

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Copyright Protection. This play (the “Play”) is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, and the Berne Convention.

Reservation of Rights. All rights to this Play are strictly reserved, including, without limitation, professional and amateur stage performance rights; motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video, and sound recording rights; rights to all other forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction now known or yet to be invented, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, photocopying, and information storage and retrieval systems; and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

Performance Licensing and Royalty Payments. Amateur and stock performance rights to this Play are controlled exclusively by Playscripts, Inc. (“Playscripts”). No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this Play without obtaining advance written permission from Playscripts. Required royalty fees for performing this Play are specified online at the Playscripts website (www.playscripts.com). Such royalty fees may be subject to change without notice. Although this book may have been obtained for a particular licensed performance, such performance rights, if any, are not transferable. Required royalties must be paid every time the Play is performed before any audience, whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. All licensing requests and inquiries concerning amateur and stock performance rights should be addressed to Playscripts (see contact information on opposite page).

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to the author's agent: Peter Hagan, The Gersh Agency, 41 Madison Ave., 33rd Floor, New York, NY 10010.

Restriction of Alterations. There shall be no deletions, alterations, or changes of any kind made to the Play, including the changing of character gender, the cutting of dialogue, or the alteration of objectionable language, unless directly authorized by Playscripts. The title of the Play shall not be altered.

Author Credit. Any individual or group receiving permission to produce this Play is required to give credit to the author as the sole and exclusive author of the Play. This obligation applies to the title page of every program distributed in connection with performances of the Play, and in any instance that the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing, or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and of a font size at least 50% as large as the largest letter used in the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the author. The name of the author may not be abbreviated or otherwise altered from the form in which it appears in this Play.

Publisher Attribution. All programs, advertisements, and other printed material distributed or published in connection with the amateur or stock production of the Play shall include the following notice:

**Produced by special arrangement with Playscripts, Inc.
(www.playscripts.com)**

Prohibition of Unauthorized Copying. Any unauthorized copying of this book or excerpts from this book is strictly forbidden by law. Except as otherwise permitted by applicable law, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including, without limitation, photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Playscripts.

Statement of Non-affiliation. This Play may include references to brand names and trademarks owned by third parties, and may include references to public figures. Playscripts is not necessarily affiliated with these public figures, or with the owners of such trademarks and brand names. Such references are included solely for parody, political comment, or other permitted purposes.

Permissions for Sound Recordings and Musical Works. This Play may contain directions calling for the performance of a portion, or all, of a musical work, or performance of a sound recording of a musical work. Playscripts has not obtained permissions to perform such works. The producer of this Play is advised to obtain such permissions, if required in the context of the production. The producer is directed to the websites of the U.S. Copyright Office (www.copyright.gov), ASCAP (www.ascap.com), BMI (www.bmi.com), and NMPA (www.nmpa.org) for further information on the need to obtain permissions, and on procedures for obtaining such permissions.

The Rules in Brief

- 1) Do NOT perform this Play without obtaining prior permission from Playscripts, and without paying the required royalty.
- 2) Do NOT photocopy, scan, or otherwise duplicate any part of this book.
- 3) Do NOT alter the text of the Play, change a character's gender, delete any dialogue, or alter any objectionable language, unless explicitly authorized by Playscripts.
- 4) DO provide the required credit to the author and the required attribution to Playscripts in all programs and promotional literature associated with any performance of this Play.

For more details on these and other rules, see the opposite page.

Copyright Basics

This Play is protected by United States and international copyright law. These laws ensure that playwrights are rewarded for creating new and vital dramatic work, and protect them against theft and abuse of their work.

A play is a piece of property, fully owned by the playwright, just like a house or car. You must obtain permission to use this property, and must pay a royalty fee for the privilege—*whether or not you charge an admission fee*. Playscripts collects these required payments on behalf of the author.

Anyone who violates an author's copyright is liable as a copyright infringer under United States and international law. Playscripts and the author are entitled to institute legal action for any such infringement, which can subject the infringer to actual damages, statutory damages, and attorneys' fees. A court may impose statutory damages of up to \$150,000 for willful copyright infringements. U.S. copyright law also provides for possible criminal sanctions. Visit the website of the U.S. Copyright Office (www.copyright.gov) for more information.

THE BOTTOM LINE: If you break copyright law, you are robbing a playwright and opening yourself to expensive legal action. Follow the rules, and when in doubt, ask us.

Playscripts, Inc.
325 W. 38th Street, Suite 305
New York, NY 10018

Phone: 1-866-NEW-PLAY (639-7529)
Email: info@playscripts.com
Web: www.playscripts.com

Cast of Characters

THEA KRONBORG:

At ages 10-12

At ages 17-18

In her 30s

DOCTOR HOWARD ARCHIE

PROFESSOR WUNSCH

RAY KENNEDY

ANDOR HARSANYI

Time

The early 20th century.

Place

Moonstone, Colorado, then the world.

Production Notes

The many settings that surround the story of Thea Kronborg may be simple or complex. Simple is best: a few set pieces tracked or moved onstage and off, a few dropped pieces here and there, all against a large western cyclorama sky, where perhaps projections also appear.

Lark may be played in two short acts, or in one, without intermission.

Author's Note

If you are young, talented, and trying to sing, or play the piano, or compose music or dance or paint or write or become any kind of artist, and find it almost hopeless, the best thing you can do is read Willa Cather's *The Song of the Lark*. In this novel, she creates the childhood of the artist as none other. How a poor farm girl in the vast Midwest becomes a great opera singer in other hands could seem preposterous, not in hers. It is not so much how Thea Kronborg does it, and who helps her, that is so moving, as what is done. A child's soul finds what it loves, fights for it, and never looks back. During her lifetime, Willa Cather forbade dramatizations of her books. But when The Children's Theatre of Minneapolis asked me for a play, I hoped she would not mind too much if I tried to make *The Song of the Lark* something for the stage that an adult and a child, one perhaps like the child she had been, could experience together.

LARK

adapted by Romulus Linney

FROM WILLA CATHER'S NOVEL, *SONG OF THE LARK*

ACT I

(A train is heard in the distance, coming and fading away, against the sound of a cold wind. A large grey sky, dark and forbidding. At center in a light is a child's small iron cot, with a worn quilt over it. It is backed by a plain, backstairs wooden wall. The sound of the cold wind cross fades with the sound of coughing, to which is added the sound of a newborn baby screaming. Lights and sound fade. A silence. Then a girl's coughing is heard again, rasping and dangerous. Lights up on THEA KRONBORG, a girl about twelve or thirteen, with blond hair. She is in the bed. There is a pile of books on a small table by her side. Enter DOCTOR ARCHIE. He is in his early thirties, in plain but well-cut clothes of the 1900s, carrying a doctor's bag.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Thea?

THEA. Yes.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. You in here?

THEA. Yes. Who is it?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. It's Doctor Archie, Thea. *(He goes to THEA's bedside. He puts his hand on her forehead.)*

THEA. Oh, Doctor. Has the baby come?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Last night.

THEA. Is my mother all right?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. She's fine. Question is, how are you? *(He quickly opens his bag, gets out a thermometer and a stethoscope.)*

THEA. Do I have a brother or a sister?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Brother. Open.

(THEA opens her mouth and DOCTOR ARCHIE puts the thermometer under her tongue.)

THEA. I'm glad.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Don't talk with that in your mouth.

THEA. Brothers—

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Hush—

THEA. Are more fun!

(THEA coughs, violently. DOCTOR ARCHIE takes out the thermometer and holds her wrists while she coughs. It is a dangerous and violent fit of coughing.)

THEA. I'm sorry. I don't mean to be a bother.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. You're not a bother. Here. *(He puts the thermometer back in her mouth.)* Now listen to me. You are going to have to be very quiet, do what I tell you, eat and drink what I tell you and sleep a great deal.

(THEA talks with the thermometer in her mouth:)

THEA. But there's a new baby.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. So?

THEA. I'll have a lot to do. I want to take care of him.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Not until you get well.

THEA. Mother and Father.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Hush. I'm going to talk to your mother and father, and your brothers and sisters and everybody else who comes to this house. They are all going to pay some attention to you. They will begin by moving your bed out of this back room into the parlor where it's warm and dry.

THEA. But the baby.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Will be fine. I am going to get you into a very strong mustard plaster, wrap you in some heated sheets, and do something— *(DOCTOR ARCHIE takes out the thermometer, gives it*

one quick look) about this. Now. (*He takes a stethoscope and listens to THEA's chest.*)

THEA. Mother and Father depend on me.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Breathe. You don't do things for your family for awhile. Your family does things for you. No getting up and working until I tell you, no school until I tell you.

THEA. No piano?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Especially no piano. No trips on foot into town to study with your Professor. Once more, breathe.

THEA. But I love my lessons with him.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. When you're well. Does he still drink?

THEA. A little. But he's a good teacher.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Right now, you drink this. (*DOCTOR ARCHIE pours some medicine into a spoon. He looks at a pile of books by her bedside.*) What are those?

THEA. Oh, my grammars. My father started it. Swedish and German, which are alike. Then French. I learn languages easy, and I like it.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Swallow. (*He feeds the medicine to THEA. He looks at the grammar books.*) You have to memorize this? Verbs, genders, declensions?

THEA. I just do it.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Not now. If you must read while you're sick, read something fun. You will permit yourself to be amused and taken care of. A bed will be made for you in the parlor.

THEA. In the parlor, me?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. You. I'm going to stay here until I see it is done. I'm going to stay here until your brothers and sisters understand you are to be left alone, and not jumped on or yelled at or bothered in any way whatsoever.

THEA. Am I that sick?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. You have pneumonia. But you are going to pull through. And everybody is going to help.

THEA. I don't want to be anything special.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. I hereby declare you Something Special for one whole month, maybe longer. You understand?

THEA. Why are you so good to me?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. I'm your doctor.

