

house up on the hill . . . To have little macaroons 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 Kulyenchikov?

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! (*Strumming 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

while I do not have the intelligence to know what I am stepping into. Good night, sir. Good night, Mama, good night, Papa.

LENYA. Good night, son. When you're through reading, darling, put out the drapes.

GREGOR. I do not give up easily. I'll be back in the morning.

DOCTOR. Good night, your grace.

LENYA. Good night, Grace. (*They bow low.*)

DOCTOR. Watch what you're doing, you're burning my mustache.

GREGOR. (*Aside.*) Having them for in-laws in a curse worse than the curse.

LEON. Pray God it never happens.

GREGOR. Who's that? Who's there? Come out, I say!

LEON. Forgive me, sir. I was just passing by. May I introduce myself. I am—

GREGOR. I know who you are. You're the new schoolmaster who has come here in a pathetic attempt to break the curse of Kulyenchikov.

LEON. As I have just witnessed your pathetic attempt to win Sophia.

GREGOR. Everyone's a critic. The curse can only be broken if you can educate her, which you can't . . . or if she marries me.

LEON. Which apparently she won't. Why don't you pursue some other girl?

GREGOR. Because Sophia is beautiful. Did you ever see the other girls in the village? They look like me!

LEON. For a man so powerful, you seem to have an inordinate lack of self-esteem. I am sorry for you. Good day, sir.

GREGOR. Not *good* day. *One* day.

LEON. I beg your pardon?

GREGOR. Were you not aware that if at the end of one brief day you have not succeeded to raise her intellect you must be gone from our village? To remain for even one second past the allotted time means you will fall victim to the curse yourself. (*To the audience.*) I love that part.

LEON. I cannot believe such nonsense. Threaten me all you want, sir, but I will never leave. To be quite honest, I love Sophia Zubrisky.

GREGOR. Love??? There is no love in Kulyenchikov. It's all part of the curse.

LEON. You mean Sophia cannot love me?

GREGOR. You have one day to find that out, sir. One single day. Twenty-five measly hours.

LEON. Twenty-four.

GREGOR. What?

LEON. There are twenty-four hours in a day.

GREGOR. I believe you are thinking of February, sir.

Good night. (*He leaves.*)

LEON. But is it true? If I cannot teach Sophia to think in twenty-four hours, she will never be able to love me?

(*Sophia appears on the balcony.*)

SOPHIA. Leon!

LEON. Sophia! Are you all right?

SOPHIA. I must talk to you. Someplace where we'll not be seen.

LEON. Wherever you say.

SOPHIA. Can you meet me here?

LEON. Yes. When?

SOPHIA. Now!

LEON. Now? Yes. Of course. That's where I am.

SOPHIA. Come up here. Hurry, Leon, hurry. It's of