

LENYA. Say "Yes," darling. Say, "Yes, you may call me Sophia."

LEON. Please, madame. We must allow the girl to speak for herself. (*To SOPHIA.*) I should like very much to be your friend. Would it please you if I called you Sophia? (*SOPHIA looks puzzled.*)

DOCTOR. It's been so long since she's taken a test.

LEON. I think she wants to say something.

SOPHIA. I—I would be very pleased to have you call me Sophia.

DOCTOR. There you are!

LENYA. I'm so proud. So proud!

LEON. Please. It's very distracting to the girl's concentration. (*To SOPHIA.*) I've come a very long way to help you with your education. I have every reason to believe that under ordinary circumstances, you have the capability of being an extremely bright and intelligent young woman, that deep inside you somewhere is an intellect just crying to be heard, that you have enormous powers of reason. But someone has put a cloud over these powers and it is my intention to remove this cloud so that enlightenment can once more shine through those unbelievably crystal-clear blue eyes once again . . . But I need your help, Sophia. Will you give me that help?

SOPHIA. Yes. You may call me Sophia.

DOCTOR. She did it again. That's two in a row.

LEON. (*Aside.*) Get a grip, Leon. Nothing in life comes easy . . . (*To SOPHIA.*) I should like to ask you a few very simple questions. If we are to begin your education, it is important that I know at what point to begin. It won't be taxing, I promise you. I would never want to be the cause of a frown or frown on that fair face . . . Now, then—what is your favorite color?

SOPHIA. My favorite color?

LEON. Yes, is it red or blue or green or orange? Any color at all. Which one is your favorite?

DOCTOR. I used to know that one.

LEON. I'll ask you once again, Sophia. What-is-your-favorite-color?

LENYA. Why is he being so hard on her? This isn't a university.

SOPHIA. My favorite color—

LEON. Yes?

SOPHIA. —is yellow.

LEON. Yellow! Her favorite color is yellow! Why, Sophia? Why is yellow your favorite color?

SOPHIA. Because it doesn't stick to your fingers as much.

LENYA. (*Aside, to the DOCTOR.*) I think she's wrong. I think it's blue that doesn't stick to your fingers as much.

LEON. That's a very interesting answer, Sophia. There is a certain logic to her response. The fact that that logic escapes me completely doesn't alter the fact that she has something in mind. Sophia, I'm going to ask you something quite simple now. I'm going to ask you to make a wish. Do you know what a wish is?

SOPHIA. Yes. A wish is something you hope for that doesn't come true.

LEON. Well, perhaps we can change all that. If you could make a wish that did come true, anything at all, what would you wish for?

SOPHIA. What would I wish for?

LEON. Yes, Sophia, what would you wish for?

SOPHIA. I would wish that I could fly like a bird . . . to soar over buildings and trees . . . to float on the wind and be carried far away . . . over mountains and lakes

... over forests and rivers . . . to meet people in other villages . . . to see what the world was like . . . to know all the things that I shall never know because I must always remain here in this place.

LEON. Sophia, that is the most beautiful wish I have ever heard. (*To the ZUBRITSKYS.*) Don't you see what her wish means? To fly like a bird means to sever the bonds that chain her to ignorance. She wants to soar, to grow, she wants knowledge! And with every fiber of my being, from the very depths of my soul, I shall gather all my strength and patience and dedication, and I make this promise that I, Leon Steponovitch Tolchinsky, shall make Sophia Zubritsky's wish come true.

SOPHIA. If you could do that, schoolmaster, I would be in your debt—forever.

LEON. She touches me so. Your daughter has such a sweet soul and such a pure heart. We must begin as soon as possible. Not another moment must be lost. I shall return in the morning at eight o'clock sharp. (*To SOPHIA.*) What subject shall we begin our studies with, Sophia?

SOPHIA. I should like to begin with—languages.

LEON. Languages! Of course! Even I should have thought of that. Languages it shall be, my dear, sweet Sophia . . . And what language shall we begin with first?

SOPHIA. (*Thinks.*) Rabbit, I think.

LEON. *Rabbit?*

DOCTOR. A very hard language, rabbit. Hardly anyone speaks it anymore.

LENYA. As long as she gets a few phrases, it's enough to begin with.

SOPHIA. Am I through for today?

LEON. Yes.

SOPHIA. Then I shall go to my room.

LENYA. Watch how she gets up from the chair. Watch! You didn't see it. Sophia, do it again.

LEON. It's not necessary. She's already past getting up from chairs.

DOCTOR. They're so much smarter than in our day.

SOPHIA. Until tomorrow, schoolmaster.

LEON. In all my life, I have never looked forward to a morning as much as tomorrow's.

SOPHIA. I think you are the most beautiful schoolteacher I have ever seen, Master Tolchinsky. I pray that you don't despair of Kulyenchikov . . . and that you will stay with us forever. (*She leaves.*)

LENYA. She found the door! She found the door!

DOCTOR. I've never seen Sophia so radiant . . . Lenya, are you thinking what I'm thinking?

LENYA. I'm not even thinking what *I'm* thinking.

What are you talking about?

DOCTOR. I think our Sophia has taken a liking to the new schoolmaster.

LEON. If it is true, Dr. Zubritsky, then standing before you is the happiest man on the happiest planet in the universe. Tell me, is she spoken for?

DOCTOR. Spoken for?

LEON. Does she have any suitors? Any young men desperately in love with her?

DOCTOR. We—we don't talk of such things.

LEON. Why not?

DOCTOR. There is no one. No one at all. Not even *him*.

LEON. *Him?*

LENYA. He didn't mean him. He meant someone else who isn't him.

LEON. There is someone. Who is it? I must know. It's of the greatest concern to me.