. She is flushed with the delightful news and almost forgets to take off her shoes.*) You seem strangely excited, Phoebe.

PHOEBE: Susan, I have met a certain individual.

SUSAN: V.B.? (*Phoebe enthusiastically nods several times.*) My dear, you are trembling.

PHOEBE: No. Oh, no.

SUSAN: You put your hand to your heart.

PHOEBE: Did I?

SUSAN: (*Stage whisper.*) Has he proposed?

PHOEBE: Oh, Susan.

(*Mary enters, wearing her cloak.*)

MARY: How do you do, Miss Phoebe. Susan, I have no wish to alarm you, but I am of the opinion that there is a man in the house. I suddenly felt it while putting on my shoes.

SUSAN: You mean an *admirer* in the kitchen? (*Rings the bell. Patty enters.*) Patty, I hope not to hurt your feelings, but—

PATTY: (*Sternly.*) Are you implying, ma'am, that I have an admirer?

SUSAN: Oh no, Patty.

PATTY: So be it. (*Starts to exit.*)

SUSAN: Patty, come back. I told a falsehood just now. I am ashamed of myself.

PATTY: As well you might be, ma'am.

PHOEBE: How dare you?! There is a man in the kitchen. To the door with him!

PATTY: A glorious soldier to be so treated!

PHOEBE: The door!

PATTY: And if he refuses?

(*Susan and Phoebe looked perplexed.*)

PHOEBE: If he refuses, send him here to me.

*(Patty exits.)*

MARY: A soldier? *(Nervously.)* I hope it isn't that impertinent recruiting sergeant. I passed him in the street today. He closed one of his eyes at me and then quickly opened it. I knew what he meant.

SUSAN: *(Listening through the floor.)* I think I hear them arguing.

*(The Ladies all stoop or go on their knees to listen, and when they are in this position, the Recruiting Sergeant enters unseen. He chuckles. Embarrassed, the other Ladies make a hasty exit, leaving Phoebe alone with him.)*

SERGEANT: *(To Phoebe.)* Your servant, ma'am.

*(Phoebe spies mud from his boots on the rug.)*

PHOEBE: *(Advancing, sternly.)* Sir— *(Sergeant looks perplexed.)* Mud! *(Brushes rug.)* Oh! Oh! Sergeant, I am wishful to scold you, but would you be so obliging as to stand on that mat while I do it?

SERGEANT: With all the pleasure in life, ma'am. *(Stands to the side.)*

PHOEBE: Sergeant, have you killed people?

SERGEANT: Dozens, ma'am, dozens.

PHOEBE: How terrible. Oh, sir, I pray every night that the Lord in his loving kindness will root the enemy up. Is it true that Napoleon, the Corsican Ogre, eats babies?

SERGEANT: I have spoken with those who have seen him do it, ma'am.

PHOEBE: Oh, Sergeant, a shudder goes through me when I see you in the streets recruiting those poor young men.

SERGEANT: If you were one of them, ma'am, and death or glory was the call, you would take the shilling, ma'am.

PHOEBE: Oh, not for that.

*Bright, Thoughtless and Merry*

15

SERGEANT: For King and Country, ma'am?

PHOEBE: Yes, yes, for that.

SERGEANT: Not that it is all fighting. The sack of captured towns...the loot.

PHOEBE: (*Proudly.*) An English soldier never sacks nor loots.

SERGEANT: No, ma'am. And then...the girls.

PHOEBE: What girls?

SERGEANT: In the towns that...that we don't sack.

PHOEBE: How they must hate the haughty conqueror.

SERGEANT: We are not so haughty as all that.

PHOEBE: (*Sadly.*) I am afraid, Sergeant, you do not tell those poor young men the noble things I thought you told them.

SERGEANT: Ma'am, I must tell them what they wish to hear. There have been five, ma'am, all this week, listening to me and then showing me their heels, but by a grand stroke of luck, I have recruited them at last.

PHOEBE: Luck?

(*Susan opens the door slightly and listens.*)

SERGEANT: The luck, ma'am, is that a gentleman of the town has enlisted. That gave them the push forward.

(*Susan is excited.*)

PHOEBE: A gentleman of this town enlisted? (*Eagerly.*) Sergeant, who?

SERGEANT: Nay, ma'am, I think it be a secret as yet.

PHOEBE: But a gentleman?! 'Tis the most amazing, exciting thing! Sergeant, be so obliging—

SERGEANT: Nay, ma'am, I can't.

SUSAN: (*At door, carried away by excitement.*) But you must, you must!

SERGEANT: (*Turning to the door.*) You see, ma'am—

(*Susan hurriedly shuts the door.*)

PHOEBE: Sergeant, I have not been saying the things I meant to say to you. Will you please excuse my turning you out of the house?

SERGEANT: I am used to it, ma'am.

*(Phoebe sees the bedroom door open a bit. Susan is listening.)*

PHOEBE: *(Loudly.)* I protest, sir! We shall permit no admirers in this house! Should I discover you in my kitchen again, I shall pitch you out! Be gone, sir.

*(Sergeant exits. All the Ladies except Henrietta enter. Mary and Fanny Willoughby are wearing their cloaks.)*

MARY: Miss Phoebe, we could not but admire you.

PHOEBE: But who is the gentleman recruit?

SUSAN: *(Excited.)* Perhaps they will know who he is at the woolen drapers.

FANNY: Let us inquire!

MARY: *(To Phoebe.)* I wish to apologize. Miss Phoebe, you are a dear, good girl. I have made remarks about your ringlets. It was jealousy. Come, Sister.

FANNY: Phoebe, dear, I wish you only happiness.