THEA. More than that.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Wrist. *(He takes her pulse:)* Maybe we just like each other. I'll talk to your mother and father. I'll stop in at school. I'll go see that piano teacher, if he's sober. And no grammar books. I mean business here, you understand?

THEA. Yes, Doctor. Thank you.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. All right. Get ready to move.

(He snaps his bag shut, presses her hand, and leaves. THEA smiles, and sighs, and snuggles back into bed. Lights change around her, and her bed moves. When the lights come up again, it is surrounded by a comfortable parlor, with substantial wallpapered walls that hold paintings and photographs. THEA sits up in bed. She is much better. She has pulled a warm woolen coverlet over her, and she is reading a book, aloud to herself, slowly.)

(DOCTOR ARCHIE appears, listening to her.)

THEA. And all that Memory loves the most
Was once our only hope to be,
And all that Hope adored and lost Hath melted into Memory.
(Thinks:) We lose what we loved when we were little?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. What on earth are you doing?

THEA. Oh! I didn't see you.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Talking to yourself?

THEA. Yes. But I'm reading something I like.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. What?

THEA. This. Trying to, anyway.

(DOCTOR ARCHIE takes the book and looks at the cover.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Lord Byron? Do you like him?

THEA. I don't always understand him, but I like him. Here. *(She finds a place in the book:)* "My native Land, good night." That.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. How about "Maid of Athens"? That's racy.

THEA. No. But "We'll go no more a-roving." I like that.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Lord Byron had a terrible reputation.

THEA. I don't see what's so terrible about him. I love the words, and he makes me laugh.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Where did you get Lord Byron?

THEA. Sunday School gives my father a present because he's the Preacher. This year they gave him this.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Did they know what's in it?

THEA. It doesn't matter, because my father never reads it anyway.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. All right, so *you* read Byron, just don't repeat everything he says. More grammars?

(DOCTOR ARCHIE picks up two or three other books.)

THEA. I added Spanish. I can't just lie here!

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Swedish, German, French, Spanish, and Lord Byron. You do keep busy.

THEA. That's me.

(DOCTOR ARCHIE puts his hand to THEA's forehead.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Color in your cheeks. Breathe. *(She does.)*

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Not a sound, and your forehead *is* cool as a cucumber. Almost well.

THEA. Then can I get up?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Tomorrow, but slowly. Another few days in the house. We almost lost you, Thea.

THEA. I don't remember much about it.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. I do. That baby brother of yours made enough noise to raise the dead. Thor, that's the Norwegian God of Thunder.

THEA. Thor's all right. But it was sort of fun to be sick. No school. Didn't have to practice the piano.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. How much do you do that?

THEA. Four hours a day. Mother says I have talent. She and my father and their mothers and fathers all played and sang. So she thinks I should, too.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Your music professor stopped me on the street and asked how you were. He'll be sick himself, trotting around in the cold with no overcoat.

THEA. He's poor.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. He can afford whiskey. Is he all right when you take your lessons? He wasn't when I saw him. He was drunk.

THEA. I don't care if he drinks. He's old and he's poor. He never uses bad language, Doctor Archie. He's very proper with me and always sober.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. But should you have to practice so much?

THEA. He won't hear of anything else. When I hurt my right hand and you said I couldn't practice til it got well, he made me play with my left. He's hard on me, but I like him.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. I guess he wants you to do your best. OK.

THEA. Doctor Archie, could we get him a coat?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. What?

THEA. He could get pneumonia like I did. Maybe somebody's old coat, from somewhere.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Like my hall closet. You do think fast.

THEA. Can we?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. He wouldn't take anything from me.

THEA. If you can find a coat, I'll get it on him.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. I'll try.

THEA. How is your wife? We never see her.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. She doesn't go out much.

THEA. Why not?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. She likes to stay home. Not everyone is as happy as you are.

THEA. Will I always be happy, Doctor Archie? Lord Byron doesn't seem to think I will, or anybody will.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Lord Byron doesn't know everything. But sometimes, as we grow older, life gets more—complicated.

THEA. For you, too?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. For everybody.

THEA. Then it will for me. But I want everything when I grow up. I want to play the piano. I want a husband like my father and lots of friends like my brothers and sisters and I want to be a mother like my mother, and have ten babies. Can I have all that?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Ask Byron.

THEA. He'd say yes to the piano and no to everything else. What do you say?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. I hope you get—what you want.

THEA. Let me ask you again, Doctor Archie. Why do you care about me? Not just because you're my doctor, either.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. There's something about you. I can't put it into words. Maybe it has to do with your piano music. Maybe it has to do with reading Byron and memorizing grammars. Beats me. And I do have other patients, so good-bye. You can get up tomorrow, but you don't go outside until Monday.

THEA. Remember the coat?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. All right! Good-bye.

(Exit DOCTOR ARCHIE. THEA opens her Byron again. She reads aloud, slowly as before.)

THEA. When a man hath no freedom to fight for at home,
Let him combat for that of his neighbors;
Let him think of the glories of Greece and of Rome
And get knock'd on the head for his labors.

I know what that means!

(THEA laughs with delight. Lights go down. Music. Dreary Czerny piano exercises. The parlor disappears and a cluttered, one-room studio appears, centered around a large battered trunk and a circular piano stool. WUNSCH is flapping the overcoat about, turning it this way and that, then putting it on. WUNSCH is not a comic figure. He is old, ragged, his hair close-cropped. He is really ferocious looking, more like an unkempt ogre than a foolish professor. His clothes are worn and even a bit dirty. And he is sober. Enter THEA, watching him.)

THEA. See, it does fit.

WUNSCH. I suppose. Where did it come from?

THEA. A friend.

WUNSCH. I don't take charity!

THEA. My mother.

WUNSCH. Oh.

THEA. Don't hurt her feelings. Wear it.

WUNSCH. Thank her for me, now play. Scale of B flat Major.

(THEA sits on a piano stool. WUNSCH waits impatiently, leaving the coat on. THEA gets ready to begin, then stops.)

THEA. Professor.

WUNSCH. I said play!!

THEA. I need some help.

WUNSCH. Yes. Help with the hands, with the back, with the notes, with the scales! Be-gin!!

THEA. But I don't know who else to ask!

WUNSCH. Ask what?

THEA. I need a hymn.

WUNSCH. Here, you play scales, Czerny, then Schubert, then Schumann. Hymns make me sick.

THEA. I can sing solos in my father's church. I'll make ten cents every time. That's a lot of money. It will help the family.

WUNSCH. Do you want to sing?

THEA. Well, I can hum, and sing ditties and things. On Sundays in church, along with everybody else. Why not by myself? I need to do it for the family.

WUNSCH. Do you have your Schubert ready?

THEA. Yes.

WUNSCH. From memory?

THEA. Yes.

WUNSCH. All right, one minute. Your father's church. Most everybody wants something from Sweden?

THEA. Most everybody.

WUNSCH. Humm. (*WUNSCH opens the large trunk. It contains very old manuscripts of all kinds of music. He pulls out hunks of manuscripts, slaps them down here and there. Finally he finds one, torn, faded, almost crumbled away from age.*) Ah. No, no. (*He throws it back. Picks another.*) Ugh. Death, ugh. Pray, die, ugh. (*He throws it back.*) All about fear, nothing about life and love, like Schubert. Well, here. (*He holds up one, tattered, almost in pieces.*) Music here is good. Words? (*Reads:*) "God is God, even if all the people perish." Ugh. Can you sight sing this? La, la, la. Dum, dum, dum. Forget the words.

THEA. I think so. (*She sings the melody of the Swedish folk hymn, clumsily.*) But what about the words?

(WUNSCH pulls a tattered manuscript in ink out of his trunk.)

WUNSCH. Use these.

THEA. What are they?

WUNSCH. Never mind! Now, scale of B flat Major.

(Pause. THEA reads the lyrics of the music.)

THEA. But this isn't like a hymn. It's like a love song. Who wrote this?

WUNSCH. Somebody. Who cares?

THEA. And the music? It doesn't say who wrote that, either.

WUNSCH. Just use those words. Now forget hymns and play your piano.

THEA. Scale of B Flat Major.

(THEA turns facing out on the piano stool. We hear the scale as the lights go down and the Professor's study disappears. Sound of a train again. The scales cross fade with a young child crying. THEA turns around leading a little wagon, with her baby brother Thor in it. Thor is a puppet. He is always crying, and THEA takes care of him by riding him around in a wagon. Sound of the train fades.)

THEA. Now, Thor. *(Thor bellows.)*

THEA. Hush, look around. I'm going to show you all kinds of nice things. The dry goods store. The drug store. The railroad station. Maybe we'll see Ray Kennedy get off his train.

(Thor howls. THEA wheels Thor off. Enter DOCTOR ARCHIE, with RAY KENNEDY, who is a railroad conductor with freight trains. He is thirty, and wears railroad clothes and cap. He is a very plain but forthright man, not handsome but honest and appealing.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. So what's this big secret?

RAY. I just want to make sure I'm not being a fool.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. You're the most sensible fellow in town, Ray. Everybody likes you and I like you. So what's the matter?

RAY. It's about Thea Kronborg.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. What about her?

RAY. She's kind of exceptional.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Yes, she is.

RAY. She's still just a kid. What do you think will happen to her if she stays here?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. In Moonstone? What can? She'll play the piano awhile. Be a music teacher, I guess.

RAY. And get married, right?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. And have a lot of children like her mother, and be a fine woman wherever she is.

RAY. But you say that like there's something wrong with it.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. It's what happens.

RAY. So, is it wrong for me thinking now about marrying her?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Now wait a minute.

RAY. She's the most wonderful person I've ever known. And we're pals, you know. I mean, she likes to hear about where I've been, in Mexico and the Southwest, and what I've seen, and all. She does like me. I'm only thirty, and like you say, in five years she'll have to marry somebody around here, and Doctor Archie, I swear to God, nobody could love her more than I do.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. I believe you. You're a fine man. And in five years, when she's seventeen, eighteen, if she loves you, why not?

