A LITTLE PRINCESS

SARA. (Quite stunned.) Emily, look at me. (The two DOLLS slowly turn their heads in unison to SARA.) We must be very great friends to each other. You see, my papa is on the sea now and ... and ....

(SARA, not able to talk, joins in the singing. RAM DASS steps and SARA finishes the song alone.)
(MISS AMELIA and MISS MINCHIN appear on the grand staircase.)

MISS MINCHIN. Sara Crewe!
MISS AMELIA. Miss Crewe! Are you quite alright?
SARA. (Looking after her father; in his direction.) I want to be quite by myself, if you please.
MISS MINCHIN. You must come down now and begin your lessons!
MISS AMELIA. (Walking off. MISS MINCHIN first.) Oh dear, oh dear me. I never saw such a funny, old-fashioned child, sister. She has not made the least particle of noise.
MISS MINCHIN. Amelia! Perhaps you prefer kicking and screaming as some of our other young ladies do when they first arrive!
MARIETTA. Miss Sara?

(MARIETTA helps SARA into her school smock. SARA gives EMILY a book.)

SARA. If you please, Marietta, give a book to Emily while I go downstairs. (MARIETTA looks at SARA and she explains.) You see, perhaps Emily can read, and play and dance but she will only do it when people are out of the room.
MARIETTA. Comme elle est drole!
SARA. I have to go to my lessons now. Thank you, Marietta.
MARIETTA. Elle a l'air d'une princesse, cette petite.

Scene 5

(RAM DASS claps his hands: schoolroom/parlor, lots of chatter and energy as the young girls quickly come in.)

START

RAM DASS. The brave young soldier entered the classroom. NURSE/SERVANT ... where there were young ladies of all ages, shapes and sizes!

(A full classroom of young ladies—all eyes on SARA as she walks in. Furtive whispering, ad lib and talking together.)

LILLIAN. Veronica! Look!
VERONICA. What's her name, Ethelberta?
ETHELBERTA. I don't know but I think she's pretty, in an odd sort of way.
JESSIE. Lavinia, quick look! It's the new girl!
LAVINIA. She is supposed to be the new show pupil and a credit to the school. She even has a French maid.
JESSIE. How do you know?
LAVINIA. I heard Miss Minchin say to Miss Amelia that her clothes were so grand that they were ridiculous for a child. My mamma says that children should be dressed simply.
MISS MINCHIN. (Rapping in a dignified manner upon her desk, MISS AMELIA, ever present, is at her side.) Young ladies. I wish to introduce you to your new companion. (MISS AMELIA, a bit overexcited, runs about getting all the little ones on their feet. All the LITTLE GIRLS stand as does SARA.) Thank you, Miss Amelia, I shall expect all of you to be very agreeable to Miss Crewe, she has just come to us from a great distance—in fact, from India. She is to become a lady of the highest position in our society as all of you I know, aspire to become. (The PUPILS bow ceremoniously, SARA turns to her.) Sara, come here to me. As your papa has engaged a French maid for you, I conclude that he wishes you to make a special study of the French language.
SARA. (Awkwardly.) I think he engaged her, because he—he thought I would like her, Miss Minchin.
MISS MINCHIN. I am afraid that you imagine things are done because you like them. My impression is that your papa wishes you to learn French.
SARA. I—I have never really learned French, and I don't think that I....
MISS MIN Chin. That is enough. You must begin your lessons at once. The French master, Monsieur Du Farge, will arrive shortly. Take this book and look at it until he does.

SARA. (Confused, returning to her seat and studying the book.) 'Le père' — 'the father' — 'le mère' — 'the mother.'

MISS MIN Chin. You look rather cross, Sara. I am sorry you do not like the idea of learning French.

SARA. I am very fond of it, but—

MISS MIN Chin. You must not say 'but' when you are told to do things. What would your papa say?

(MALE ONE/MONSIEUR DuFARGE enters and all PUPILS stand up.)

ALL GIRLS. Bonjour, Monsieur DuFarge.

MALE ONE/MONSIEUR DuFARGE. (In French.) And a wonderful good day to all of you. (In English, with a French accent.) Miss Minchin. Ah, this is the new pupil for me, Madame? I hope that is my good fortune.

MISS MIN Chin. Yes, her papa—Captain Crewe—is very anxious that she should study the language. But I am afraid she has a childish prejudice against it and does not wish to learn.

MONSIEUR DuFARGE. I am sorry for that, mademoiselle. Perhaps, when we begin, I may show you that it is a charming tongue.

SARA. (In French, fluent, quickly, nervous. As it goes, MONSIEUR DuFARGE translates.) Madame had not understood. I have not learned French exactly—not out of books—but my papa and other people have always spoken it to me.

MONSIEUR DuFARGE. (Taking the phrase book from her, to MISS MIN Chin.) Ah, Madame, there is not much I can teach her. She has not learned French, she is French. Her accent is exquisite.

MISS MIN Chin. I see. I am very sorry, Monsieur Du Farge. (To SARA, politely.) You ought to have told me.

SARA. I—I tried, I—I suppose I did not begin right.

JESSIE and LAVINIA giggle. MISS MIN Chin. runs upon her desk.

MISS MIN Chin. Girls! You seem to have forgotten how polite