

C., R. of MOTHER ABBESS.)

Out of focus and bemused,

And I never know exactly where I am.

BERTHE: (*Crosses L. of MOTHER ABBESS*).

Unpredictable as weather,

She's as flighty as a feather,

(*MOTHER ABBESS backs up a step.*)

MARGARETTA: (*To SISTER BERTHE*)

She's a darling.

BERTHE: (*To SISTER MARGARETTA*)

She's a demon.

MARGARETTA: (*To SISTER BERTHE*)

She's a lamb.

SOPHIA: (*Crosses L. of SISTER BERTHE*)

She'll out-pest any pest,

Drive a hornet from his nest,

BERTHE: She could throw a whirling dervish out of whirl.

MARGARETTA: She is gentle,

She is wild, (*Raising both hands.*)

SOPHIA: She's a riddle.

She's a child. (*Raising both hands.*)

BERTHE: She's a headache! (*Raising both hands.*)

MARGARETTA: (*Dropping her hands*)

She's an angel.

MOTHER ABBESS:

She's a girl. . .

ALL: (*Looking front—On count of 8, all clasp hands at chest, look up in prayer*)

How do you solve a problem like Maria?

How do you catch a cloud and pin it down?

How do you find a word that means Maria?

MARGARETTA: (*Crosses S.R.*)

A flibbertijibbet,

SOPHIA: (*Crosses S.L.*)

A will-o'-the-wisp,

BERTHE: (*Crosses S.R.*)

A clown.

ALL: Many a thing you know you'd like to tell her,

Many a thing she ought to understand,

(*SISTER SOPHIA crosses to MOTHER ABBESS.*)

MOTHER ABBESS:

But how do you make her stay?

(*SISTER BERTHE crosses to stool R. of table.*)

SOPHIA: And listen to all you say?

(*SISTER BERTHE sits down.*)

MARGARETTA:

How do you keep a wave upon the sand?

ALL: How do you solve a problem like Maria?

How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?

(*On "hold," All hold out both hands.*)

BERTHE: Reverend Mother, may I just. . .

MOTHER ABBESS: Now, my children, I think I should talk to Maria instead of about her. I am grateful to you all.

(*The three sisters bow and exit U.R. There is a knock on the S.R. door. MOTHER ABBESS rises.*) Ave! (*MARIA enters. She has her arms folded across her chest with her hands concealed beneath the short cape of her habit.*)

Come here, my child. (*MARIA crosses D.C., kneels and kisses MOTHER ABBESS' ring.*) Sit down, Maria, I want to talk to you. (*MARIA sits on stool R. of desk.*)

MARIA: Yes—about last night. Reverend Mother, I was on my knees most of the night because I was late—and after you'd been so kind and given me permission to leave. . .

MOTHER ABBESS: (*Sits L. of desk*) It wasn't about your being late, Maria. . .

MARIA: I must have awakened half the Abbey before Sister Margaretta heard me and opened the gate.

MOTHER ABBESS: Maria, very few of us were asleep. We could only think that you had lost your way—and to be lost at night on that mountain!

MARIA: Reverend Mother, I couldn't be lost on that mountain. That's my mountain. I was brought up on it! It was that mountain that brought me to you.

MOTHER ABBESS: Oh . . . ?

MARIA: When I was a little girl I used to come down the mountain, climb a tree and look over into your garden. I'd see the sisters at work, and I'd hear them sing on their way to vespers. Many times I went back up that mountain in the dark—singing all the way. (MARIA clasps her hands together and raises them above her head in an exuberant gesture. Then she catches herself, gives a guilty glance toward the MOTHER ABBESS, and puts her hands back beneath her cape.) And that brings up another transgression—I was singing yesterday—and I was singing without your permission.

MOTHER ABBESS: Maria, it's only here in the Abbey that there is a rule about singing.

MARIA: That's the hardest rule of all for me. Sister Margaretta is always reminding me—but too late, after I've started singing.

MOTHER ABBESS: And the day you were singing in the garden at the top of your voice.

MARIA: But Mother, it's that kind of song.

MOTHER ABBESS: I came to the window and when you saw me you stopped.

MARIA: Yes—that's been on my mind ever since it happened.

MOTHER ABBESS: It's been on my mind, too. I wish you hadn't stopped. I used to sing that song when I was a child, and I can't quite remember—Please—

(She gestures to MARIA to sing.)

MARIA: (Sitting, facing front, sings)

Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens,
Bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens,

(MOTHER ABBESS starts to write.)

Brown paper packages tied up with strings—
These are a few of my favorite things.

(MOTHER ABBESS motions MARIA to rise. MARIA drops her hands, rises, takes stage and enjoys herself.)

Cream colored ponies and crisp apple strudels,

Doorbells and sleigh bells and schnitzel
with noodles,

Wild geese that fly with the moon on their wings—

These are a few of my favorite things.

Girls in white dresses with blue satin sashes,

Snowflakes that stay on my nose and eyelashes,

Silver-white winters that melt into springs—
These are a few of my favorite things.

When the dog bites,

When the bee stings,

When I'm feeling sad,

I simply remember my favorite things

And then I don't feel so bad!

(Slaps desk for emphasis. Then looks embarrassed.)

MOTHER ABBESS: (Taps with her pencil)

Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens,
(Rises, crosses D.L.)