RAY. Gosh, you just don't know how much better that makes me feel! I know she's still a child, and God knows I'd die before I'd ever say a thing about it before she's ready. All I want in this world is to make her happy. *(Thor is heard, howling again.)*

DOCTOR ARCHIE. You can start doing that right now. Here she comes. With Thor.

(Thor howls. THEA pulls him up to DOCTOR ARCHIE and RAY.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Hello, Thea.

THEA. Good morning, Doctor Archie. Hello, Ray.

RAY. Hello, Thee.

(Thor howls.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Does he ever stop doing that?

THEA. He's cutting his teeth now.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. When do you practice your piano?

THEA. Thor sleeps as hard as he yells. I find time.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Well, I'll leave you to your work. Come by my office any time, after five. I'm always glad to see you, and even Thor. Ray.

RAY. Good morning, Doctor.

THEA. Bye.

(Exit DOCTOR ARCHIE.)

RAY. I'm glad to see you, Thee. You don't mind I call you Thee, do you? Kind of short for Thea?

THEA. No, Ray. *(Thor howls.)*

THEA. Hush, Thor. Here's a ginger root. Suck on that. *(Thor quiets down.)*

THEA. Did you mean it, Ray, about taking us all to the Sand Hills?

RAY. Sure, Thee. I got next Sunday off, and if your mother and father want to bring your brothers and sisters, I'll hitch up my wagon and take every one of you.

THEA. I can see some of the hills from the edge of town, but I want to really go there. What are they like, Ray?

(THEA now sits in the wagon, with Thor held in her arms, his face to her, sucking his ginger root. RAY sets his crate down and sits on it by her.)

RAY. On my Moonstone-Denver run, sometimes the train goes through them at dawn. *(RAY points out ahead of them, as if seeing the Colorado Sand Hills.)* The Turquoise Hills, that's what they call them

in the mornings, all blue-green and green-blue, shifting like that, I mean, big desert country, wide open. Sometimes you even see a mirage.

THEA. Mirage?

RAY. It's a phantom lake, Thee, spreading for miles and miles. It's just an illusion, of course, but it seems real, and beyond it lie more and more hills, all kinds of colors, sunbaked yellow and purple, everything a big beautiful desert can be.

THEA. Oh, Ray. Are there really so many wonderful things like that in the world?

RAY. You know what I want you to see most of all?

THEA. What, Ray?

RAY. A canyon. It's in Arizona, but you can get there easy from here. When I was a young fellow, Thee, I was first chasing gold mines, then tending bar, a sheep herder for awhile, then a brakeman on the Sante Fe. I was awful mixed up about a lot of things.

THEA. I can't imagine you mixed up about anything, Ray.

RAY. Yeah, well, I was. But I woke up, early, early in the morning, camping out by myself in this canyon. Now, Thee, years and years and years ago, the first Americans lived in that canyon. Their cliff dwellings are still there. You can still find scraps of hard clay, from the jars they made to hold the water they had to save.

THEA. What were they?

RAY. Navajo, people think. Anasazi, Ancient Ones. They cut these houses out of the side of the canyon, and lived there so simple and plain, that when they died, they left nothing behind except these wonderful places where they could see for miles and miles, everything in the canyon. That morning when I woke up, I saw the light begin and then the sun come up and—and— *(RAY has his arms out trying vainly to describe his experience, but can't.)* —all that—I mean—and everything. Well, I guess, you'd say, kid, I saw what I reckon God ought to be.

THEA. You did?

RAY. I know your Daddy's a preacher and I wouldn't say nothing against that, but from that morning on, I've been what you call a freethinker.

THEA. What's that?

RAY. A man who just thinks what he thinks. In that canyon I felt like I was in a place so wonderful, just being me there, watching that great sun come up, was—everything needed. I kinda knew what I was, after that. A little man in a big place, but lucky to be alive. I been sober ever since. Sounds pretty confused I guess.

THEA. Not to me.

RAY. Well, some day, maybe, I can take you to that canyon, and you can see for yourself

THEA. Thor's asleep. (*THEA sets Thor down in the wagon, and covers him with the little blanket. Then she jumps to her feet and arms out, spins herself around and around.*) Oh, Ray! Yes! Yes! I do want to go to that canyon! I want to go everywhere! I want to see everything! Some days, like at school, or in church, with everybody else so set on what they're doing and happy about it, I'm not. Just walking down the street sometimes, I want to explode! I want to blow myself up in the air and get taken by the wind everywhere. Your canyon, Chicago, all the great cities, all over the whole world!

RAY. Aw, kid.

THEA. I do! My music can take me there. I think if I just work hard enough, and get good enough at the piano, I can get to some of those places. Oh, I don't know. I guess I'm as crazy as you were.

RAY. No. You're something else.

THEA. I know what I don't want to do! I love my mother and father and my brother and sisters, but Ray, what I don't want to do—is get married.

RAY. Oh. That so?

THEA. I don't.

RAY. Not ever?

THEA. Well, not until I found my canyon like you did, or been the places I want to go, played the piano like I want to play it. Most people want a good home and married to a good person and having babies, but is it wrong, Ray? Wanting something as bad as I do, first, and not knowing what it is?

RAY. Uh, well, kid. I guess nothing you really want would be wrong. But maybe, some day, you might think again about getting married. To the right man. I mean, in time, I mean.

THEA. Maybe so. *(Nodding.)* Maybe so.

RAY. Yeah. *(Nodding.)* Yeah.

THEA. Thor's waking up. That means trouble. What was the name of that place in Arizona?

(THEA wheels Thor off RAY gets up, stands smiling after her.)

RAY. Panther Canyon!

THEA. *(Calling:)* Next Sunday the Sand Hills! Don't forget!

RAY. *(Calling:)* I'll remember! *(He stares after her, beaming. To himself:)* I'll remember, kid. Will you?

(We hear the scale of B Flat Major again. Professor WUNSCH's study appears. A bright spotlight is on the piano stool as the scale is heard. THEA, now older, sixteen, played now by another actress, but with the same blond hair. She sits on the stool, her back to us. She does not pretend to be playing a piano with her arms and hands, but sits still, swaying slightly, full of energy, and we understand that she is playing. Professor WUNSCH appears, even more unkempt and ferocious-looking. He has a flask of whiskey in one hand, which he looks at and firmly closes and puts in his pocket. THEA ends the scale.)

WUNSCH. So you are a little early today?

THEA. I need to talk to you.

WUNSCH. Talk, why talk? Play.

THEA. Professor Wunsch—

WUNSCH. All right, talk. One minute.

THEA. (*THEA looks at her hands:*) It just isn't here anymore. The more I practice, the worse I get. The first years I studied with my mother were all right. Then you came to Moonstone and I was thrilled and it was so exciting. Now it's all gone away. Good music is harder than I ever thought.

WUNSCH. Why do you think I stay here, teaching music in this little town?

THEA. Don't you want to be here?

WUNSCH. For you! There is no place else for me. I teach you, a great pleasure, and some others, not a great pleasure. And so I drink too much. Do you think this is what I wanted for my life?

THEA. I guess not.

WUNSCH. No. You think I don't understand how it feels, music gone from your hands. It happened to me. If I thought it had happened to you, I would stop teaching you.

THEA. You would?

WUNSCH. I would stop saying practice and practice and practice. I would not worry about everything that can take you from your music.

THEA. Like what?

WUNSCH. Like your family!

THEA. Oh.

WUNSCH. Like your friends, your life at school. Join this, be a part of that, win a blue ribbon, watch the football! Then dance, meet your sweethearts, have your husband, have your babies. A fine life. But not first. First, for you, is piano.

THEA. All right, but you still haven't told me, where the music has gone. I play now, it's stiff. It doesn't move. It's dead.

WUNSCH. Not dead. Testing you. Music is very beautiful, but it can be very cruel. Sometimes the most cruel to those who love it the most. That is hard. You are a Swedish-American farm girl. You are healthy as a cow, strong as a horse, with honest down-to-earth

common sense. And a talent, I believe comes to you straight from the angels. Simple and strong, like that Swedish hymn I found for you years ago, that got you jobs at church. You sing all the time now.

THEA. The hymn was fine but not the words you put to it. They almost got me in real trouble.

WUNSCH. What words?

THEA. Three verses about men finding God-loving women, and women finding God-loving men, and people all finding God-loving people. They said it was sacrilegious. But since it came from you, they said well, what can we expect. But they liked the music and so they just changed the words.

WUNSCH. To God being God and we die.

THEA. Yes.

WUNSCH. Sing the hymn.

THEA. What?

WUNSCH. Not the words. Just the music.

THEA. All right.

WUNSCH. And give you your hands. *(He holds THEA's hands.)* Don't think about these hands or the piano. Just la la la, like when I first gave it to you. Just the music.

(THEA sings the Swedish hymn. As she does, she feels stronger. WUNSCH releases her.)

WUNSCH. So?

THEA. I do feel better.

WUNSCH. So what now? Let's see. *(He goes to his big trunk again, digs through a lot of music.)* You are beginning to feel something that is not yet quite here. But we should prepare for it. *(WUNSCH finds the score he was looking for, old and yellowed and tattered.)* This.

(He gives it to THEA, who pours over it.)

WUNSCH. Your scales, Czerny, Schubert, Schumann, Beethoven, Mozart, and Brahms. But sooner or later, Father Bach.

THEA. This says Franz Lizst.

WUNSCH. It says piano transcription by Lizst, from A Minor Fugue by Bach. This is not for you now, but it demands—put together—the skill and the music. Franz Lizst was the greatest player of the piano who ever lived, but here he bowed to Bach. Lizst and Bach. Keep the music. Until you are ready for the secret that is in it.

THEA. What secret?

WUNSCH. The secret of music.

THEA. You're driving me crazy! What does that mean?

WUNSCH. No one can tell you. In the meantime, you work and work and work to understand the hands, the skill. Bach will teach you the rest later. And skill you can learn from me! Scale in B Flat Major! And!

THEA. Professor!

