

START

to go to the dressmaker. Mucki's getting his first trousers, and Karl's going to get a new jersey suit for the winter.

WENDLA. Sometimes I'm so happy - there's so much joy and the sunshine is so bright. I want to be out, and walk over the fields when it's dusk, and look for primroses and sit and dream by the river. And then this *toothache* starts, and I think that tomorrow is the day I shall die. I feel hot and cold, everything goes dark, and the monster flutters in . . . Whenever I wake up, Mother's crying. O, that hurts me so much . . . I can't tell you, Ina.

INA. Shall I lift your pillow?

(FRAU BERGMANN comes back.)

FRAU BERGMANN. He thinks the vomiting will stop, too, and then it will be safe for you to get up. I think you should get up soon, too, Wendla.

INA. Perhaps next time I come to see you, you'll be jumping around the house again. Bless you, Mother. I really must go to the dressmaker now. God bless you, Wendla, dear. (Kisses her.) Soon, soon better!

WENDLA. Thank you, Ina. Bring me some primroses next time you come. Goodbye. Say hello to the boys for me. **END**

(INA goes.)

WENDLA. What did he say outside, mother?

FRAU BERGMANN. Nothing. He said Fraulein von Witzleben also tended to faint. Evidently it almost always

floor!

WENDLA. Now I certainly won't go. (Kneels beside him.)

Why don't you come out in the fields with me, Melchior? It's sticky and gloomy here. It doesn't matter to us if we get soaked to the skin!

MELCHIOR. The hay smells so good. The sky outside must be as dark as the grave. All I can see is the bright poppy on your breast -- I can hear your heartbeat --

WENDLA. Don't kiss me, Melchior! Don't kiss me!

MELCHIOR. Your heart -- listen to it beating --

WENDLA. You love each other -- when you kiss -- No, no!

MELCHIOR. O, believe me, there's no such thing as *love*!

It's all self, all ego. I don't love you anymore than you love me.

WENDLA. Don't! Don't, Melchior!

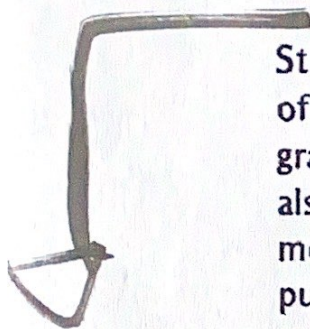
MELCHIOR. Wendlal

WENDLA. O, Melchior! Don't, don't.

Scene Five


Scene: FRAU GABOR sits and writes.

FRAU GABOR. Dear Herr Stiefel, After twenty four hours of thinking and thinking over what you have written to me, I take up my pen with a heavy heart. I cannot -- I give you my solemn word -- obtain the cost of a passage to America for you. Firstly, I do not have so much at my disposal, and secondly, if I had, it would be the greatest possible sin to put into your hands the means of carrying out a recklessness so fraught with consequence. You would do me a grave injustice, Herr



Stiefel. If you found in this refusal a sign of any lack of love on my part. On the contrary, it would be a grave offence to my duty as a motherly friend, if I also were to lose my head and, influenced by your momentary desperation, abandon myself to first impulses. I will gladly—should you so wish—write to your parents and try to persuade them that throughout this term you have done all that lay in your power, and exhausted your strength, so much so that any rigorous condemnation of your failure would not only be unjust, but might very well be detrimental to your physical and spiritual health.

The threat hinted at in your letter—that if your escape were not made possible you would take your life—does, to be frank, Herr Stiefel, somewhat surprise me. Be a misfortune never so undeserved, one should not allow oneself to stoop to underhanded methods. The method by which you seek to make me, who have always been kind to you, responsible for any ensuing tragedy, smacks somewhat of that which in the eyes of ill-disposed persons might well be taken for an attempt at extortion. ~~I must own that, least of all from you, who otherwise know so well the respect one owes oneself, was the above mentioned to be expected. However, I am convinced that you were still suffering from the effects of first shock and therefore unable to understand the nature of your conduct. And so I confidently trust that these my words will reach in in an already more composed frame of mind.~~



(Continued on next page)

champagne at Pagannini's. Valasqueze had sold his Plague Sufferer. Adolar drank out of the ashtray. Schiller sang "The Mother Who Murdered Her Child" and Adolar beat hell out of the guitar. I was so drunk they had to put me to bed. You're still at school, Moritz?

MORITZ. No, no -- this is my last term.

ILSE. That's right. O, time passes much better when you're earning. D'you remember how we played bandits? Wendla Bergmann and you and me and the others. You all came to our place in the evenings and drank the goat's milk while it was still warm. What's Wendla up to? Last time I saw her was at the flood. What does Melchior Gabor do? Does he still look so solemn? We used to stand opposite each other in music.

MORITZ. He's a philosopher.

ILSE. Wendla was at our place a while back and brought Mother some stewed fruit. I was sitting for Isidor Landauer then. He wants me for the Virgin Mary, the mother of God with the baby Jesus. He's an idiot and disgusting. Ugh, never settles. Have you got a hangover?

MORITZ. From last night. We knocked it back like hippopotamuses. I staggered home at five.

ILSE. You've only got to look at you! Were there any girls?

MORITZ. Arabella. We drank beer out of her slipper. She's Spanish, you know. The landlord left us alone with her the whole night --

ILSE. You've only got to look at you, Moritz! I don't know what a hangover is! At the last carnival, I didn't go to bed or get out of my clothes for three days and nights! From fancy dress balls to the cafes, lunch on the lake,

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evening at cellar revues, nights back to the fancy dress balls. Lena was with me and that fat Viola. Heinrich found me on the third night.

~~MORITZ. Had he been looking for you?~~

ILSE. He tripped over my arm. I was lying unconscious on the street in the snow. Afterwards I went back with him. I couldn't get out of his place for two weeks -- that was a terrible time! Every morning I had to pose in his Persian dressing gown, and every evening I had to walk round his rooms in a black page-boy tunic. White lace, cuffs, collar and knees. He photographed me in a different way every day -- once as Ariadne on the arm of the sofa, once as Leda, once as Ganymede, and once on all fours as a female Nabobcanesor. He was always squirming on about murder, shooting, suicide, drugs and fumes. He brought a pistol in bed every morning, loaded it with shot, and pushed it into my breast: one twitch and I press. O, he would have pressed, Moritz, he would have pressed. Then he put the thing in his mouth like a pea-shooter. It's supposed to be good for the self-preservation instinct. Ugh -- the bullet would have gone through my spine!

~~MORITZ. Is Heinrich still alive?~~

~~ILSE. How should I know? There was a big mirror in the ceiling over the bed. The little room looked as high as a tower, as bright as an opera house. You saw yourself hanging down alive from the sky. I had terrible dreams. God, O, God, if only the day would come. Good night, Ilse. When you're asleep you're so beautiful I could murder you.~~

~~MORITZ. Is this Heinrich still alive?~~

~~ILSE. No, please God. One day he was fetching absinthe~~

END