

HERR KNOCHENBRUCH (*"Indeed"*): Has somehow passed our middle-term exams, it would appear we face a certain dilemma.

FRAULEIN KNUPPELDICK: Ah.

HERR KNOCHENBRUCH: The upper grade, as we know, will hold only sixty. I hardly think we can promote sixty-one.

FRAULEIN KNUPPELDICK: Hardly, Herr Knochenbruch. But, let us look to the finals ahead.

HERR KNOCHENBRUCH: Yes? . . .

FRAULEIN KNUPPELDICK: Remember, it is I who shall be marking *them*.

HERR KNOCHENBRUCH: Then *I* am assured the good name of our school is secure.

*(Herr Knochenbruch and Fraulein Knuppeldick exchange a look.)*

## SCENE 7

*Afternoon. A windy day. Wendla, Martha, Thea and Anna walk arm in arm.*

ANNA: Shall we take the short way home?

THEA: No no—by the bridge.

WENDLA: After two hours marching with that medicine ball?!

THEA: Come on!

ANNA (*Teasing*): Someone wants to see: has Melchi Gabor taken a raft out?

THEA (*"Even so"*): Last one there has to hold hands with Hanschen! . . .

*(The Girls start off.)*

ANNA: Martha, careful—your braid's coming loose.

MARTHA (*Concerned*): No.

THEA: Just let it. Isn't it a nuisance for you—day and night.

You may not cut it short, you may not wear it down . . .

WENDLA: Tomorrow, I'm bringing scissors.

MARTHA: For God's sake, Wendla, no! Papa beats me enough as it is.

WENDLA: Really?

MARTHA: No, no, I— It's nothing.

THEA: Martha . . . ?

ANNA: Martha, we're your friends . . .

*(A beat.)*

MARTHA: Well, when I don't do as he likes . . .

ANNA: What?

MARTHA: Some nights . . . Papa yanks out his belt.

THEA: But where is your mama?

MARTHA: "We have rules in this house. Your father will not be disobeyed."

*(A beat.)*

The other night, I ran for the door. "Out the door? All right, I like that. That's where you'll spend the night—out on the street."

THEA: No!

MARTHA: It was so cold.

ANNA: My God.

*(A beat.)*

WENDLA: He beats you with a belt?

MARTHA: Anything.

WENDLA: With a buckle?

MARTHA (*Rolls up her sleeve*): Right there . . .

ANNA: Oh my God!

WENDLA: Martha, the welts—they're terrible.

ANNA: We must tell someone.

MARTHA: Anna, no!

ANNA: But we must.

MARTHA: No, no, please. They'd throw me out for good.

THEA: Like what happened to Ilse, you mean.

WENDLA: Remember!