

(MARIA, slightly bewildered, takes the whistle from its case. The CAPTAIN crosses downstage right.)

MARIA. I won't have to whistle for them, Reverend Captain...
What I mean is, I'll be with them all the time.

CAPTAIN. Not on all occasions. This is a large house and a large estate. They have been taught to come only when they hear their signal. Now when I want you, this is what you'll hear.

(He whistles the governess' signal.)

MARIA. You won't have to trouble, sir, because I couldn't answer to a whistle.

CAPTAIN. That's nonsense. Everyone in this house answers to a whistle. I'll show you.

(He whistles the butler's signal.)

FRANZ. *(Entering downstage right and coming to attention.)*
Yes, sir?

CAPTAIN. This is my orderly – my butler. The new governess – Fraulein Maria.

(He whistles the housekeeper's signal.)

FRAU SCHMIDT. *(Entering on the balcony.)* Yes, sir?

CAPTAIN. That is the executive officer, Frau Schmidt, the housekeeper. Fraulein Maria. Please be sure that her room is ready.

FRAU SCHMIDT. Yes, sir.

(FRANZ takes Maria's bag and goes upstairs to the landing, joining FRAU SCHMIDT.)

CAPTAIN. Well, I shall now leave you with the children. You are in command.

(He starts out downstage right. MARIA blows a blast on the whistle. He stops and turns.)

MARIA. Pardon me, sir – I don't know how to address you.

CAPTAIN. You will call me Captain.

MARIA. (*Crosses to the CAPTAIN.*) Thank you, Captain. I forgot to return this whistle, Captain. I won't need it, Captain.

(The CAPTAIN takes the whistle and exits downstage right. FRANZ and FRAU SCHMIDT exit to the third floor. MARIA turns to the CHILDREN with a hand clap, catching them off guard.)

Well, now that there's just us, would you tell me your names again and tell me how old you are. Now you're -?

(Each CHILD, in turn, steps forward in military manner, speaks, and then steps back.)

LIESL. I'm Liesl. I'm sixteen years old and I don't need a governess.

MARIA. (*Right of LIESL.*) I'm glad you told me. We'll just be friends.

(LIESL steps back. FRIEDRICH steps forward.)

FRIEDRICH. I'm Friedrich. I'm fourteen. I'm a boy.

MARIA. (*Right of FRIEDRICH.*) Boy? Why, you're almost a man.

(FRIEDRICH looks pleased. LOUISA signals the other girls, who giggle.)

LOUISA. I'm Brigitta.

MARIA. (*Crosses behind LOUISA, pulling up her braid.*) You didn't tell me how old you are, Louisa.

BRIGITTA. (*Steps left of MARIA.*) I'm Brigitta. She's Louisa and she's thirteen years old and you're smart. I'm nine and I think your dress is the ugliest one I ever saw.

KURT. (*Steps right of MARIA.*) Brigitta, you mustn't say a thing like that.

BRIGITTA. Why not? Don't you think it's ugly?

KURT. If I did think so, I wouldn't say so.

(Snapping to attention.) I'm Kurt, I'm eleven - almost.

MARIA. That's a nice age to be, eleven – almost.

MARTA. *(Steps forward left of MARIA, pulling her skirt.)* I'm Marta and I'm going to be seven on Tuesday and I'd like a pink parasol.

MARIA. Pink is my favorite color, too.

(GRETl steps forward and stamps her foot.)

And you're Gretl.

*(GRETl smiles and jumps into MARIA's arms.
MARIA crosses left center.)*

I'm going to tell you something.

*(She sits on the chair right of the sofa and
puts GRETl on the floor right of her.)*

I've never been a governess before. How do I start?

LOUISA. *(Runs to MARIA.)* You mean you don't know anything about being a governess?

MARIA. No.

LOUISA. Well, the first thing you have to do is to tell Father to mind his own business.

KURT. No, Louisa, don't. I like her.

BRIGITTA. *(Above chair, picking up guitar case.)* What's in here?

MARIA. My guitar.

BRIGITTA. What did you bring this for?

MARIA. For when we all sing together.

(BRIGITTA takes the guitar out of the case.)

MARTA. We don't sing.

MARIA. Of course you sing. Everybody sings. What songs do you know?

KURT. We don't know any songs.

MARIA. *(Taking guitar from BRIGITTA.)* You don't?

CHILDREN. No.

MARIA. Well, now I know where to start.