*(Phoebe presses Fanny's hand. Henrietta enters.)*

HENRIETTA: Miss Phoebe, I give you joy.

*(Henrietta, Mary, and Fanny exit and they are seen passing by the window.)*

PHOEBE: Susan, you have been talking to them about V.B.

SUSAN: I could not help it. Now, Phoebe, what is it you have to tell me?

PHOEBE: *(In a low voice.)* Dear, I think it is too holy to speak of.

SUSAN: To your sister?

PHOEBE: Susan, as you know, I was sitting with an unhappy woman whose husband had died in the war. When I came out of the cottage, *he* was passing.

SUSAN: Yes?

PHOEBE: He offered to escort me. At first, he was very silent...as he has often been of late.

SUSAN: *(Smiling.)* We know why.

PHOEBE: Please do not say that I know why. Suddenly, he stopped and swung his cane. You know how gallantly he swings his cane.

SUSAN: Yes, indeed.

PHOEBE: He said, "I have something I am wishful to tell you, Miss Phoebe. Perhaps you can guess what it is."

SUSAN: Go on!

PHOEBE: To say I could guess, Sister, would have been unladylike. I said, "Please do not tell me in the public thoroughfare" to which he instantly replied, "Then I shall call and tell you this afternoon."

SUSAN: Phoebe!

*(Patty enters, carrying a tea tray and tea set. There are three teacups on the tray.)*

PHOEBE: Susan, to think that it has all happened in a single year!

SUSAN: Such a genteel competency as he can offer...such a desirable establishment.

PHOEBE: I had no thought of that. I was recalling our first meeting at Mrs. Fotheringay's quadrille party.

SUSAN: We had quite forgotten that our respected local physician was growing elderly.

PHOEBE: Until he said, "Allow me to present my new partner, Mr. Valentine Brown."

SUSAN: Phoebe, do you remember how at the tea table he facetiously passed the cake basket with nothing in it?!

PHOEBE: He was so amusing from the first. I am thankful, Susan, that I, too, have a sense of humor. I am exceedingly funny at times...am I not, Susan?

SUSAN: Yes, indeed. But he sees humor in the most unexpected things. I say something so ordinary...like how I love to have everything either blue or white in this room, and I know not why he laughs, but it makes me feel quite witty.

PHOEBE: (*Anxiously.*) I hope he sees nothing odd about us.

SUSAN: My dear, I am sure he won't. Phoebe, remember the day when he first drank tea in this house?

PHOEBE: He invited himself.

SUSAN: He merely laughed when I said it would cause people to talk.

PHOEBE: He is absolutely fearless. Susan, he has smoked his pipe in this room.

SUSAN: Smoking is indeed a dreadful habit.

PHOEBE: But there is something so dashing about it.

SUSAN: (*Melancholy.*) And now I am to be left alone...

PHOEBE: No.

SUSAN: My dear, I could not leave this lovely blue-and-white room. It is my husband.

PHOEBE: Susan, you must make my house your home. I have something distressing to tell you.

SUSAN: You alarm me.

PHOEBE: You remember Mr. Brown advised us how to invest half of our money?

SUSAN: I know it gives us eight percent, though why it should do so, I cannot understand, but very obliging, I am sure.

PHOEBE: Susan, all that money is lost. I received the letter several days ago.

SUSAN: Lost?

PHOEBE: Something burst, dear, and then they absconded.

SUSAN: But Mr. Brown—

PHOEBE: I have not told him of it yet, for he will think it was his fault. But I shall tell him today.

SUSAN: Phoebe, how much have we left?

PHOEBE: Only 60 pounds a year. So you see, you must live with us, dearest.

SUSAN: But Mr. Brown...he—

PHOEBE: He is a man of means, and if he is not proud to have you, I shall say at once, "Mr. Brown, the door."

SUSAN: Phoebe, I have a wedding gift for you.

PHOEBE: So soon?

SUSAN: It has been ready for a long time. I began it when you were not ten years old and I was a young woman. I meant it for myself, Phoebe. I had hoped that he... *(Pause.)* ...his name was William, but I think I must have been too unattractive.

PHOEBE: Sweetest...dearest—

SUSAN: So long ago, Phoebe! *(Dreamily.)* He was very tall with brown hair. It was most foolish of me! *(Dreamily.)* With long straight legs and such a pleasant expression—

PHOEBE: Susan, what was it?

SUSAN: It was a wedding gown, my dear. Even plain women, Phoebe, we can't help it. When we are young, we have romantic ideas just as if we were pretty. And so the wedding gown was never used. Long before it was finished, I knew he would not propose, but I finished it, and then I put it away. I have always hidden it from you, Phoebe, but of late, I have brought it out again and altered it. *(Goes to a trunk/ottoman and unlocks it.)*

PHOEBE: Susan, I could not wear it. *(Susan brings her the wedding gown.)* Oh! How sweet! How beautiful!

SUSAN: You will wear it, won't you? And the tears it was sewn with long ago will all turn into smiles on my Phoebe's wedding day.

*(Knock at the street door.)*

PHOEBE: A knock! (*Panic-stricken.*) Susan, I think he kissed me once!

SUSAN: (*Startled.*) You think?

PHOEBE: I know he did. That evening...a week ago, when he was escorting me home from the concert. It was raining, and my face was wet. He said that was why he did it.

SUSAN: Because your face was wet?

PHOEBE: It does not seem a sufficient excuse now.

SUSAN: (*Appalled.*) Oh, Phoebe, before he proposed?!

PHOEBE: (*Distressed.*) I fear it was most unladylike.

