

Scarlett Camp

Dr. Wells

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### Little Miss Tranquility

Elizabeth “Beth” March was taken from *Little Women* far too soon. Beth had lived a simple life. While many rooted for Beth, she had contracted Scarlet Fever that had led to her untimely death. In my remix of *Little Women*, titled *Little Miss Tranquility*, I would have Beth survive Scarlet Fever, and go on to live a fulfilling life. The encouragement to write Beth’s story is to show all the “Beth’s” in the world that a fulfilling life is still possible, even if your dreams are stamped as “simple.” Although Beth’s character is considered a characterization of “ideal womanhood,” Beth will have the opportunity to live a life through her own identity. More importantly, it is crucial we allow the original Beth March to stay alive through our stories.

The inspiration for *Little Women* came from Louisa May Alcott’s own life. Alcott’s sister, Elizabeth “Lizzy” Sewall Alcott, had died from Scarlet Fever. Similarly to Beth, she had recovered but eventually passed from the lingering effects of Scarlet Fever. Alcott had the opportunity to keep her sister alive through her writing. However, Lizzy, sweet and quiet, was very angry during her slow incline of health, and unfortunately, that is how many remembered her. The Alcott’s beliefs of alternative medicine and veganism impacted their decision to not call for a doctor. Lizzie recovered but was never the same. The morphine and opium that she was given increased her agitation; she had started to attack her sisters. The choices that her parents had made about her illness had cost Lizzie her life.

With that being addressed, keeping Beth alive would have allowed Lizzie to stay alive through her writing. Lizzie was killed multiple times. A girl who had dreams, desires, and a will to live was condensed into sweet Beth. Sweet Beth who had no ambitions, dreams, or desires; just a girl who was characterized by her passivity and conformity to “ideal womanhood.” Her father and her sister both wrote novels, yet they both, “...built a sepulcher of words around her” (Machado). Because Lizzie was never got the chance to live in life, her father’s novel, or Louisa’s novel, I would dedicate my novel to her.

*For Lizzie,  
You never had the chance to live your own story,  
So, I will carry you in mine.  
Through every word I write, you will live on-  
Loved, remembered, and never truly gone.*

Before I can begin to rewrite Beth’s unfortunate fate, I need to start to rewrite her life before and during the illness. In my remix, Beth will still contract Scarlet Fever, but she will make a recovery. She might suffer from some health issues, but she will still be alive. During Beth’s illness in *Little Women*, the illness came almost instantly. Scarlet Fever can take 2-5 days to start showing signs, while Beth felt the symptoms as soon as she talked about the sick baby. She will still get sick, and heading towards death’s door, but she will be able to make a recovery. Beth is young and healthy which will make her recovery easier. Her full recovery will allow Beth to live a full life, or at least the expectations for a full life, like her sisters.

Another important part of my remix will be Beth moving out of Marmee and Mr. March’s house. While talking about future dreams and ambitions, Beth states “Mine [dream] is to stay at home safe with father and mother, and help take care of the family” (Alcott 143). Beth wants to stay home as a child, like many children do, but in my story, as she grows older she will start to crave independence. In my remix, when Beth tells Marmee and Mr. March that she wants to

move out, and they audibly laugh. They do not believe that their sweet Beth is going to leave their nest. While Beth had been helping a few families out with their children, one of the mothers suggested that she open a day nursery of her own. Beth considered her options and decided that she would be able to help more families if she were to open a day nursery.

Beth starts to save up the little money she was receiving from helping families. While in town one day, Beth was feeding the birds some bread when a man, looking at the newspaper, knocked into her. The man was tall, with sandy blonde hair, and a muscular build. The man was a farmer running to town for a visit at the bank. The man's name is Eugene. Although he was a big man, he was gentle and kind. There was instantly an attraction between Beth and Eugene. Beth, being extremely shy, turned many shades of red, and started apologizing profusely. Eugene, who was timid but not to the extent Beth was, kindly smiled and accepted her apology. Before Eugene could say anything else, Beth ran away, but not before throwing the rest of the bread for her birds.