WUNSCH. Yes??

THEA. The words to that hymn, who wrote them?

WUNSCH. A fool, years ago!

THEA. You, years ago?

WUNSCH. No!

THEA. Yes! And!

(THEA spins about on her stool and the B Flat Major Scale begins. As she plays the light begins to fade on her, but stays on WUNSCH, as he looks at her with a strange and searching expression. Then as the light goes out on THEA, WUNSCH takes out his flask of whiskey and drains it. WUNSCH's study disappears. THEA goes to one side of the stage and takes up Thor, now a bigger puppet, three years older. She carries him against her hip to the center of the stage, sets him down facing her, and sits before him.)

THEA. Here, Thor. This is an old alarm clock. It can't keep time because it's rusted out, see? But you can punch it and push the hands

and sometimes it will still ding once or twice. You're the only one I can talk about this to!

(Puppet Thor seems to be fooling with the old clock.)

THEA. Thor, I hate Maisie Fischer! I want to kill her! I want to stick her on a spit and roast her over a blazing fire! I want to watch her toes shrivel up and her eyes pop out! Oh, THOR!!

(A ding! from Thor, playing with the clock.)

THEA. I didn't care about that Christmas show at school! But the entertainment committee, that means Mrs. Livery Johnson, who loves Maisie and her mother's church and hates me and my mother's church, she put Maisie Fischer down to sing, and I was down for "instrumental"!

(A noise of clock springs from Thor.)

THEA. All right, but I couldn't play Schubert or anything else I studied with Professor Wunsch. I had to play that boring "Western Sunsets" somebody dumb wrote for the public schools. Well, I spoke up for myself and said to Mrs. Livery Johnson this wasn't fair. She didn't like that and said, yes, she understood I was Maisie's rival in the entertainment business. So I would play "Western Sunsets" and Maisie Fischer would recite something and neither of us would sing.

(Thor breaks something inside the clock.)

THEA. That made me the skunk in the barn all right. Being a bad sport, which she all but said out loud to everybody. After I played that awful "Western Sunsets," badly, because I hated it, you know what Maisie Fischer did? She recited the words to "Rock of Ages"! Everybody cried, and then! then! Mrs. Livery Johnson sat down at the piano and played "Rock of Ages"! so Maisie Fischer ON DEMAND could sing it! Everybody stood up and clapped and cheered and Maisie Fischer stood there smirking at me and everybody knew why! I couldn't play Schubert or sing anything. I made a hundred and fifty new enemies all at once! School! School!!

(The alarm in the old clock rings.)

THEA. You got that thing to ring? Well, SHUT IT OFF! *(In tears, THEA takes the clock from Thor and shuts the alarm off:)* I know I'm awful, and shouldn't be like this. But I can't help it! And this time, I don't care! *(Thor cries. THEA picks him up and sets him against her hip again.)*

THEA. Hush, Thor. I didn't mean to upset you. Hush, let's go home. What's next, Thor? That's what I want to know. What's next?

(Exit THEA and Thor. DOCTOR ARCHIE's simple consulting room, appears, which consists of a table with some books on it, an armchair, and a straight chair. There is a small lamp glowing on the table. DOCTOR ARCHIE is reading a thick book. There is also a pot of tea on an electric burner. A knock.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Come in.

(Enter THEA, very upset.)

THEA. Oh, Doctor Archie!

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Thea, come in.

THEA. Where is he? What happened to him?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. We don't know. Professor Wunsch just left town. Sit down. Have a cup of tea.

THEA. But he's old and he's sick. Sometimes he's sad and bitter. What will become of him?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Here. Drink.

(THEA takes the tea and sits in the chair across the table from DOCTOR ARCHIE.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. We have to let people be who they are, Thea.

THEA. Even when it's not good for them?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Especially then. Otherwise we are telling somebody else how to live, which is a mistake.

THEA. Why?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Because each of us has enough trouble learning how we should live. We all have our difficulties. Professor Wunsch, you, me.

THEA. But you're our wonderful doctor. You make us all well. What difficulties could—oh.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. You see?

THEA. You stay here after work, and don't go home. We never see your wife.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. My wife is often ill. You wouldn't tell me what to do about her, would you?

THEA. No.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Then we mustn't tell Professor Wunsch what to do, either.

THEA. My father says he's gone somewhere to drink himself to death. What do you think?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. I think he stayed here as long as he did because of you. I think he realized that an old man had taught you all he could. He made you work very hard. But he was working very hard, too. For you.

THEA. Last week, he gave me a Bach fugue. It's hard just to read, and harder to play, much less really understand. He said I would, someday. He said it has a secret I have to find for myself.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Maybe that was his way of saying good-bye to you.

THEA. But he didn't let me say good-bye to him!

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Maybe he couldn't.

THEA. Well, I will now! Help me! *(THEA closes her eyes, and clasps her hands together.)* Professor Wunsch! Good-bye! We wish you well! I will miss you! God bless you! Good-bye!!

(She opens her eyes. DOCTOR ARCHIE tosses her a red bandanna. She sneezes into it and blows her nose.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Feel better?

THEA. Some. You helped. What are you reading?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Big thick book. Russian.

THEA. What's it about?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. A girl like you.

THEA. What's her name?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Natashya.

THEA. That whole book is about her?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Most of it. And about a man she marries.

THEA. I think Ray Kennedy is going to ask me to marry him.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. I think so, too.

THEA. What do I say?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Yes or no.

THEA. It's not that simple! He's my best friend, along with you and Professor Wunsch. I don't have friends at school. Even the teachers, don't like me much. Not like you do. And I don't want to marry anybody.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Then don't.

THEA. But what else can I do? I can't learn any more piano with the Professor gone. School will be over, soon. Anyway, I'll be seventeen in a month. Everybody else will get married. And I do like Ray.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. You see now why we don't tell other people what to do.

THEA. That Russian girl, in your big thick book. What's she doing about getting married?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Find out for yourself. Here. *(He gives THEA the book.)*

THEA. *War and Peace?*

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Find Natashya. She's young at first, like you. Making a big discovery.

THEA. What?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Some people don't like her.

THEA. Like Maisie Fischer and everybody in school!! And I don't know why. Why don't people like Natashya?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. She doesn't know either. Some people just do and other people don't. She thinks she's a good girl. Everyone will just naturally treasure her and love her. Then she finds out some won't.

THEA. She did something wrong!

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Not that simple. And how it hurts. Why?

THEA. Why?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. She's growing up.

THEA. I don't know whether that feels good or bad. So many questions. Why don't I have friends at school? Where's Professor Wunsch? What do I say to Ray?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Read *War and Peace*. Good luck.

THEA. Bye.

(Lights dim on DOCTOR ARCHIE. THEA steps out of his office as it perhaps moves backward, and she meets RAY. It is night. Crickets.)

RAY. Here I am, Thee, just when I said I'd come. Train's on time!

THEA. I'm always glad to see you, Ray. What is it you want to talk about?

RAY. I brought you something, kid. Whup, sorry. Can't call you kid any more. You're about grown up now. But here. I brought you this.

THEA. What is it?

RAY. Look.

(He holds up a large railroad lantern, unlit. THEA is not impressed but tries to be.)

THEA. Oh. A lantern, Ray?

RAY. Yeah, but not just any lantern. You told me you had trouble at night reading by a kerosene lamp, and your folks think it's dangerous. I know you like to read at night, so here. Light it. *(He hands her a box of matches.)*

THEA. But what's the difference?

RAY. You'll see. This has a special lens. It refracts different ways, and if it falls over, the fire goes out.

THEA. All right.

(THEA lights the lantern. A bright glow comes from it.)

THEA. Oh! Ray, it's nice now.

RAY. Latest thing on the railroad.

THEA. My goodness.

(She puts it down. She and RAY sit around it. The lantern casts a lovely glow on them both.)

THEA. It's beautiful.

RAY. So, what's the book you're reading?

THEA. Doctor Archie gave it to me. It's long!

RAY. What's it about?

THEA. A girl.

RAY. What happens to her?

THEA. She gets all mixed up. At least that's what's happening to her far as I've got.

RAY. Think she'll straighten out?

THEA. Doctor Archie says she does finally, bur not for a long time.

RAY. What do you want for your birthday?

THEA. Oh, Ray.

RAY. Well, seventeen is a big year. I want to give you something.

THEA. I wish you could give me Professor Wunsch back. I have to practice all by myself I do, the same four hours every day, but I'm not learning anything.

RAY. You play that piano like some angel, Thee. What more do you have to learn?

THEA. Oh, so much! I just don't know what it is! It's awful, Ray! I don't want to read long Russian novels about girls making mistakes, I want to play and play and be—be—

RAY. Be what, Thee?

THEA. The best I can ever be! But what's that? What's in me, that Professor Wunsch worked so hard for? That even Doctor Archie says is not like other people.

RAY. I say that, too.

THEA. I know you do, and I know you want me to have what I want in life, but what is it, Ray? Natashya in that book doesn't know! I don't either!

RAY. Maybe I can help you, Thee. And soon. Like on your seventeenth birthday. I know it's hard, not having a real teacher anymore. Bur our ways here are what we have and there are some pretty good things about them. I'd like to show you as many of those good things as I can, for as long as I can. Thee— *(Pause. RAY pulls back.)* Well, enough of that. Take your lantern home and find out when that Russian girl straightens out. Does she get married then?

THEA. Yes, I think she does.

RAY. Well, good. For her, I mean. Aw, heck. I love you, Thee. And when you're seventeen, I'm going to ask you I reckon you know what. I hope you'll say yes. Good night.

THEA. Ray.

(Exit RAY. THEA stands looking after him, very perplexed. RAY's train is heard again. Light narrows on THEA, worrying. In another light, DOCTOR ARCHIE appears on the other side of the stage.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Well, Thea? You see.

THEA. You can't tell other people what to do. Yes, I see.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Made up your mind yet?

THEA. No. Yes. No. He's such a good man. He'd be a fine husband and a wonderful father.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. I think he would.