(*Patty shows Valentine Brown in and exits.*)

BROWN: Miss Susan, how do you do, ma'am? Miss Phoebe, though we have met today already, I insist on shaking hands with you again.

SUSAN: Always so dashing.

(*Valentine laughs and Phoebe and Susan exchange smiles.*)

VALENTINE: May I sit on this chair, Miss Phoebe? I know Miss Susan likes me to break her chairs. (*Chuckles.*)

SUSAN: (*Sternly.*) Indeed, sir, I do not.

(*Phoebe and Susan exchange smiles. Valentine is about to take a seat.*)

SUSAN: Oh dear, I feel sure he is going to roll the coverlet into a ball and then sit on it.

(*Valentine, who has been on the point of rolling the coverlet into a ball, abstains, and sits.*)

VALENTINE: So I am dashing, Miss Susan? Am I dashing, Miss Phoebe?

PHOEBE: (*Coyly.*) A...little, I think.

*Bright, Thoughtless and Merry*

21

VALENTINE: Well, I have something to tell you today, which I really think is rather dashing. *(Susan gathers her knitting, looks at Phoebe, and prepares to exit. To Susan.)* You are going, ma'am, before you know what it is?

SUSAN: I...I...indeed...to be sure...I...I know, Mr. Brown.

PHOEBE: Susan!

SUSAN: *(Realizes. To Valentine.)* I mean, I do not know. I mean, I can guess...I mean...Phoebe, explain. *(Hurriedly exits.)*

VALENTINE: *(Disappointed.)* I had flattered myself 'twas a secret. Am I then to understand that you had foreseen it all, Miss Phoebe?

PHOEBE: Nay, sir, you must not ask that.

VALENTINE: I believe, in any case, 'twas you who first put it into my head.

PHOEBE: *(Aghast.)* Oh, I hope not!

VALENTINE: Your demure eyes flashed every time the war was mentioned.

PHOEBE: Mr. Brown, what is it you have to tell us?

VALENTINE: That I have enlisted, Miss Phoebe. Did you surmise it was something else?

PHOEBE: You are going to the war? Mr. Brown, is it a jest?

VALENTINE: It would be a sorry jest, ma'am. I thought you knew.

PHOEBE: I see...

VALENTINE: These stirring times, Miss Phoebe, he is but half a man who stays at home. I have thought about it for months. I want to see whether I have any courage—and since an army surgeon does not appeal to me—it was enlist or remain behind. Today, I found out that there are five others who enlisted. Miss Phoebe, it is not one man I give to the King, but six.

PHOEBE: *(Brightly.)* I think you have done bravely.

VALENTINE: We leave shortly for the Petersburg barracks, and then I go to London tomorrow. So this is goodbye...

PHOEBE: I shall pray that you may be preserved in battle, Mr. Brown.

VALENTINE: And you and Miss Susan will write to me when the occasion offers?

PHOEBE: If you wish it.

VALENTINE: (*Smiling.*) With all the stirring news of Quality Street.

PHOEBE: It seems stirring to us. It must be merely laughable to you, who came here from a great city.

VALENTINE: Dear Quality Street...I made friends with two very sweet ladies.

PHOEBE: Mr. Brown, I wonder why you have been so kind to my sister and me?

VALENTINE: The kindness was yours. At first, Miss Susan amused me... (*Chuckles.*) ...to see her on her knees decorating the little legs of the couch with frills as if it were a child! But it is her sterling qualities that impress me presently.

PHOEBE: And did...did I amuse you also?

VALENTINE: Prodigiously, Miss Phoebe. Those other ladies, they were always scolding you; your youthfulness shocked them.

PHOEBE: (*Nervously.*) I have sometimes feared that I am perhaps too youthful.

VALENTINE: (*Laughs.*) You were too quiet. I felt sorry that one so sweet and young should live so grey a life. I wondered whether I could put any little pleasures into it.

PHOEBE: The picnics...it was very good of you.

VALENTINE: That was only how it began, for soon I knew that it was I who got the pleasures and you who gave them. You have been to me, Miss Phoebe, like a quiet, old-fashioned garden full of the flowers that Englishmen love best because they have known them longest: the daisy, that stands for innocence, and the hyacinth for constancy, and the modest violet and the rose. When I am far away, ma'am,

I shall often think of your pretty soul, which is your garden,  
and shut my eyes and walk in it.

*(Susan enters.)*

SUSAN: *(Awkwardly.)* Have you—? Is it—? You seem so  
calm, Phoebe.

PHOEBE: *(Pressing her sister's hand, warning.)* Susan, what Mr.  
Brown is so obliging as to inform us of is not what we  
expected...not that at all. My dear, he is the gentleman who  
has enlisted, and he came to say goodbye.

SUSAN: Going away?

PHOEBE: Yes, dear.

VALENTINE: Am I not the ideal recruit, ma'am...a man  
without a wife, or a mother, or a sweetheart?

SUSAN: No sweetheart?

VALENTINE: Have you one for me, Miss Susan?

PHOEBE: *(Hastily.)* Susan, we shall have to tell him now.  
You dreadful man, you will laugh and say it is just like  
Quality Street. But, indeed, since I met you today and you  
told me you had something to communicate, we have been  
puzzling what it could be, and we concluded that you were  
going to be married.

VALENTINE: *(Laughing.)* Ha-ha-ha! Was that it?

PHOEBE: So like women, you know. We thought we perhaps  
knew her. *(Glancing at the wedding gown.)* We were even  
discussing what we should wear at the wedding.

VALENTINE: *(Laughing.)* Ha-ha! I shall often think of this! I  
wonder who would have me, Miss Susan! *(Rising.)* But I  
must be off, and God bless you both.

