

AUDITION PIECE #3: THE DOCTOR, LENYA AND LEON

(The Doctor and his wife, Lenya, are the people who sent for Leon the schoolteacher to come here, so they have a better understanding than most about how the curse works, and a great desire to improve life for their daughter, Sophia. The "joke" at the beginning of the scene here is that the Doctor and Lenya have been trying to think of the word "teacher" and it has been on the tips of their tongues, but they haven't been able to come up with it yet. So they are trying hard to get Leon to say "teacher" without being too obvious. In general, they are overjoyed to see him. For his part, Leon knows that the Doctor hired him but they have never met before, so Leon is "feeling out" his new employers and trying to make a good first impression while also figuring out more of what is going on with this town.)

(LENYA opens the door. LEON stands there)

LENYA: Won't you come in, young man?

LEON: Dr. Zubritsky? Madame Zubritsky? I am delighted to be in Kulyenchikov. I am Leon Steponovitch Tolchinsky.

DOCTOR: So you are the new... The new...

LEON: Yes! I am he.

DOCTOR: It's he, Lenya, the new... The new...

LENYA: But you look so young to be a... To be a...

LEON: Not at all. I think in time you will find that I am, if I may say so, one of the best young—well, I don't want to seem immodest.

DOCTOR: No. Please. Be immodest. We love immodesty.

LENYA: The more immodest the better. The best young what? What?

LEON The best young teacher in all of Russia!

DOCTOR: A teacher! He's a teacher! The new teacher is here.

LENYA: Thank God the teacher is here!

LEON: Thank you. Thank you. I'm most gratified at this most warm and overwhelming reception.

DOCTOR: Make yourself at home, teacher. Take off your coat, teacher. Lenya, bring the teacher a cup of tea. Sit down, teacher.

LENYA: Would you like some tea, teacher? Or maybe some paper and pens, teacher? Perhaps you would like to start teaching right away, teacher?

LEON: Well, no one's more eager than I am. Madame Zubritsky, this is for you.

(He hands her some flowers.)

LENYA: Oh, whitefish. I saw them on sale today. Thank you.

(She takes them.)

DOCTOR: How can we help you?

LEON: Well, there are a few questions I wanted to ask you first.

DOCTOR: Questions! That's what they ask. When they point to you and you don't know. He knows. He knows what questions are. I can tell this one's going to be a good teacher.

LENYA: Would you be so kind, Master Tolchinsky, to—to ask us a question. Any question at all.

DOCTOR: It means a lot to us. It's been so long since anyone has asked us a good "school" question. Please!

(They all sit.)

LEON: Well, there are questions and there are questions. Do you want a question on mathematics or a question dealing with science or perhaps a philosophical question?

DOCTOR: The first one. The first one sounds good. The philosophical question. Ask us that one.

LEON: Very well, if you wish . . . What is the purpose of man's existence?

DOCTOR: What a question . . . Lenya, did you ever hear such a beautiful question?

LENYA: I'm speechless . . . To think someone would ask us a question like that.

LEON: Are you interested in the answer?

DOCTOR: Not today, thank you. To be asked one question like that in a lifetime is more than we ever expected. The answer should be given to someone much more worthy than we are.

LEON: But it's your birthright. Knowledge is everyone's birthright.

DOCTOR: Everyone not born in Kulyenchikov.

LEON: I don't understand.

LENYA: You would if you knew about the nurse.

LEON: What nurse?

DOCTOR: Not the nurse, the hearse.

LEON: The hearse?

LENYA: He means the purse.

LEON: What kind of purse?

DOCTOR: The kind of purse that inflicts the wrath of God upon all those poor souls who were unfortunate enough to be born in this pitiful village.

LEON: Do you mean, perhaps, a curse?

DOCTOR: Curse! That's what it is! I knew it sounded like that.

LENYA: We were so close. So close!

LEON: What is this curse you speak of, Dr. Zubritsky?

DOCTOR: Lenya, bolt the door. Draw the curtains.

LENYA: I can't draw curtains. I can draw a cat or a fish...

DOCTOR: Never mind. Lower your voice.

LENYA: *(Bends her knees, making herself shorter)* How low do you want my voice?