

MOTHER ABBESS. Why did they send you back to us?

MARIA. (*After a moment's hesitation.*) They didn't send me back. I left. I left without telling them I was going – without saying goodbye.

MOTHER ABBESS. Sit down, Maria.

[MUSIC NO. 27 "INCIDENTAL"]

(**MARIA** sits by the desk. **SISTER MARGARETTA** looks on with increasing interest.)

Maria, what happened? Why did you do this?

MARIA. I was frightened.

MOTHER ABBESS. Frightened?

MARIA. (*With difficulty.*) I was confused. I felt – I never felt that way before. I couldn't stay – and I knew that here I would be away from it – that here I would be safe.

MOTHER ABBESS. Maria, our abbey is not to be used as an escape. What is it you can't face?

(*Music out.*)

MARIA. I can't face him again.

MOTHER ABBESS. (*After a pause.*) Thank you, Sister Margarett.

(**SISTER MARGARETTA** exits upstage right. The **MOTHER ABBESS** stands behind **MARIA**. She puts her hands on **MARIA**'s shoulders and speaks quietly.)

Maria, are you in love with Captain von Trapp?

MARIA. (*Torn.*) I don't know. I don't know.

MOTHER ABBESS. Tell me about it, my child.

MARIA. (*With emotion.*) Brigitta said that I was – and that her father was in love with me – and then there he was – and we were looking at each other – and I could hardly breathe. Then I knew I couldn't stay.

(*She rises.*)

MOTHER ABBESS. But you do like him, Maria?

MARIA. Oh, yes!

MOTHER ABBESS. Did you let him see how you felt?

MARIA. (*Turning to her.*) If I did I didn't know that I did. That's what's been torturing me. I was there on God's errand. To have asked for the Captain's love would have been wrong. I don't know, Mother. I do know this –

(*She kneels before the* **MOTHER ABBESS.**)

I am ready at this very moment to take the vows of poverty, obedience and – chastity.

MOTHER ABBESS. (*Helping MARIA to rise.*) Maria, the love of a man and a woman is holy, too. The first time we talked together – you told me that you remembered your father and mother before they died. Do you remember – were they happy?

(*She seats MARIA on the stool.*)

MARIA. Oh, yes, Mother, they were very happy.

MOTHER ABBESS. Maria, you were born of their happiness, of their love. And, my child, you have a great capacity to love. What you must find out is – how does God want you to spend your love.

(*She sits at her desk.*)

MARIA. I've pledged my life to God's service. I've pledged my life to God.

MOTHER ABBESS. My daughter, if you love this man, it doesn't mean that you love God less. You must find out. You must go back.

MARIA. (*Rising.*) Oh, no, Mother, please, don't ask me to do that. Please!

[MUSIC NO. 28 "CLIMB EV'RY MOUNTAIN"]

Let me stay here.

(*She circles behind the desk and sinks at the feet of the* **MOTHER ABBESS.**)

MOTHER ABBESS. These walls were not made to shut out problems. You have to face them. You have to find the life you were born to live.

MARIA. How do I find it?