SUSAN: *(Forlorn.)* You are going?

VALENTINE: No more mud on your carpet, Miss Susan. No  
more coverlets rolled into balls. A good riddance. *(Takes  
Phoebe by the hand and looks into her face.)* Miss Phoebe, a last  
look at the garden...

PHOEBE: We shall miss you very much, Mr. Brown.

VALENTINE: There is one little matter. That investment I advised you to make, I am happy it has turned out so well.

PHOEBE: (*Shoots Susan a look to stop her from telling him about the loss of the money.*) It was good of you to take all that trouble, sir. Accept our grateful thanks.

VALENTINE: Indeed, I am glad that you are so comfortably left. I am your big brother. Goodbye again. (*Looks round.*) This little blue-and-white room and its dear inmates, may they be unchanged when I return. Goodbye.

(*Valentine exits. Susan looks forlornly at Phoebe, who smiles pitifully.*)

PHOEBE: A misunderstanding...just a mistake. (*Shudders, takes the wedding gown and puts it back into the trunk/ottoman. Sobbing, Susan sinks into a chair.*) Don't, dear, don't. We can live it down.

SUSAN: He is a fiend in human form!

PHOEBE: Nay, you hurt me, Sister. He is a brave gentleman.

SUSAN: The money...why did you not let me tell him?

PHOEBE: So that he might propose to me out of pity, Susan?

SUSAN: Phoebe, how are we to live?

PHOEBE: Brother James—

SUSAN: You know very well that brother James will do nothing for us.

PHOEBE: I think, Susan, we could keep a little school...for genteel children only, of course. I would do most of the teaching.

SUSAN: You...a schoolmistress? "Phoebe of the Ringlets." Everyone would laugh!

PHOEBE: I shall hide the ringlets away in a cap like yours, Susan, and people will soon forget them. And I shall try to look staid and to grow old quickly. It will not be as difficult as you think, dear.

SUSAN: There were other gentlemen who were attracted to you, Phoebe, and you turned from them.

PHOEBE: I did not want them.

SUSAN: They will come again...and others.

PHOEBE: No, dear. Never speak of that to me anymore.

*(Woefully.)* I let him kiss me...

SUSAN: You could not prevent him.

PHOEBE: Yes, I could. I know I could now. I wanted him to do it. Oh, never speak to me of others after that. Perhaps he saw I wanted a kiss and did it to please me. But I meant—indeed, I did—that I gave the kiss to him with all my love. Sister, I could bear all the rest, but I have been most unladylike!

*(Blackout.)*



## ACT 99

(AT RISE: *Blue-and-white room, ten years later, August, noon. The blue-and-white room has been transformed into a school. It is still blue and white, but the beautiful furnishings are gone and have been replaced by grim scholastic items: desks, a globe, a blackboard, maps, etc. It is here that Phoebe keeps school. Susan teaches younger students in the adjoining room, which was once the spare bedroom. Through the window, Quality Street is decorated with flags. Martial music from another street is heard. Phoebe is giving a dance lesson to Pupils, showing them a new step. Phoebe's appearance has changed. Her curls are out of sight under a cap, her manner is prim, and she looks 20 years older instead of 10.*)

PHOEBE: *(To Pupils.)* Toes out... *(Demonstrates.)* ...like so.  
Chest out, Georgy. Point your toes, Miss Beveridge, like so.  
*(Demonstrates.)* Keep in line. And young ladies, remember your toes.

*(Susan enters from the adjoining room. The years have been kinder to her than Phoebe.)*

SUSAN: *(Stage whisper so the Pupils can't overhear.)* Phoebe,  
how many is 14 plus 17?

PHOEBE: Thirty-one.

SUSAN: I thank you. *(Exits.)*

PHOEBE: *(To Pupils.)* That will do, ladies and gentlemen.  
You may go.

*(Pupils bow or curtsy, and exit to the adjoining room, with the exception of Arthur Wellesley Tomson, who is standing in disgrace in a corner, and Isabella. Isabella raises her hand for permission to speak.)*

ISABELLA: Please, ma'am, Father wishes me to learn algebra.

PHOEBE: Algebra?! It...it is not a very ladylike study, Isabella.

ISABELLA: Father insists. Will you, or won't you?

PHOEBE: You are thin. It will make you thinner, my dear.

ISABELLA: Father says, either I acquire algebra or I attend Miss Prothero's school.

PHOEBE: Very well, I...I will do my best. You may go. *(Isabella exits. Phoebe sits, wearily. To Arthur.)* Unhappy boy... *(Arthur grins.)* ...come here. *(Arthur approaches.)* Are you ashamed of yourself?

ARTHUR: No, ma'am.

PHOEBE: Arthur, why did you fight with that street boy?

ARTHUR: I don't know...

PHOEBE: Then why fight him? Was it for the honor of the school?

ARTHUR: Yes, ma'am.

PHOEBE: Say you are sorry, Arthur, and I won't punish you.

*(Arthur feigns crying. Phoebe kisses Arthur's hand.)*

PHOEBE: Go away now, Arthur.

*(Still "crying," Arthur exits. Susan enters.)*

SUSAN: Phoebe, if a herring and a half cost three ha'pence, how many for 11 pence?

PHOEBE: Eleven.

SUSAN: William Smith says it is 15, and he is such a big boy, do you think I ought to contradict him? May I say there are differences of opinion about it? No one can be really sure, Phoebe.

PHOEBE: It is 11. I once worked it out with real herrings. Susan, we must never let the big boys know that we are afraid of them. To awe them...stamp your foot, speak in a ferocious voice, and look them unflinchingly in the face.