THEA. But I don't want to get married! I want to play the piano!

(The sound of RAY's train gets louder.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Then do that.

THEA. But how can I? There's Ray's train now, on the Denver to Moonstone run. He can't teach me. Nobody can anymore. I'll spend my life giving lessons to children and singing in that choir!

DOCTOR ARCHIE. I don't know what to say. *(Light goes out on DOCTOR ARCHIE.)*

THEA. He is a good man. I can't do any better here.

(Between them, on the cyclorama, a train appears, perhaps from a film, perhaps in a series of swiftly changing projected photographs. Its sound becomes a roar and then there is a huge crash, flames, and a burning train wreck.)

THEA. RAY!

(Onto the stage, followed by DOCTOR ARCHIE, RAY KENNEDY appears on a flat canvas litter, with a blanket over him. In front of the burning train, in the light of the flames, DOCTOR ARCHIE stops THEA.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Stay where you are, Thea. He can't be moved yet.

THEA. Oh, Ray.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. His back is broken. I've given him morphine, but we all have to stay very still, until we can move him. He's been calling for you.

THEA. Has he?

(RAY opens his eyes.)

RAY. Doc.

(DOCTOR ARCHIE goes to RAY.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Yes, Ray.

RAY. Did you bring Thea?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Yes, Ray.

RAY. OK. Get the preacher and everybody else out of the way. I want to talk to her alone.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Ray, you should talk to a preacher.

RAY. Doc, me and churches fell out a long time ago. That little girl's my church now. You let me talk to her.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Whatever you say. *(He nods to THEA.)* Thea. *(THEA comes to them.)*

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Sit by him. Be very still and quiet.

(DOCTOR ARCHIE helps THEA sit next to RAY, then steps back away from them.)

RAY. Hi, kid.

THEA. Hello, Ray.

RAY. You don't mind I call you kid a few more times, huh?

THEA. No, Ray.

RAY. You look scared. Nothing to cry about. I'm the same old guy here, just a little beat up is all.

THEA. I'm not scared, Ray. I'm just so sorry you're hurt. I can't help wanting to cry.

RAY. Don't do that, Thee. Doc's medicine makes me all dopey and it's kinda cozy here. Just you and me, huh?

THEA. Yes, Ray. I like it here, too. *(THEA bends over him and kisses RAY on the cheek.)*

RAY. Oh, kid!

(She holds his hand.)

You know I told you I was a big mess once. Well, I was. I dreamed about a lot of things. A gold mine, an oil well, a copper strike once. I put a little money in all of them. Even thought about going to a college. Talking like a gentleman, all that. Way out of my reach. And you, too, Thee. You're more out of my reach than all of them put together.

THEA. No, I'm not.

RAY. Sure you are. Right now, there in your face, kid, there's something I never seen in nobody else's. It's something grand other people just don't have. But you do. You got to go to the big train stations of this world, kid. No wayside stops for you. You go right on. And some day, when you've become all you're gonna be, in, I don't know, Denver or New York, or Paris, or somewhere, with diamonds on your neck and jewels in your yellow hair, then, then—

THEA. What, Ray?

RAY. You'll remember me.

THEA. Always!

RAY. You're the best thing that ever happened to me, kid.

THEA. You're too good to me, Ray!

RAY. Why, Thee. Why, kid. Everybody in this world is going to be good to you.

(DOCTOR ARCHIE comes to them.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. How's it going?

RAY. You best give me another punch of that dope, Doc. And our little pal should run along now. See you later, Thee. Go on. It's OK.

(THEA nods. Weeping, she backs away.)

RAY. Always look after that girl, Doc. She's gonna be a Queen.

(RAY closes his eyes. DOCTOR ARCHIE steps back. RAY's litter moves off one side of the stage, while from the other comes a stone cross. DOCTOR ARCHIE, with his arm around THEA, stands before it with her.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. He asked me to take care of all his affairs. Like most railroad men, he spent his wages, except for a few investments in mines, which don't look like much. But his life, Thee, he insured for six hundred dollars, with you as his beneficiary. That money is for you and nobody else.

THEA. For me?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Under one condition. You are to go to Chicago, and study music with the best teacher there, nothing else.

(Sounds of Chicago city streets, very faint, begin to be heard.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. I've talked to your mother and father. They're worried about Chicago, being so big and so far but I said that's what Ray Kennedy wanted his money used for. I said I could take you there, find you a decent place to live and get you auditions with the best teachers. Ray knew this life wasn't right for you. Six hundred dollars won't keep you there forever, but it will get you a start, and you can thank Ray for it. But, Thea. Can you do it?

THEA. Oh, I don't know. Can I?

(Behind THEA and DOCTOR ARCHIE, appear either in films of an old city like Chicago, or swiftly changing photographs of it. The rising din of city noises is now very loud. DOCTOR ARCHIE moves away from THEA, leaving her alone in the great city of Chicago.)

THEA. Yes! I will! Ray! I will!!

(Lights fades on THEA, a young girl alone in a great city.)

End of Act I

ACT II

(During intermission, scales, Czerny exercises and finally Mozart's Turkish March, played forcefully but not brilliantly, are heard. Lights on the elegantly furnished studio of ANDOR HARSANYI. There is a revolving piano stool there, as with Wunsch, but it is a very expensive one, made of beautiful wood. Mozart's Turkish March ends. THEA turns around on the piano stool to face HARSANYI. He is a handsome man in his late twenties. He is formal and analytical even cold, traits masking a deductive intelligence and a complete devotion to music.)

HARSANYI. Very well, you will study with me. But we should understand each other first. Miss Kronborg, I have never before seen a pianist more capable or more ignorant. You have technically sure, strong hands. You read music rapidly and intelligently. You have a gifted nature. But you have never studied a piece of music by Haydn, Beethoven, or Mozart. Plenty of Gluck, but no Bach. A great deal of Hummel and Clementi but no Chopin and no Brahms. Then, surprise, some Schumann. What do I make of this?

THEA. When he was young, my teacher heard Schumann's wife Clara, play the F sharp minor sonata. He could play it, well, most of it, and he taught it to me. I understand now there was a lot he didn't know.

HARSANYI. I don't mean to insult your teacher. He no doubt cared a great deal about you, but he was, I gather, very old and very tired.

THEA. And he drank and he vanished.

HARSANYI. He taught what is called the old Stuttgart method. Stiff back. Stiff elbows. Very formal, very high position of the hands. All right, we can proceed from there. But you have never heard a symphony orchestra. Or a professional string quartet. Piano recitals by children perhaps, and I suppose, your teacher.

THEA. He never played the piano in public. No one else in town did, either.

HARSANYI. You've never heard a professional piano recital?

THEA. No.

HARSANYI. So you don't really know what it is you are trying to do. Your family—

THEA. My mother—

HARSANYI. Your mother—recognized musical talent, and to her credit set you to work at the piano. Did she teach you at first?

THEA. Four years.

HARSANYI. Then this elderly musician of unknown origins, comes to your town, rents a room, lives there, teaching and drinking. He does his best for you. But he does not awake in you a larger sense of music. That is, a kind of searching ardor. That is, a fierce longing. To some degree at least, an analytical intelligence. What all good musicians must have.

THEA. He tried. The last time I saw him, he gave me this.

(THEA reaches into a bag and hands HARSANYI the ragged sheet music we have seen before.)

HARSANYI. Bach and Lizst. Did he play this?

THEA. No.

HARSANYI. Do you play it?

THEA. I could try. But I have always been frightened by it. He said there was a secret in it.

HARSANYI. He was right, and you were right to be afraid of it.

THEA. But what is it?

HARSANYI. Save that for later. What you and your teacher did accomplish, and the reason I am willing to take you as a student, is something else.

THEA. Plain and simple, please?

HARSANYI. Simple and plain. He worked you hard, and you concentrate. You are capable of long, demanding labor. Even though you may not know exactly at what.

THEA. At music!

HARSANYI. But what's that? Mozart's *Turkish March*. You were like a bull in Spain, going after a bullfighter. All right, that's good and strong.

THEA. I am a bull?

HARSANYI. I didn't say that.

THEA. Why not cow?

HARSANYI. Stop being clever. Mozart seems easy when he is familiar. He isn't easy, ever. You have to build with him.

THEA. Build music?

HARSANYI. Up and up, repeating. Then finishing, but not crudely coming home, arriving there forever.

THEA. What?

HARSANYI. Mozart is the master of the emotional return. Which is why children don't like him very much. They are too young to begin returning. Do you know what I am saying?

THEA. Not at all.

HARSANYI. No. But you are honest about it. Good. Between a serious teacher and a serious pupil, there must be honesty. When that comes first, understanding may come second. Agreed?

THEA. Agreed. I don't understand but agreed.

HARSANYI. On my side, the student should know something about the teacher. I have only begun teaching. Why were you sent to me?

THEA. A family friend, a doctor, brought me to Chicago. He found me a good place to live, with a Swedish family, and heard that you had retired, very young, in order to teach.

HARSANYI. That is not quite right. Did he know I had a career, which ended?

THEA. What happened to you?

HARSANYI. When I was young, my father trained me then exploited me. I played for him all the time, everywhere, in saloons as well as dance halls. I developed very bad habits.

THEA. Like me?

HARSANYI. Yes. I did get to a conservatory later, but there I worked too hard and in the wrong way. Later, I was successful but I tried to play too many concerts. I injured my right hand, badly, and nothing can be done about it.

THEA. That's awful.

HARSANYI. Yes, it is. I can't demonstrate anything for you, except with my left. I will always be a little—melancholy about all this.

THEA. You don't want to be a teacher?

HARSANYI. No. I may be a bad one, jealous of my students. You are facing something new, but so am I.

THEA. I am sorry about your hand. But I am glad you will be learning, too. *(A long pause. HARSANYI stares at THEA.)*

HARSANYI. That, Miss Kronborg, was well said. If you can play as directly as you think, this will be very interesting. Shall we begin?

