

are. I'll come to you.

SOPHIA. All right. (*But he doesn't move.*)

LEON. (*To the audience.*) After a while you get the hang of it.

SOPHIA. (*Reappears on the balcony.*) Here I am.

LEON. My kiss, sweet Sophia. (*They kiss.*)

SOPHIA. As we kissed I felt a strange flutter in my heart.

LEON. So did I.

SOPHIA. You felt a flutter in my heart as well? How alike we are. And yet your hair is so much shorter . . . I must go. I'm about to fall asleep and I want to get to bed in time. (*She leaves.*)

LEON. (*To the audience.*) I know the dangers of loving such a simple soul. It would mean a lifetime of sweet, blissful passion—and very short conversations at breakfast. (*There is a clap of thunder.*) I'd best find some comfortable lodgings. (*He descends. There is another clap of thunder.*)

SCENE 4

SNETSKY. (*Running onstage.*) Was that you?

LEON. I beg your pardon?

SNETSKY. Were you responsible for making that dreadful noise?

LEON. Of course not. That was thunder and lightning. It's caused by extreme atmospheric pressures in the skies above us.

SNETSKY. Well, whoever did it is going to get Count Yousekevitch very angry at us.

LEON. Count Yousekevitch?

SNETSKY. He's the one who lives in the big house on

top of the hill. Every time he hears someone make that noise, he throws water down on us.

LEON. No, no, Snetsky, that's rain. Rain!

(YENCHNA appears. She carries flowers.)

YENCHNA. Umbrellas! Umbrellas for sale! Get your umbrellas before he throws the water.

LEON. Yenchna, no one throws water. It's rain from the skies caused by a buildup of condensed moisture.

YENCHNA. You can tell that to these fools, but I used to be a substitute teacher . . . Umbrellas!

LEON. Excuse me, but would either one of you know of a place to stay?

(SLOVITCH appears with MISHKIN.)

SLOVITCH. What's going on? What's all the racket?

MISHKIN. I knew it. I knew he would throw water down on us today. Every time I wash my cow, you know he's going to throw water.

LEON. Mishkin, would you happen to know— (*Prelude chimes, which precede the actual ringing of the steeple bell.*)

SLOVITCH. Oh-oh. It's time for Count Yousekevitch to propose again.

MISHKIN. This could be the day. One yes from her and we could all be smart again.

LEON. You mean you want Sophia to marry him?

SNETSKY. Not unless she wanted to. But it would be nice to remember my first name.

LEON. But that's a terrible sacrifice to ask of Sophia. Surely you wouldn't ask that of her.

YENCHNA. What kind of sacrifice? To live in a big

house up on the hill . . . To have little macarons whenever you want . . . To have a maid brush your teeth in the morning . . .

LEON. But does she love him?

SNETSKY. I beg your pardon?

LEON. Does she love him?

SLOVITCH. We don't have any.

LEON. You don't have any what?

SLOVITCH. Love! It's part of the curse.

LEON. I don't understand.

MISHKIN. I hear him coming. You'd better leave, schoolmaster. He doesn't like people around. (SLOVITCH, MISHKIN and SNETSKY leave.)

LEON. Yenchna! Is it true there is no love in Kulyen-chikov?

YENCHNA. I wouldn't know. My late husband's been gone almost fourteen years.

LEON. I'm sorry.

YENCHNA. That's a long time to be late. I wish he was dead. (She leaves.)

LEON. I'm breaking out in a cold sweat. The possibility of losing Sophia terrifies me . . . I'm going to eavesdrop. (He hides behind a tree.)

GREGOR. (Offstage.) Sophia! (Strimming a balalaika, GREGOR YOUSEKEVITCH appears.) Sweet Sophia! Time to wake up, my pretty one . . . time to get proposed to. She's asleep! Perhaps a pebble will awaken her. (He picks up a pebble and tosses it up to the balcony. We hear a crash of glass. DR. ZUBRITSKY appears in a nightshirt, holding a candle.)

DOCTOR. Who did that?

GREGOR. It is I, Count Yousekevitch.

DOCTOR. Good evening, sir. (He bows and knocks his head on the railing.)

GREGOR. I've come to propose.

DOCTOR. Well, you're a little late. I'm married almost twenty-six years.

LENYA. (Offstage.) Nikolai! Nikolai!

DOCTOR. I'm out here, Lenya. What did you want?

(LENYA appears. She holds a lit candle.)

LENYA. Some bandages. My feet are bleeding . . . who are you talking to?

GREGOR. It is I, Madame Zubritsky. Count Yousekevitch. I've come to propose to Sophia.

LENYA. She's busy throwing water on the drapes. They're on fire.

DOCTOR. The drapes are on fire?

LENYA. I had to light something . . . I couldn't find my candle.

(SOPHIA comes out.)

SOPHIA. Papa, what's going on?

DOCTOR. Did we wake you, darling?

SOPHIA. No. I was reading by the light of the drapes. GREGOR. I must be crazy marrying into this family.

DOCTOR. Count Yousekevitch wants to propose to you, darling. Go ahead, Count Yousekevitch.

GREGOR. Can't we be alone?

DOCTOR. No. No. I think Sophia should hear this, too.

GREGOR. Very well. Will you marry me, Sophia?

LENYA. Oh, my God, this is so romantic. I just wish my feet weren't bleeding.

SOPHIA. I'm sorry, Count Yousekevitch, but marriage is a very great step to take and I don't wish to make it