(*Sighs.*) Oh, Susan, Isabella's father insists that she learn algebra.

SUSAN: What is algebra exactly?

PHOEBE: It is  $x$  minus  $y$  equals  $z$  plus  $y$  and things like that. And all the time you are saying they are equal, you feel in your heart, why should they be? (*Band music swells outside and Phoebe and Susan put their hands to their ears.*) It is the band for tonight's ball. We must not grudge their rejoicings, Susan. It is not every year that there is a Waterloo to celebrate.

SUSAN: I was not thinking of that. I was thinking that he is to be at the ball tonight, and we have not seen him for ten years.

PHOEBE: Yes, ten years. We shall be glad to welcome our old friend back, Susan. I am going in to your room now to teach the Latin class.

(*A Soldier with a Young Lady pass by the window. Another Man follows angrily.*)

SUSAN: Oh, that weary Latin! I wish I could whip the man who invented it!

(*Susan exits to the adjoining room. Band music fades. Susan enters excitedly.*)

PHOEBE: What is it?

SUSAN: (*Tragically.*) William Smith! Phoebe, I tried to look ferocious—indeed, I did—but he saw I was afraid, and before the whole school, he stuck out his tongue out at me!

PHOEBE: Oh my!

SUSAN: (*Frightened.*) Phoebe, he is much too big. Should I let it pass?

PHOEBE: If I let this pass, I am a stumbling block in the way of true education.

SUSAN: Sister...no!

PHOEBE: (*Bravely.*) Susan, stand aside.

*(Phoebe marches into the adjoining room. As Susan listens nervously, Captain Valentine Brown is ushered in by Patty. He has whiskers of that time period and is wearing a uniform. He has lost his left hand in the war, but it is not noticeable at first.)*

PATTY: (*Announcing.*) Miss Susan, 'tis Captain Brown!

SUSAN: Captain Brown!

VALENTINE: (*Warmly.*) Reports himself at home again.

SUSAN: You call this home?

VALENTINE: When the other men talked of their homes, Miss Susan, I thought of this room. (*Looking around.*) Maps! Desks! But still it is the same dear room. I have often dreamt, Miss Susan, that I came back to it in muddy shoes. (*Alarmed, Susan looks at his feet.*) I have not, you know! Miss Susan, I rejoice to find no change in you. And Miss Phoebe, "Miss Phoebe of the ringlets," I hope there be as little change in her.

SUSAN: (*Painfully.*) "Phoebe of the ringlets"! Ah, Captain Brown, you need not expect to see her.

VALENTINE: (*Disappointed.*) Is she not here? It spoils my homecoming.

*(The door of the adjoining room flings open and Phoebe rushes in, followed by William Smith. Valentine immediately understands the situation, and without looking at Phoebe, seizes William by the collar and marches him out of the school.)*

SUSAN: Phoebe, did you see who it is?

PHOEBE: (*Embarrassed.*) I saw. Susan, I have lost all my looks.

*(Pupils enter from the adjoining room and crowd in. Susan orders the Pupils back into the adjoining room and exits with them. Valentine enters, not recognizing Phoebe, whose back is to him.)*

VALENTINE: *(As he enters.)* A young hooligan, madam, but I have deposited him on the causeway. I fear —

*(Valentine stops, puzzled, because Phoebe has covered her face with her hands.)*

PHOEBE: Captain Brown.

VALENTINE: Miss Phoebe, it is you?

*(Valentine approaches her and is shocked by her appearance.)*

PHOEBE: Yes, I have changed very much. I have not worn well, Captain Brown.

VALENTINE: *(Awkwardly.)* We...we are both older, Miss Phoebe.

*(Valentine holds out his hand warmly.)*

PHOEBE: *(With affected high spirits, smiling.)* It was both hands when you went away. *(Valentine shows her that his left hand is gone. Overcome.)* Oh, I did not know! You never mentioned it in your letters!

VALENTINE: Miss Phoebe, you omitted from your letters that you had such terrifying hooligans to teach.

PHOEBE: He is the only one. Most of them are dear children, and this is the last day of the term.

VALENTINE: Ah, ma'am, if only you had invested all the money you received from my advice. What a monstrous pity you did not.

PHOEBE: We never thought of it.

VALENTINE: You look so tired.

PHOEBE: I have a headache today.

VALENTINE: You did not use to have headaches. Curse those "dear" children.

PHOEBE: Nay, do not distress yourself about me. Tell me of yourself. We are so proud of the way in which you won your commission. Will you leave the army now?

VALENTINE: Yes, and I have some intention of pursuing again my old life on Quality Street. I came here in such high spirits, Miss Phoebe.

PHOEBE: *(With a wry smile.)* The change in me depresses you.

VALENTINE: I was in hopes that you and Miss Susan would be going to the ball. I have brought invitations for you.

*(Phoebe is pleased and means to accept. Valentine sighs, and Phoebe thinks he deems her too old.)*

PHOEBE: But now you see that my dancing days are over.

VALENTINE: *(Awkwardly.)* Ah, no.

PHOEBE: But you will find many charming partners. Some of them have been my pupils. There was even a pupil of mine who fought at Waterloo.

VALENTINE: Young Blades...I have heard him on it. *(Phoebe puts her hand wearily to her head.)* Miss Phoebe, what a dull grey world it is!

*(Phoebe turns away to hide her emotion. Susan enters.)*

SUSAN: Phoebe, I told them that you will not teach the Latin class today, and I am dismissing them.

VALENTINE: *(To Phoebe.)* Latin?