THEA. Yes!

HARSANYI. Scale in B Flat Major, please.

THEA. That, I know!

(THEA smiles, wheels about on the piano stool. We hear her scale in B Flat Major. Light down Iowan HARSANYI's studio. To one side of the stage, in a spotlight, enter DOCTOR ARCHIE. The B Flat Major scale becomes Chopin's 1st Etude, opus 25.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Dear Thea. We all miss you in Moonstone. I am still practicing medicine and like Ray Kennedy, trying to find that rich copper mine, with no luck. Your family is very well. Your father's sermons and your mother's cooking are the same. Your siblings are all just as loud and just as healthy. Thor is busy taking every mechanical thing in sight apart. He can't always get it back together again, but his energy is prodigious. I am sending you an

Italian grammar to add to your others. I hope you are happy and I know you are working hard. Yours, Doctor Archie.

(Light down on DOCTOR ARCHIE, up on THEA, her back to us on her piano stool. Even though the piano continues, low, playing now Chopin's 1st Etude, Opus 25, THEA's back is to us. She does not pretend with her arms and hands to play, but we understand that in fact she is playing the work we hear. Lights around her come up, showing Andor HARSANYI standing by, listening. He has a wooden back scratcher in his good hand, with which he scratches his neck, head, and occasionally, his bad hand. He also uses it to mark time, and to express to himself how THEA's playing should go, not like a baton, but a better right hand. The Chopin etude ends. THEA turns about on her piano stool to get her teacher's verdict. There is a long pause while HARSANYI considers her.)

HARSANYI. You don't need to burden that climatic phrase with a heavy touch. Not too much emotion, and certainly not that much pedal. It can almost play itself, if you've led up to it well.

THEA. That means I'm pounding?

HARSANYI. Put it this way. Less bullfight, more dance. You can hear Chopin's mazurkas, his native Polish dances, inside a lyrical etude like that one, and you should. It is a further development of something fundamentally healthy and strong, but refined.

THEA. And I am healthy, strong, and need refining. Thank you very much.

HARSANYI. You do need refining, but for goodness sake, Miss Kronborg. Isn't it better to have something there to refine? Or would you rather be just beautiful, like a powder puff, and put makeup over nothing?

THEA. I see your point.

HARSANYI. Be what you are. We'll learn the rest. But.

THEA. But, but, but!

HARSANYI. You just expect me to say oh how wonderful?

THEA. I could could could—uh—stand that, yes.

HARSANYI. Do you know why I am always so tired after these lessons? Why I run them overtime and often schedule them the last one of the day?

THEA. I'm boring!

HARSANYI. No.

THEA. I'm not musical!

HARSANYI. We both know you're the best student I have. What exhausts me, and to the bone, Miss Kronborg, is what I don't understand about you. You are something new. And something I have to learn.

THEA. How to put up with me?

HARSANYI. How to learn how to teach you! It's not easy. One swallow does not make a summer.

(Pause.)

THEA. Now what in the world does that mean?

HARSANYI. That you're complicated. It's something my wife says when I tell her about you.

THEA. You talk about me to your wife?

HARSANYI. All the time. She says you are the sort of challenge that will make teaching bearable for me.

THEA. Oh. Is this so unbearable, teaching?

HARSANYI. It was at first. When you have walked out on a stage and played well, it's ah, a bit hard to hear young people play badly.

THEA. Are we all so awful?

HARSANYI. Yes. But then, finally, a difference. Better. You feel better about your students and better about yourself.

THEA. Then what's the matter with my Chopin?

HARSANYI. You!

THEA. Me???

HARSANYI. What's driving me crazy now, Miss Kronborg, is what I don't understand about you, and still have to learn. Let's reverse the Chopin. *(He gets some sheet music for her.)* Not a dance in something lyrical, but something lyrical in the obvious, a song. Schubert, the Erlking. Melodramatic, written out here for the piano.

THEA. Who is the Erl King?

HARSANYI. A monster who kills children.

THEA. Oh, wonderful!

HARSANYI. Read it through. It can sound like the chase in a moving picture theatre, but—inside—there is the opposite. The delicate, even fastidious spirit of an evil King. Find the opposite in a work of art. You know?

THEA. I don't. But I'll try.

(THEA turns around and begins to play Lizst's famous transcription of Schubert's Erlking, with harsh sounds of Chicago's city streets mixed with it. THEA swings about on her piano stool. The music continues.)

THEA. Dear Doctor Archie. I am having trouble. Andor Harsanyi is not easy to study with. He's been a real artist himself. When he tries to show what is in the music and how I should work at it, I sometimes can't follow him. He knows so much more than he can express. He tries to teach. I try to learn. We clash and sometimes fight. He doesn't like what I do, and that's hard. And oh, Chicago is so very big and I feel so very small. I wish I was happier but I'm not. I get colds all the time. I can't sleep. I don't know what to do. My best. Thea.

(The Erlking ends. THEA turns around on her piano stool. HARSANYI considers her, and scratches his head with his wooden scratcher.)

HARSANYI. Better. The evil King who kills the child is quite sensitive. You thought about that.

THEA. Yes.

HARSANYI. You thought about it away from the piano.

THEA. Yes, you taught me that. Now I can't stop.

HARSANYI. A few months ago, you only worked when you played. Now, I hope, you feel like you are followed—

THEA. Chased! Hunted down!

HARSANYI. —by the music?

THEA. Yes! By some Erlking monster, trying to kill ME! Yes!

HARSANYI. Nevertheless. You must sit down with a score, away from the piano. Away from all your busy hard work that covers everything over. You must learn not just the notes, but what you decide the music is. Then you practice.

THEA. That is not the way most teachers teach piano.

HARSANYI. I am not most teachers. And I have a pupil who is not most pupils!

THEA. Because she isn't getting better! She's studied with you half a year and she's getting worse! Can I talk?

HARSANYI. When don't you?

THEA. Everything I really want is impossible now! I was happy and contented playing for Professor Wunsch, and memorizing German verbs and French genders but only because I was a pompous little girl. Now I hate him and even my mother for starting me on the piano in the first place, and I hate all these languages I keep learning like a maniac!

HARSANYI. Miss Kronborg. Your mother did not bring you into the world to play the piano. That you must bring into the world yourself, just like the day you were born!

THEA. I know that!! And I can't sleep now! I walk up and down the street of this terrible city and cry! Girls drive me crazy talking silly nonsense. Boys try to kiss me and I can't stand that either! Because the truth is, I just wasn't born a musician! I'm something else, but what? Junk! Garbage! Throw me away!

(Pause.)

HARSANYI. Your vehemence is vulgar. I've been reading a book I want to tell you about.

THEA. I don't want to hear about any more books! They don't help!

HARSANYI. This one might. It is by an extraordinary Alsatian German.

THEA. What's that?

HARSANYI. A German living in a very French part of Germany.

THEA. So?

HARSANYI. He is a concert organist, specializing in Bach. He also builds and repairs organs. He is also a Doctor of Theology—

THEA. Oh, please—

HARSANYI. —a Doctor of Philosophy—

THEA. Really!

HARSANYI. —and now, I gather, a Doctor of Medicine who is giving up everything to go to Africa and treat natives. Doctor Schweitzer has the most extraordinary idea about Bach, and about all artists.

THEA. What do I care! You're a music teacher! Not a philosopher! Teach me music!

HARSANYI. If you will shut up, I will try. *(Pause.)*

THEA. All right. Doctor Schweitzer.

HARSANYI. He thinks in every artist there is another one. Bach is a poet as well as a musician, we all know that, from the words of the cantatas, and how they are built on old hymns, but Schweitzer thinks Bach "sees" what is in the music like a painter would and that is why the architecture of his music is so solid.

THEA. Fine! What's the point?

HARSANYI. What else are you, Miss Kronborg? What other artist is inside you? Listen to me! What else?

THEA. I don't know. I don't know what I am.

HARSANYI. Neither do I. But, maybe, this is a key that turns a lock. Here. Look this over please and learn it. By Schumann, who wrote a hundred songs in one year, for the wife he loved. This is the first, called “Dedication.” Not even Schubert wrote anything more open, less inhibited. See where it takes you.

THEA. I’ll try.

(THEA turns on the piano stool. we hear Schumann’s “Dedication,” arranged for piano, mixed again with the harsh sounds a/Chicago. Lights go down on HARSANYI’s studio, and come up on DOCTOR ARCHIE.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Dear Thea. My wife, ill for so long, has passed away, and I am leaving Moonstone. I’ll live in Denver. I’ll send you my address there. One of those mines I bought stock in, was a silver mine. I didn’t think much of it. Now all my copper stock is worthless but the silver is promising. Good things and bad things, mixed up together. As always, my deep affection. Doctor Archie.

(The Schumann ends. THEA turns about on the piano stool. HARSANYI stares at her.)

HARSANYI. You’ve been playing that piece for two months now. Have you looked up the song it is based on?

THEA. Well, no.

HARSANYI. I had hoped you would, without my saying anything. The words don’t hold anything back. “You are my soul, my heart. You are my joy and my pain. You are the world where I live and the Heaven where I fly. And you are the grave, where I cast all my sorrows.” Do you think that is in Schumann’s music?

THEA. No, I don’t! The music is light and airy. That poem, if that’s what it is, is heavy-handed and sentimental.

HARSANYI. Embarrassing?

THEA. Yes!

HARSANYI. Then why am I, a cold fish if there ever was one, interested in it?

THEA. You’re sentimental too!

HARSANYI. Am I? The last line is, "You are my good spirit, my better self." A man's love for his wife. Sentimental?

THEA. Schumann went crazy! He died in a madhouse! I know that much!

HARSANYI. But you don't know how he loved his wife! That wasn't his mad self, that was his better self! His musical self! And from it came this song!

THEA. So?

HARSANYI. So what is your better self?

THEA. I don't have one! I'm just me! And I am ignorant and I am miserable!