After asking around, Eugene found out that Beth was one of the March sisters. He dressed in his nicest attire and went to the family house to ask her on a date. Upon arriving, Marmee was extremely confused but remained a good host. Marmee had told Eugene that Beth was out taking care of children, but she would be back soon. She invited Eugene inside and they had a nice conversation. Marmee was very impressed with Eugene. Eugene was a part of the Thompson family; a large agricultural family in Massachusetts. Eugene and his father built a new farmhouse on the family property for him and future family to settle into. When his father passes away, the farm will be his. Mr. March could not believe that such an aggressive man would court after his little Beth. Mr. March remained skeptical; as he did not believe in animal labor or harm. Mr. Thompson assured him that the animals are treated with respect, and that they only harm

animals to help the community. Unfortunately, Eugene did not realize that this was an argument that you could not win with Mr. March.

After a few months, Beth was deeply in love with Eugene. At this point of the book, Beth would be 24 years old, and Eugene was only a year older than her. She found Eugene funny and hard working. He always made time for Beth. They both loved animals, and Eugene wants Beth to teach him how to play the piano. When Beth was 25, she married Eugene. They had a beautiful wedding on the farm with plenty of room for both families. As a wedding present, Eugene got Beth a dog, named Pip after her deceased bird. Eugene had told Beth that birds had brought them together, and after hearing the heartbreaking tale of Pip the bird, that he felt like it would be a great way to honor Pip and their relationship.

Beth used the money she saved up to officially open a day nursery. The farmhouse was plenty big enough for children. The children were able to help in the garden, pet the farm animals, and had plenty of room to run around and play. Beth centered her pedagogical approach around music and nature; she had finally felt like herself and truly free of the mental restraints that she had given herself. Beth and Eugene never had children of their own because they felt as if their nursery children were their own. However, they do adopt a child after Eugene's sister passed away during childbirth. The father could not go on without his wife, so the couple took the baby girl.

**Sample**

Sitting on a bench in town, Beth started throwing pieces of bread to her only friends. For the longest time Beth's sisters were her friends, and she was okay with that. Now that her sisters are married, she has no one. Well, she has Marmee and Father, but she is getting too old to be hanging around with her parents all the time. Beth starts to fidget, filling with guilt. She shouldn't be so harsh towards her parents. Her father could have died in the war, but then again, she could have died as well. Everyone seems to forget how sick she had gotten due to her sisters' lack of responsibility. Beth had always faded into the background.

The Black-crowned Night Herons loved the week old, stale bread. Her father had been traveling for weeks. Beth recalled something about protesting animal labor on farms. She couldn't keep up with his nonsense. Beth loved her father, but he could be quite ridiculous. His beliefs were one of the reasons she had almost died. Marmee had begged and begged her father to call for a doctor, but he refused. He said the medicine would only kill her faster. At that point, she was hoping for it to kill her. The pain had been unbearable, but she survived, and she vowed to live her life to the fullest once she recovered. Anyways, Beth and her mother did not eat much bread, and she couldn't have the bread go to waste. Beth was a lot of things, but she refused to be wasteful.

Beth was entranced by the beautiful birds. The way they picked at the bread thoughtfully, and their quizzical looks in her direction. They were such complex creatures. Due to her distraction, she didn't notice the man until it was too late. Beth turned and ran right into a man; they both fell back. Beth bounced back onto her feet. Although upset, her main concern was for the man. Before she could stumble out a sentence, the man sprung up, embarrassed. Beth looked at him. She didn't recognize him. He was a tall, broad man. He was muscular, like someone who

truly worked for a living. Beth quickly turned red. Before he could apologize, Beth sputtered out an apology.

“I am so sorry, sir. Please forgive me. I was feeding the birds and paying no attention to my surroundings.” The man gave her an easy smile.

“It’s okay ma’am. It was my fault anyways.” The man and Beth stared at each other for a moment. “Oh! How rude of me not to introduce myself. I’m Eugene. I was just heading to the bank. Would you mind walking with me?” Beth’s eyes widen.

“Oh. No. Um. I’m sorry, but I must get back home.” Beth turns speedily before turning back around for a quick glance and quickly murmuring “I’m Beth.” Beth scattered the remaining bread at the birds and quickly walked away. Eugene watched her until she was out of sight. He had never encountered such a kind woman. She was so concerned about him. It took all his strength not to follow her.

Works Cited

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