PHOEBE: I am proud to teach it. Susan...his arm...have you seen?

*(Susan sees that Valentine is missing his left hand and is overcome but recovers as the Pupils enter.)*

SUSAN: *(To Pupils.)* Hats off, gentlemen, salute; and ladies curtsy to the brave Captain Brown.

*(Valentine salutes them awkwardly, and the Pupils cheer him, to his great discomfort, as they exit. Valentine, Susan, and Phoebe look at each other. Awkward pause.)*

PHOEBE: *(To Valentine.)* I wish you a merry time at the ball.

VALENTINE: *(Sighs.)* Miss Susan, cannot we remove all these maps and horrors till the school vacation is over?

SUSAN: *(Chuckles.)* Indeed, sir, we always do. By tomorrow, this will be my dear blue-and-white room again, and that my sweet spare bedroom.

PHOEBE: For five weeks!

VALENTINE: And then...the...the dashing Mr. Brown will drop in as of old, and, behold, Miss Susan and Miss Phoebe—

PHOEBE: *(Sadly.)* “Phoebe of the Ringlets”! *(Quietly exits.)*

VALENTINE: The brave Captain Brown?! *(Chuckles.)* Good God, ma’am, how much more brave are the ladies who keep a school?!

*(Patty enters with Charlotte Parratt and Ensign Blades.)*

CHARLOTTE: But I did not know you had company, Miss Susan.

SUSAN: *(Introducing.)* ‘Tis Captain Brown...Miss Charlotte Parratt.

CHARLOTTE: *(Gushing.)* The heroic Brown?

VALENTINE: Alas, no, ma’am. The other one.

CHARLOTTE: Miss Susan, do you see who accompanies me?

SUSAN: *(Looking at Ensign Blades.)* I cannot quite recall...

BLADES: A few years ago, ma’am, there sat in this room a scrubby, inky little boy. I was that boy.

SUSAN: Can it be our old pupil...Ensign Blades?

*(Pleased, Ensign Blades bows.)*

BLADES: Once a little boy and now your most obedient, ma'am.

SUSAN: You have come to recall old memories?

BLADES: Not exactly. I— (*Stops himself.*) Charlotte, explain.

CHARLOTTE: Ensign Blades wishes me to say that it must seem highly thrilling for you to have had a pupil who has fought at Waterloo.

SUSAN: Oh, yes! (*To Blades.*) But I trust, sir, that when you speak of having been our pupil you are also so obliging as to mention that it was during our *first* year. Otherwise, it makes us seem rather elderly.

(*Ensign Blades bows again.*)

CHARLOTTE: Ensign Blades would be pleased to hear, Miss Susan, what you think of him as a whole.

SUSAN: (*To Blades.*) Indeed, sir, I think you are a fine young man. It amazes me that we used to have to discipline you.

VALENTINE: Ensign Blades wishes to indicate that it was more than Bonaparte could do! (*To Blades.*) We shall meet again, *bright* boy. (*Exits.*)

BLADES: (*To Susan.*) He said "bright boy," ma'am. Do you think he was teasing me?

SUSAN: I am sure, sir, he did not mean it.

(*Phoebe enters.*)

PHOEBE: Charlotte, I am happy to see you. You look wonderful, my dear...so young and fresh.

CHARLOTTE: Do you think so, Miss Phoebe?

BLADES: (*Bows.*) Miss Phoebe, your obedient student...

PHOEBE: It is Ensign Blades! How kind of you, sir, to revisit the old school. Please do sit down.

CHARLOTTE: Ensign Blades has a favor to ask of you, Miss Phoebe.

BLADES: I learned, ma'am, that Captain Brown has obtained an invitation for you for the ball, and I am here to solicit for the honor of standing up with you.

*(Phoebe is flattered but then she sees a wry smile pass between Charlotte and Blades.)*

PHOEBE: *(Insulted.)* Is it that you desire to make sport of me?

BLADES: *(Distressed.)* Oh, no, ma'am!

PHOEBE: I am sorry, sir, to have to deprive you of some entertainment, but I am not going to the ball.

SUSAN: *(Haughtily.)* Ensign Blades, I bid you my adieux.

BLADES: *(Distressed.)* If I have hurt Miss Phoebe's feelings, I beg to apologize.

SUSAN: *(If you have hurt them?)* Oh, sir, how is it possible for anyone to be as silly as you seem to be.

BLADES: *(Distressed.)* Charlotte...explain...

*(Charlotte departs with a cold curtsy, taking Blades with her. Susan turns sympathetically to Phoebe. Phoebe sits with her head bowed. Soon she jumps up courageously, brushes away her distress, gets an algebra book from the desk and sits down to study it. Miss Susan is at the window, where Ladies and Gentlemen are now seen passing by wearing their ball attire.)*

SUSAN: What book is it, Phoebe?

PHOEBE: It is algebra.

SUSAN: *(Looking out the window.)* They are going by to the ball. *(Angry.)* My Phoebe should be going to the ball, too.

PHOEBE: You jest, Susan. *(Susan watches her read. Phoebe wipes away tears. Rises.)* Susan, I hate him. Oh, Susan, I could hate him if it were not for his poor hand.

SUSAN: My dear...

PHOEBE: He thought I was old because I am weary, and he should not have forgotten. I am only 30. Susan, why does 30 seem so much more than 29? *(As if Valentine were present.)*

"Oh, sir, how dare you look so pityingly at me? Because I have had to work so hard? Is it a crime when a woman works? Because I have tried to be courageous." Have I been courageous, Susan?

SUSAN: God knows you have.