HARSANYI. Many young people think they can do everything, and do nothing. You, always different, think you can do nothing, when I think you can do anything.

THEA. It's too much! I can't stand it, the music you have opened to me!

HARSANYI. Why not?

THEA. Because I can't play it! Not really well! I wish I was dead!

HARSANYI. Now we are going to have a fight.

THEA. What else have we been doing for a year?

HARSANYI. I arrange tickets for you. To hear the great pianists of the day who come to Chicago. Busoni! Do you go, no! Paderewski! Do you go? No!

THEA. I did to the symphony! Last Saturday!

HARSANYI. You said you didn't!

THEA. I couldn't tell you! I had never been to such a thing before. All the people, the lights, the beautiful concert hall. At first, I watched the musicians, and the instruments and how loud they played, but I don't remember what it was they played! I didn't care about the music, whatever it was. Then they played a symphony by Dvorak. To the New World. America. And again I didn't think

about music. I thought about home. About the sand hills, and the grasshoppers and the locusts, and the great high plains that are like me, all by myself too! I felt like a soul in the dark, not yet born, obsessed by what I don't know! I'll never hold such beauty in these hands, never! Then they played Wagner, grand and glorious, and I thought, what does this have to do with me? Nothing! So I told you I didn't go.

HARSANYI. All right, but I won't give up on you, even if you give up on yourself. I'll get more tickets!

THEA. I WON'T GO!

HARSANYI. WHY NOT??

THEA. I HAVE REHEARSALS!!!!

(Pause.)

HARSANYI. You have what?

THEA. Rehearsals.

HARSANYI. For?

THEA. For the church choir I sing in.

HARSANYI. What kind of church choir?

THEA. Swedish. Lutheran, on the North Side. Lots of music and I have to work hard.

HARSANYI. How many nights a week?

THEA. Four, sometimes five. And extra things, like funerals.

HARSANYI. How long have you been doing this?

THEA. All year. I have to, to help pay my rent, and study with you. It's business!

HARSANYI. Just business, five times a week? Do you like to sing?

THEA. I never think about it. I just do it. I don't know anything about singing, so what can I say about it?

HARSANYI. Do you have a voice?

THEA. Oh, yes.

HARSANYI. How do you know?

THEA. I just do. And I get paid well. Especially for the funerals.

HARSANYI. You sing at funerals and choir practice instead of listening to Busoni, and Paderweski. Then you come here and want to be a pianist. Amazing. (*He stares at her.*) And what have I been doing? I have been giving you songs, to play on the piano, without asking myself why. Didn't you want to sing them for me?

THEA. Of course not. I am a pianist, not a singer.

HARSANYI. May I—if you please—hear you sing?

THEA. Why?

HARSANYI. Curiosity. Sing anything, with words or without. One of your hymns. Just not—a familiar one. Something I don't know.

THEA. Well, there is a Swedish hymn. I can't sing the words.

HARSANYI. Why not?

THEA. They're silly—

HARSANYI. —and embarrassing

THEA. —Yes. Professor Wunsch wrote them when he was a young man. He gave them to me because he didn't like the words hymns use about God and death.

HARSANYI. Neither do I. Sing anything at all. Can you?

THEA. Oh yes.

(Easily and simply, she sings the melody of one verse of the Swedish hymn Professor WUNSCH gave to her.)

HARSANYI. Is there more?

THEA. It's just the same, over and over.

HARSANYI. Remember Mozart. The return. Let's say you've sung five verses of that hymn and now you are singing the last one. How would that go?

THEA. Like this.

(THEA sings the hymn verse again, but now with more strength and assurance, ending it wonderfully, and throwing her arms out in pleasure as she does so. HARSANYI is very quiet and very excited.)

HARSANYI. May I touch you?

THEA. I suppose.

(HARSANYI puts one hand on THEA's stomach and one on the back of one side.)

HARSANYI. Just breathe. Like you're going to sing again.

(THEA breathes, a long long breath. HARSANYI's hands come away from her like they've been scorched.)

HARSANYI. That was a very deep breath. May I touch your throat?

THEA. Yes.

(HARSANYI puts one hand on her throat.)

HARSANYI. Sing ah. *(THEA does.)*

HARSANYI. Again, until your breath is gone. *(THEA does.)*

HARSANYI. Good. Up. E and F. *(THEA does.)*

HARSANYI. Pianissimo. *(THEA does.)*

HARSANYI. Good. Now swell. *(THEA does.)*

HARSANYI. Good. Now. *(HARSANYI sits on the piano stool.)* I'll play the Schumann with one hand. Forget the words, I'll say them. Can you sing it?

THEA. Oh, yes.

(HARSANYI's back is to us, but his face is turned to THEA. He speaks the words of "Dedication," while playing the melody, we understand, with one hand. THEA sings it while HARSANYI speaks it, her voice soaring over him effortlessly.)

HARSANYI. You are my soul and my heart,
You are my joy and oh, my pain,

You are the world where I live,
And the Heaven where I fly,
You are my spirit and my better self!

(Silence. They stare at each other.)

HARSANYI. There it is.

THEA. There what is?

HARSANYI. The reason I gave you songs to play.

THEA. I don't understand.

HARSANYI. The reason you love languages and learned them since you were a child.

THEA. What?

HARSANYI. I must have known it the minute I laid eyes on you.

THEA. Stop this! Know what?

HARSANYI. You're not a pianist! You're a singer!

(THEA is horrified.)

THEA. I am not! I'm going to play the piano!

HARSANYI. I will arrange for you to take voice lessons.

THEA. No! No! No!

HARSANYI. With the best teachers in New York. I know who they are.

THEA. New YORK? More TEACHERS?

HARSANYI. Yes!

THEA. I can't afford you and Chicago, much less anybody in New York! My money is almost gone!

HARSANYI. By next week, you will learn the words to the Erlking and to Dedication. And one hymn. You will sing them for some people I know. There are powerful families in Chicago who care about music. We can raise money.

THEA. Sing for my supper? Never!

HARSANYI. What you want is to be an artist. Yes?

THEA. Yes. But with the piano! All my years of work!

HARSANYI. Few singers possess the musical experience you have found in that piano. Listen to me. Some sing almost by nature. Some can't even read music. They memorize sounds and sing the operas. Others take lessons all their lives and sing the same opera no better. Once or twice in a century, a singer masters the voice completely, in the way a great pianist masters the piano. It is a tremendous advantage. It will help you, as if it was planned that way all the time!

THEA. *IF* I can sing!

HARSANYI. YOU KNOW YOU CAN SING! DON'T YOU????

(A terrible pause, then THEA breaks down. She sobs, openly.)

THEA. Yes!

HARSANYI. So do I!

(HARSANYI waits. THEA struggles with herself.)

HARSANYI. Sorry I shouted at you.

(HARSANYI waits. THEA struggles.)

HARSANYI. I am excited.

(THEA stares at him.)

THEA. Finally?

HARSANYI. Finally.

THEA. Not because of the piano, but because I SING?

(HARSANYI nods.)

HARSANYI. Why didn't you tell me about this?

THEA. It was my secret. From you, from everyone.

HARSANYI. Because it was safe. Singing in church, at funerals, no one paid you any attention. No criticism. But did you ever think of singing in public?

THEA. No. I did wonder, though, why I was so tired after practicing the piano, and never tired after singing.

HARSANYI. For the same reason I have been so tired teaching you piano. We've been swimming upstream. Now we can turn around, and go with the river, to the sea. And you will become the singer, no, not just the singer, the woman you were meant to be! Now, we begin again! Scale in B Flat Major. Sing.

(Lights down on them. we hear THEA singing her scale. She turns around to us, her voice still singing, and again with the harsh sounds of Chicago mixed in.)

THEA. Dear Doctor Archie. You are in Denver and I am nowhere. It took a whole year for Andor Harsanyi to discover I am not a pianist but a singer. What is worse, I know he is right. I thought becoming an artist would be hard, but never as brutal as this! I still don't know where I am, or who I am. I still play the piano every day and. I sing, but for what? Next year, a real voice teacher, says Harsanyi. In New York, he says. What teacher? What next year? I'm broke and I'm broken. I'm going home for the summer, and I know I will never go back. It's hopeless, it's over. I'm glad about your silver mine. My best, Thea.

(Music and sounds stop. Lights up on THEA and HARSANYI again.)

HARSANYI. Good-bye? You're joking.

THEA. I can't begin all over again. I just can't.

HARSANYI. You don't have the money. You hate Chicago. You want to go home and be a schoolteacher. Miss Kronborg. To feel with my fingertips, that voice throb in your throat. To watch that sturdy Swedish body breathe, in breaths five times as deep as mine. To hear you forget yourself and let that voice out, to go anywhere. These are the joys of a music teacher, which you have given to me. You have taught me. You are not going to take them away from me now.

THEA. I know when to quit.

HARSANYI. And all the people who believed in you? Your friend the doctor? Your fierce old teacher? The railroad man who sent you

into the world on six hundred dollars, which was, after all, the price of a man's life?

THEA. You were all wrong. It just isn't there.

HARSANYI. So, you have spent your days seeking a promised land. You could always quit, and scrub floors. Not now. With that voice you must stand in front of the whole world and let it test what you are made of. You're just afraid.

THEA. I am not!

HARSANYI. Then take what is yours! I can't do that for you!

THEA. Do what?

HARSANYI. Gamble!

THEA. With my life?

HARSANYI. Every musician does! You are torn between a desire for safety and for music. (*HARSANYI holds up one score, old and tattered.*) Now is the time, perhaps, for your old teacher's Bach. With something from me. (*HARSANYI holds up another score, brand new.*) This is a song by Berlioz, for soprano and orchestra. Can you speak French?

THEA. I know the grammar. And sort of how it sounds.

HARSANYI. Repeat after me. Alors, Mademoiselle, vous etes vraiment une pamplemousse.

THEA. I am not a grapefruit!

HARSANYI. S'il vous plait!

