

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 landing, joining FRAU SCHMIDT.*)

CAPTAIN: Well, I shall now leave you with the children.

You are in command. (*He starts out D.R. 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 CAPTAIN*) Thank you, Captain. I forgot to return this whistle, Captain. I won't need it, Captain. (*He takes the whistle and exits D.R. FRANZ and FRAU SCHMIDT exit to third floor. She turns to children with a handclap, 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: (*R. 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: (*R. 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 L. 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 R. 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 L. 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. (*GRETTL steps forward and stamps her foot.*) And you're Gretl. (*GRETTL smiles and jumps into her arms. MARIA crosses L.C.*) I'm going to tell you something. (*MARIA sits on chair R. of sofa, puts GRETEL on floor R. 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.

MARTA: (*BRIGITTA takes guitar out of case*) We don't sing.

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

KURT: We don't know any songs.