PHOEBE: But it has given me a headache...it has tired my eyes. (*As Valentine.*) "Alas, Miss Phoebe, all your charm has gone, for you have a headache and your eyes are tired." He is dancing with Charlotte Parratt now, Susan. (*As Valentine.*) "I vow, Miss Charlotte, you are selfish and silly, but you are a sweet eighteen." (*As Charlotte.*) "Oh, Captain Brown, how you tease me!" That delights him, Susan. See how he waggles his silly head.

SUSAN: Charlotte Parratt is a goose!

PHOEBE: 'Tis what gentlemen prefer. If there were a sufficient number of geese to go round, Susan, no woman of sense would ever get a husband. "Charming Miss Charlotte, you are like a garden. Miss Phoebe was like a garden once, but 'tis a faded garden now."

SUSAN: But you are ladylike...

PHOEBE: Susan, I am tired of being ladylike. I am a young woman still, and to be ladylike is not enough. I wish to be bright, and thoughtless, and merry. It is every woman's birthright to be loved and admired. I wish to be loved and admired. Was I born to be confined within these four walls? Are they the world, Susan, or is there anything beyond them? I want to know. My eyes are tired because for ten years they have seen nothing but maps and desks. Ten years! Ten years ago, I went to bed a young girl and I woke with this cap on my head. It is not fair. This is not me, Susan, this is some other person. I want to be myself!

SUSAN: Phoebe, Phoebe—you who have always been so patient!

PHOEBE: Oh, no, not always. If you only knew how I have rebelled at times, you would turn from me in horror. Susan, I have a picture of myself as I used to be. I sometimes look

at it. I sometimes kiss it and say, "Poor girl, they have all forgotten you. But I remember."

SUSAN: I cannot recall it.

PHOEBE: I keep it locked away in my room. Would you like to see it? I shall bring it down. My room! Oh, Susan, it is there that the Phoebe you think so patient has the hardest fight with herself, for there I have seemed to hear and see the Phoebe of whom this... (*Looking at herself in the mirror.*) ...is but an image in a distorted glass. I have heard her singing as if she thought she was still a girl. I have heard her weeping. Perhaps it was only I who was weeping, but she seemed to cry to me, "Let me out of this prison! Give me back the years you have taken from me! Oh, where are my pretty curls? Where is my youth, my youth!"

(*Phoebe exits, leaving Susan looking forlorn. Susan picks up the algebra book.*)

SUSAN: Poor Phoebe! (*Reads.*) "Multiply by C and we get—" Poor Phoebe! Oh, I cannot believe it! (*Reads.*) "Add AB little 2 add a little 2C—"

(*Patty enters with a lamp.*)

PATTY: Hurting your poor eyes reading without a lamp. Shame, Miss Susan!

SUSAN: Patty, I will not be dictated to. (*Patty looks out the window.*) Draw the curtains at once. I cannot allow you to stand gazing at the foolish creatures going to the ball!

PATTY: (*Closing the curtains.*) I am not gazing at them, ma'am. I am gazing at my sweetheart.

SUSAN: Your sweetheart? I did not know you had one.

PATTY: Nor have I, ma'am, as yet. But I looks out, and thinks I to myself, at any moment, he may turn the corner. I have been looking out windows waiting for him to oblige by turning the corner for 15 years.

SUSAN: Fifteen years and still you are hopeful?

PATTY: There is not a more hopeful woman in all the King's dominions.

SUSAN: You...who are so much older than Miss Phoebe.

PATTY: Yes, ma'am, I have the advantage of her by ten years.

SUSAN: It would be silly to pretend that you are specially pretty.

PATTY: That may be, but my face is my own, and the more I see it in the mirror, the more it pleases me. I say to myself, "Who is to be the lucky man?"

SUSAN: 'Tis wonderful.

PATTY: This will be a great year for females, ma'am. Think how many of the men who marched away to the wars have come back limping. Who is to take off their wooden legs in the evening, Miss Susan? You, ma'am, or me?

SUSAN: Patty!

PATTY: Or Miss Phoebe? The pretty thing that she was, Miss Susan.

SUSAN: Do you remember, Patty? I think there is no other person who remembers unless it be Miss Willoughby and Miss Henrietta.

PATTY: Give her a chance, ma'am, and take her to the ball. There be three balls this week, and the last ball will be the best, for 'tis to be at the barracks, and you will need a carriage to take you there, and there will be the packing of you into it by gallant squires, and the unpacking of you out, and other devilries!

SUSAN: (*Admonishingly.*) Patty!

PATTY: If Miss Phoebe were to dress young again, and put candles in her eyes that used to be so bright, and coax back her curls...

*(Phoebe enters. A great change has come over her. She is young and pretty again. She is wearing the wedding gown, her ringlets are glorious, her figure youthful, and her face flushed and animated.*

*Patty sees her and is astonished. Phoebe gestures for Patty to exit. Patty exits. Susan is speechless.)*

PHOEBE: Susan, this is the picture of my old self that I keep locked away in my room and sometimes take it out of its box to look at. This is the girl who kisses herself in the glass and sings and dances with glee until I put her away, frightened lest you should hear her.

SUSAN: How marvelous! Oh, Phoebe!

PHOEBE: Perhaps I should not do it, but it is so easy. I have but to put on the old wedding gown and tumble my curls out of my cap. Sister, am I as changed as he says I am?

SUSAN: You almost frighten me.