THEA. Alors, Mademoiselle, vous etes vraiment une pamplemousse! Et vous, Monsieur, etes vraiment un tyran! Allez aux diable!

HARSANYI. I am a bully and I can go to the devil, good. Try this: Ce léger parfum etes mon âme, et j'arrive, j'arrive, j'arrive du paradis.

THEA. This light perfume is my soul and I arrive, three times, in heaven? What are you talking about?

HARSANYI. I hope some day you find out. If you please.

THEA. Ce léger parfum est mon âme, et j'arrive, j'arrive, je'arrive du paradis.

HARSANYI. So you can do it. In this song a woman sings about something artificial, unnatural. A ghost of a flower, a rose. Silly? Embarrassing? Well, maybe, but it saves her life, and gives her a grown-up happiness. A *very* grown-up happiness. You know what sex is?

THEA. Yes!!

HARSANYI. The woman has a deliverance, both spiritual and physical. The soul and the sex. At once.

THEA. Stop!

HARSANYI. All right. Don't learn either piece, just play them through once or twice, so you can hear them in your head, and then sit down and think about them. (*Pause.*) When you go home, what do you want to see the most? Your house and family?

THEA. I always have them. No, there's something else. Panther Canyon.

HARSANYI. A canyon?

THEA. In Northern Arizona. It's deserted now, but there are cliff houses still there. Ray Kennedy told me he found something there.

HARSANYI. What?

THEA. He couldn't quite say. Himself. Lucky to be alive. I never knew exactly what he meant.

HARSANYI. You never cease to amaze me. By yourself, camping?

THEA. Yes.

HARSANYI. That could be dangerous.

THEA. I don't care.

HARSANYI. You could fall. Or be attacked by someone.

THEA. I don't care if I die there.

HARSANYI. Are you really that miserable?

THEA. I'm glad you finally get it.

HARSANYI. Be a musician or be dead?

THEA. OF COURSE!!!

HARSANYI. Then, one, sit down every day, and listen to the music half an hour. Two, go to your canyon, and play the music in your head. Three, give me that doctor's address in Denver. You owe me that much.

THEA. So I do. I will.

HARSANYI. Promise?

THEA. Yes. *(THEA gets ready to leave him.)* Good-bye.

(THEA holds out her hand. HARSANYI stares at it, then slaps the music into her hands.)

HARSANYI. Half an hour. Every day.

(Lights down as THEA turns away from him. We hear THEA playing her scales, then singing them, back and forth, stopping and starting over and over, in confusion. HARSANYI steps briskly out, into a light. Scales.)

HARSANYI. Dear Doctor Archie. Miss Thea Kronborg would make a good pianist, but not a great one. However, she possesses a body so simple and strong, and seems to operate so easily, that she can sing from the bottom of herself, in a voice like none other I have ever heard. I believe great things are possible. But she is discouraged, and heartsick. She must go through a dark night of the soul, as do mystics and saints and so on. If she comes out of it, she will need further help. She must not come back to Chicago. She must go to New York and then absolutely to Europe. If she survives her present ordeal, I can find people who will help her. I want to help her. I hope you will, too. Please reply.

(Light out on HARSANYI. On the other side of the stage, THEA steps into another light. No scales now. Instead, the sound of the cold wind heard at the beginning of the play.)

THEA. Dear Doctor Archie. I have been home in Colorado now for a month. My father is not well and my mother works too hard. My brothers and sisters are fine but care nothing about music. Thor has discovered the hammer and the screwdriver, and nothing is safe. I am going on a trip, to Panther Canyon, in Arizona. I will send you a postcard. My best. Thea.

(Exit THEA. Light on DOCTOR ARCHIE.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. I am in complete accord with everything you say about Thea Kronborg. I own successful mining investments, and a medical practice. I will be glad to help. Tell me when and tell me how.

(Exit DOCTOR ARCHIE. Nothing stands against the cyclorama. The wind rises, but now it is not a cold or harsh wind, it is soft and sweeping, and reminds one of time, not weather. Perhaps onto the stage comes an abstract piece of plain wood, a tall structure like a canyon ledge, which THEA climbs. She sits on top of it. Or perhaps she just sits on the empty stage floor. Against the cyclorama behind her is projected, in photographs, film, or in painting, first, a huge face of the young THEA KRONBORG, staring at something. Then we hear the music in her head: the Bach A Minor Fugue, on the piano, as the sun comes up. Slowly, cross fading, photographs, film, or paintings of what THEA is seeing, pass before her.)

THEA. Dear Ray. I have come to Panther Canyon, as you said I should. *(Far view of the canyon.)*

THEA. I have camped here and slept. Now I can see this whole canyon in the morning light. It seems deserted but there is so much here. It is filled with living ghosts and with time.

(A canyon wall, layers of rocks.)

THEA. Ray? I know you were a freethinker and didn't believe in an afterlife or anything like that, but I can think about you, and talk to you, wherever you are.

(A closer view of the canyon.)

THEA. I see the cliff dwellings where your Navajo people lived. Anasazi.

(Far off view of A'nasazi cliff houses, perched high up under a cliff overhang.)

THEA. The houses are still there. They are just as you said, high up on a cliff to catch the sun, but safe and sheltered under a huge rock ledge that hangs above them.

(Closer view of the cliff houses.)

THEA. Here they lived, in those houses, clean and simple, centuries ago. *(Close view of the cliff houses. It seems now that THEA is sitting inside them.)*

THEA. And like me, they must have wanted to sing.

(Interior view of a cliff house. Then pieces of broken pottery.)

THEA. Clay pots and jars held the water that gave them life.

(A Navajo pottery vessel, restored and beautiful.)

THEA. And the water was like music.

(The pottery vessel, pouring out clear water.)

THEA. My body could be one of those jars, holding water and life high up on a cliff in the sun. And pouring it out, in music.

(A waterfall.)

THEA. Is that my life?

(Canyon flowers.)

THEA. Other women, like me, lived in this place. They kept everything alive. *(Canyon flowers.)*

THEA. They were vessels, too, to hold life for awhile, and to pour it out, to make things live.

(Canyon flowers.)

THEA. Home, canyon, music, life.

(Cliff art of the Anasazi, etched into the cliffs: squares, circles, spirals, dots, waves, outlines of hands.)

THEA. Heaven.

(Snakes, elk, deep, sheep, then human figures and faces. The Bach now cross fades with two climatic soprano utterances of the Berlioz Specter of the Rose, from his song cycle Nights of Summer, and the singing seems to come out of the Bach. Far off view of the canyon again.)

SOPRANO. *(Singing:)* Ce leger parfum est man âme,
Ce leger parfum est man âme,
Et j'arrive, j'arrive du paradis.
J'arrive, j'arrive du paradis.

(The SOPRANO's voice cross fades back into the Bach, which plays softly. The vistas of the canyon fade. THEA and her face are left against the enormous blue sky.)

THEA. I know what to do.

(THEA climbs down from her ledge and exits. Her face on the cyclorama fades as the wind cross fades again, this time with a sound montage of sopranos singing the great roles of opera repertoire, in Verdi, Puccini, Beethoven and Wagner. A spotlight appears downstage. Into it, dapper as always, but now in a luxurious fur-lined coat and with an elegant gold-tipped cane, steps DOCTOR ARCHIE. His hair is white and we see how much older he is, but he is still erect and vigorous. He stands in the spotlight and looks at the cyclorama as upon it appear several posters from the great opera companies of the world: La Scala, Covent Garden, Vienna Statsopera, Metropolitan Opera. Under their names, appear names of operas. Under La Scala, Tosca. Under Covent Garden, Alceste. Under Vienna Statsopera, Fidelio. Under Metropolitan Opera, Tristan and Isolde. Beneath each opera, the name Thea Kronborg appears, small at first, but larger each time, until finally, above Metropolitan Opera and Tristan and Isolde, it appears simply as Kronborg. DOCTOR ARCHIE watches all this, leaning elegantly on his gold-tipped cane. The sound montage of the operas end with some of the piercing, soaring cries of Isolde, and on the stage appears a beautiful dressing room of an international opera star, with two chairs and many flowers surrounding several still figures, dressed in costumes of Isolde, and a bucket and bottle of iced champagne, with two tall thin glasses. A huge sign saying KRONBORG appears above everything, in lights. THEA—now played by a third actress, a mature woman in her thirties, with yellow hair—stands smiling in her dressing room,

and holds out her hands. DOCTOR ARCHIE leaves his spotlight and enters her dressing room, and the lights come up on them there. They hold hands and stare at each other.)

DOCTOR ARCHIE. It took you so long to sing in New York, now that you're here, I don't know what to say.

THEA. You don't have to say anything. Just sit down and let me give you a glass of champagne. I have to go to a dinner in my honor. But I've given strict instructions no one is to interrupt us for awhile. So, sit.

(DOCTOR ARCHIE sits. THEA pours them champagne.)

THEA. How did you like Isolde?

DOCTOR ARCHIE. I was not prepared for you. I have followed your career all these years in Europe. I know you are now a leading artist of the opera, but seeing you on stage overwhelmed me. I forgot it was you.

THEA. Then you forgot that the Isolde you saw and heard was once a little girl sick with pneumonia, whose life you saved.

(Onto the stage walk the two younger actresses who played THEA. They are THEA ONE and THEA TWO. They sit on the other side of the stage from THEA and DOCTOR ARCHIE. All three THEAS have yellow hair. DOCTOR ARCHIE hears only THEA.)

THEA ONE. Whose hand you held—

THEA TWO. Whose friend you became—

THEA. And lent her money.

DOCTOR ARCHIE. Which she paid me back, with outrageous interest.

THEA TWO. Who wrote her letters, which she kept.

THEA ONE. Who gave her Russian novels, which she read.

THEA. Now, let me look at you.

THEA ONE. Well, well.

THEA TWO. You're older.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

In order to protect our associated authors against copyright infringement, we cannot currently present full electronic scripts.

To purchase books with the full text, and to apply for performance rights, click ORDER or go back to:

www.playscripts.com