

(The song ends. The lights shift back. The school day resumes.)

HERR SONNENSTICH: Gentlemen, turn in your verses, and clear away your personal effects. I will see you tomorrow, seven A.M.

(Herr Sonnenstich goes out. The Boys gather their books.)

OTTO *(Heading out)*: Well, I'm off.

ERNST: Me, too.

HANSCHEN: I'll walk with you, Ernst.

ERNST *(Pauses, turns back)*: You will?

HANSCHEN *("Yes"; suggestively)*: We'll huddle over the Homer. Maybe do a little Achilles and Patroclus . . .

(Hanschen leads Ernst off.)

GEORG *("Good night")*: Melchior, Moritz.

MELCHIOR *(Archly)*: Home to Bach? . . .

GEORG: Fraulein Grossebustenhalter will not be kept waiting.

(Georg shivers involuntarily, and goes. Melchior turns to Moritz with a wink, but Moritz waves it away.)

MORITZ: Ach, Melchi! Sixty lines of Homer, all those quadratic equations . . . I'll be up all night again, haunted by another of those . . . dreams. And still I won't get through it.

MELCHIOR: Oh, yes. Your dream.

MORITZ *("The horror!")*: Melchi, why—why—am I haunted by the legs of a woman? By the deepening conviction: some dark part of my destiny may lie there between them? . . .

MELCHIOR: All right then. I'll tell you. I got it out of books. But prepare yourself: it made an atheist out of me.

(A beat.)

So—

MORITZ: No no—not here! I can't talk it! No—do me a favor: write it down. All of it. Conceal it in my satchel—after Gymnastics—tomorrow.

(A beat.)

If you like, you could add some illustrations in the margins.

(A beat.)

MELCHIOR: Top to bottom?

MORITZ: Everything.

(Headmaster Knochenbruch and his associate, Fraulein Knuppeldick, stroll past and pause.)

HERR KNOCHENBRUCH: Unfathomable. Fraulein Knuppeldick.

FRAULEIN KNUPPELDICK: Herr Knochenbruch . . . ?

HERR KNOCHENBRUCH: Look at that. Melchior Gabor, a young man of distinct intellectual capability—

FRAULEIN KNUPPELDICK: Thoroughly distinct.

HERR KNOCHENBRUCH: A young man who could be our finest pupil—

FRAULEIN KNUPPELDICK: Our finest, Herr Knochenbruch.

HERR KNOCHENBRUCH: But there he is, polluting himself, cavorting about with that, that . . .

FRAULEIN KNUPPELDICK: Neurasthenic imbecile, Moritz Stiefel?

HERR KNOCHENBRUCH: Thank Heaven the upper grade only holds sixty.

(Herr Knochenbruch and Fraulein Knuppeldick go off.)

SCENE 3

Late afternoon. A bridge in the countryside. Wendla, Martha, Thea and Anna walk home, talking excitedly.

THEA *(Mid-conversation)*: . . . And the bodice in lace, with a satin bow in back . . .

ANNA: Ooh! And Wendla—what will you wear to Greta Brandenburg's wedding?

WENDLA: Mama said we cannot go.