

MELCHIOR: This is my favorite spot. My private place—for thinking.

WENDLA (*Starts away*): Oh. I'm sorry—

MELCHIOR: No—no. Please.

(*She pauses.*)

So . . . how have you been doing?

WENDLA: Well, this morning was wonderful. Our youth group brought baskets of food and clothing to the day-laborers' children.

MELCHIOR: I remember when we used to do that. Together.

WENDLA: You should have seen their faces, Melchior. How much we brightened their day.

MELCHIOR: Actually, it's something I've been thinking a lot about.

WENDLA: The day-laborers?

MELCHIOR ("No"): Our little acts of charity. What do you think, Wendla, can our Sunday School deeds really make a difference?

WENDLA: They have to. Of course. What other hope do those people have?

MELCHIOR: I don't know, exactly. But I fear that Industry is fast determining itself firmly against them.

WENDLA: Against us all, then.

MELCHIOR: Thank you, yes!

WENDLA: It seems to me: what serves each of us best is what serves *all* of us best.

MELCHIOR: Indeed.

(*A beat.*)

Wendla Bergman, I have known you all these years, and we've never truly talked.

WENDLA: We have so few opportunities. Now that we're older.

MELCHIOR: True. In a more progressive world, of course, we could all attend the same school. Boys and girls together. Wouldn't that be remarkable?

(*In the moment of intellectual engagement, Melchior has drawn so close to Wendla that she grows self-conscious and pulls back.*)

WENDLA: What time is it?

MELCHIOR: Must be close to four.

WENDLA: Oh? I thought it was later. I paused and lay so long in the moss by the stream, and just let myself dream . . . I thought it must be . . . later.

MELCHIOR: Then, can't you sit for a moment? When you lean back against this oak, and stare up at the clouds, you start to think hypnotic things . . .

WENDLA: I have to be back before five.

MELCHIOR: But, when you lie here, such a strange, wonderful peace settles over you . . .

WENDLA: Well, for a moment maybe.

(*Wendla and Melchior settle beneath the oak. The lights shift, isolating them in a world of vibrant shadow. A classic arpeggio begins.*)

*Just too unreal, all this.
Watching the words fall from my lips . . .*

MELCHIOR:

Baiting some girl—with hypotheses!

WENDLA AND MELCHIOR:

Haven't you heard the word of your body?

(*Melchior reaches, tentatively, takes Wendla's hand. They begin a private pas de deux.*)

MELCHIOR:

Don't feel a thing—you wish.

WENDLA:

Grasping at pearls with my fingertips . . .