

Failed.

(A beat.)

Thank God my father never lived to see this day.

(The lights fade, and simultaneously rise on . . .)

SCENE 10

Two discrete spaces are revealed. Over the course of the scene, the lights shift back and forth between them.

Frau Gabor sits, as if in her study, writing a letter.

Moritz steps forward, on the other side of the stage—in brilliant concert light—reading that letter.

A driving beat underscores the scene, building as Moritz sings.

FRAU GABOR: Dear Herr Stiefel—

(*Thinks again*) Moritz, I've spent the entire day thinking about your note. Truly, it touched me, it did, that you'd think of me as a friend. Of course, I was saddened to hear that your exams came off rather less well than you'd hoped, and that you will not be promoted, come fall.

And yet, I must say straightaway, that fleeing to America is hardly the solution. And even if it were, I cannot provide the money you request.

MORITZ:

Uh-huh . . . uh-huh . . . uh-huh . . . well, fine.

Not like it's even worth the time.

But still, you know, you wanted more.

Sorry, it won't change—been there before.

FRAU GABOR: You would do me wrong, Herr Stiefel, to read into my refusal any lack of affection. On the contrary, as Melchior's mother, I truly believe it to be my duty (to curb this momentary loss of)—

MORITZ:

The thing that sucks—okay?—for me,

A thousand bucks, I'm, like, scot-free.

And I mean, please . . . That's all I need.

Get real—okay? By now, you know the score.

FRAU GABOR: Should you like, I am ready to write to your parents. I will try to convince them that no one could have worked harder last semester, and also that too rigorous a condemnation of your current misfortune (could have the gravest possible effect on)—

MORITZ:

You wanna laugh. It's too absurd.

You start to ask. Can't hear a word.

You wanna crash and burn. Right, tell me more.

FRAU GABOR: Still, Herr Stiefel, one thing in your letter disturbed me. Your—what shall we call it?—veiled threat that, should escape not be possible, you would take your own life.

MORITZ:

Okay so, now we do the play.

Act like we so care. No way.

You'll write my folks? Well, okay. Babe, that's how it goes.

FRAU GABOR: My dear boy, the world is filled with men—businessmen, scientists, scholars even—who have done rather poorly in school, and yet gone on to brilliant careers. Consider, for example, that rare and estimable essayist, Leopold Habebald—

MORITZ:

They're not my home. Not anymore.

Not like they so were before.

Still, I'll split, and they'll, like . . . Well, who knows?

Who knows? Who knows?