*(Band music is heard.)*

PHOEBE: The music is calling to us. Susan, I will celebrate Waterloo in a little ball of my own. See, my curls have begun to dance. They are so anxious to dance. One dance, Susan, to "Phoebe of the Ringlets," and then I will put her away in her box and never look at her again. Ma'am, may I have the honor? *(Susan shakes her head no.)* Nay, then I shall dance alone. *(Dances around.)* Oh, Susan, I almost wish I were a goose!

*(Patty enters and watches Phoebe dance.)*

PATTY: Miss Phoebe!

PHOEBE: *(Dancing.)* Not Miss Phoebe, Patty. I am not myself tonight. I am...let me see... *(Thinks.)* I am my niece!

PATTY: *(Stage whisper.)* But, Miss Susan, 'tis Captain Brown.

SUSAN: Oh, stop, Phoebe, stop!

PATTY: Nay, let him see her!

*(Susan exits into the adjoining room. Valentine enters.)*

*Bright, Thoughtless and Merry*

40

VALENTINE: I ventured to come back because— (*Phoebe turns and he stops abruptly. Bewildered.*) I beg your pardon, madam, I thought you were Miss Susan or Miss Phoebe.

(*Valentine's mistake surprises Phoebe, but she is in a wild mood and curtsies, and then turns away and smiles. He stares as if half-convinced.*)

PATTY: 'Tis my mistresses' niece, sir. She is on a visit here.

(*Valentine bows gallantly and then remembers the reason for his visit. He holds out a bottle of medicine.*)

VALENTINE: Patty, I obtained this at the apothecary's for Miss Phoebe's headache. It should be taken at once.

PATTY: Miss Phoebe is lying down, sir.

VALENTINE: Is she asleep?

PATTY: No, sir, I think she be wide awake.

VALENTINE: It may soothe her.

PHOEBE: (*As Miss Livvy.*) Patty, take it to Aunt Phoebe at once.

(*Patty exits with the medicine. Awkward pause.*)

VALENTINE: Perhaps I may venture to present myself, Miss—?

PHOEBE: (*As Livvy.*) Miss...Livvy, sir.

VALENTINE: I am Captain Brown, Miss Livvy, an old friend of both your aunts.

PHOEBE: (*As Livvy, curtsyng.*) I have heard them speak of a dashing Mr. Brown. But I think it cannot be the same.

VALENTINE: Why not, ma'am?

PHOEBE: (*As Livvy.*) I ask your pardon, sir.

VALENTINE: I was sure you must be related. Indeed, for a moment, the likeness...even the voice— (*Stops.*) You must

*Bright, Thoughtless and Merry*

41

be a daughter of the excellent Mr. James Throssel who used to reside at Great Buckland.

PHOEBE: *(As Livvy.)* He is still there.

VALENTINE: A tedious 20 miles from here, as I remember.

PHOEBE: *(As Livvy.)* I have found the journey a monstrous quick one, sir.

*(Band music is heard. Phoebe as Livvy runs to the window and peeps between the curtains. Valentine's eyes follow her admiringly.)*

VALENTINE: Miss Livvy, are you going to the ball?

PHOEBE: *(As Livvy.)* Alas, sir, I have no invitation.

VALENTINE: I have two invitations for your aunts. As Miss Phoebe has a headache, your Aunt Susan must take you to the ball.

PHOEBE: *(As Livvy.)* Oh, oh! *(Her feet move to the music.)* Sir, I cannot control my feet.

VALENTINE: The others are already at the ball, ma'am. You must follow them.

PHOEBE: *(As Livvy, mischievously.)* Oh, sir, do you think some handsome gentleman might be partial to me at the ball?

VALENTINE: If that is your wish...

PHOEBE: *(As Livvy, melodramatically.)* I dare not go! I dare not!

VALENTINE: Miss Livvy, I vow— *(Susan enters. Eagerly turns to her.)* I have ventured, Miss Susan, to introduce myself to your charming niece.

*(Awkward pause.)*

PHOEBE: *(As Livvy.)* Aunt Susan, do not be angry with your Livvy...your *Livvy*, Aunt Susan. This gentleman says he is the dashing Mr. Brown. He has invitations for us for the ball, Auntie. Of course, we cannot go...we dare not go.

SUSAN: *(Stunned.)* Phoebe...

*Bright, Thoughtless and Merry*

42

PHOEBE: (*As Livvy.*) Aunt Phoebe wants me to go. If I say she does, you know she does!

SUSAN: But...my dear, my dear...

PHOEBE: (*As Livvy.*) Oh, Auntie, why do you talk so much? Come, come!

VALENTINE: I shall see to it, Miss Susan, that your niece has a charming ball.

PHOEBE: (*As Livvy.*) He means he will find me handsome partners.

VALENTINE: Nay, ma'am, I mean *I* shall be your partner.

PHOEBE: (*As Livvy.*) Aunt Susan, he still dances!

VALENTINE: (*Taken aback.*) "Still," ma'am?

PHOEBE: (*As Livvy.*) Oh, sir, you are indeed dashing. Nay, sir, please do not scowl. I could not avoid noticing them.

VALENTINE: Noticing what, Miss Livvy?

PHOEBE: (*As Livvy.*) The grey hairs, sir.

VALENTINE: I vow, ma'am, there is not one on my head.

PHOEBE: (*As Livvy. To Susan.*) He is such a jokester.

VALENTINE: Then, ma'am, I shall do nothing but tell you jokes at the ball. Miss Susan, I beg you –

SUSAN: Oh, sir, dissuade her.

VALENTINE: Nay, I insist.

PHOEBE: (*As Livvy.*) Auntie!

SUSAN: Think, my dear, think. We dare not.

PHOEBE: (*As Livvy. To Valentine.*) No, we dare not. I cannot go. 'Tis impossible.

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**