

DOCTOR. But what if I am right? I could have sold the answer. We could have made a fortune. (*They leave . . . the set goes off.* LEON *reappears.*)

LEON. (*To the audience.*) That's it. I'm leaving now, so I'll say goodbye. I was going to stay and try to break the curse, but when he said "Twelve," I knew it was time to go . . . What I must do now is try to forget Sophia. I must!

SOPHIA'S VOICE. Schoolmaster!

LEON. Sophia? Where are you?

(*She appears on the balcony.*)

SOPHIA. Down here. I had to see you once more.

LEON. Without a wrap? In the cold night air, you'll come down with a chill.

SOPHIA. Oh, I never catch colds.

LEON. You don't.

SOPHIA. I've tried. I've just never learned how to do it. LEON. Be grateful . . . Some things are not worth knowing.

SOPHIA. I know that something has happened a long time ago that prevents me from knowing what happened a long time ago. If only you knew me the way I might have been instead of the way I am.

LEON. But if you were not the way you are, then I would not have come here to help you to become the way you might have been. (*Aside, quickly.*) Careful! You're beginning to think like her.

SOPHIA. Could you—could you ever care for someone who never became the way I might have been?

LEON. Could I ever care for someone who never became—I see what you mean. I see what you're getting at. Yes. Yes, I could. I would. I shall. I will. I have. I do.

SOPHIA. Is that rabbit you're speaking? It's hard to follow.

LEON. If it sounds like gibberish it's because you do that to me, Sophia. When thoughts come from the heart they sometimes trip over the tongue.

SOPHIA. Then I must watch where I walk when you speak . . . I must go. Everything depends upon tomorrow.

LEON. And if not tomorrow, then the tomorrow after tomorrow. And all the tomorrows for the rest of my life, if that's what it takes.

SOPHIA. No. It all rests on tomorrow. If we fail, we shall never see each other again.

LEON. Never see each other? What do you mean?

SOPHIA. I never know what I mean. I do have thoughts but they seem to disappear when they reach my lips.

LEON. If I ever reached your lips, I would never disappear.

SOPHIA. Would you like to kiss me?

LEON. With all my heart.

SOPHIA. No. I meant with your lips.

LEON. An even better suggestion.

SOPHIA. Hurry. Hurry.

(*He climbs up to the balcony.*)

LEON. I'm climbing as fast as I can.

(*She disappears.*)

LEON. (*Arrives on the balcony.*) Where are you?

SOPHIA. (*Appears below.*) Up here.

LEON. (*To the audience.*) If only she were ugly, I'd be halfway home by now. (*To SOPHIA.*) Stay where you

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