

*Mama, the weeping.
Mama, the angels.
No sleep in Heaven, or Bethlehem.*

(The lights shift to the world of 1891: a provincial German living room. Frau Bergman suddenly enters, beaming.)

FRAU BERGMAN: Wendla!

WENDLA: Mama?

FRAU BERGMAN: Goodness, look at you—in that . . . that kindergarten dress! Wendla, grown-up girls cannot be seen strutting about in such—

WENDLA: Let me wear this one, Mama! I love this one. It makes me feel like a little . . . faerie-queen.

FRAU BERGMAN: But you're already . . . in bloom.

(Off her look) Now, sssh. You made me forget all our good news.

Just imagine, Wendla, last night the stork finally visited your sister. Brought her another little baby girl.

WENDLA: I can't wait to see her, Mama.

FRAU BERGMAN: Well, put on a proper dress, and take a hat.

(Wendla starts out, hesitates.)

WENDLA: Mama, don't be cross—don't be. But I'm an aunt for the second time now, and I still have no idea how it happens.

(Frau Bergman looks stricken.)

Mama, please. I'm ashamed to even ask. But then, who can I ask but you?

FRAU BERGMAN: Wendla, child, you cannot imagine that I could—

WENDLA: But you cannot imagine I still believe in the stork.

FRAU BERGMAN: I honestly don't know what I've done to deserve this kind of talk. And on a day like today!

Go, child, put your clothes on.

WENDLA: And if I run out, now, and ask Gregor? Our chimney sweep . . . ?

(A beat.)

FRAU BERGMAN: Very well, I'll tell you everything.

But not today. Tomorrow. Or the day after.

WENDLA: Today, Mama.

FRAU BERGMAN: Wendla Bergman, I simply cannot . . .

WENDLA: Mama!

FRAU BERGMAN: You will drive me mad.

WENDLA: Why? I'll kneel at your feet, lay my head in your lap . . . You can talk as if I weren't even here.

(No response.)

Please.

FRAU BERGMAN: Very well, I'll tell you.

(Wendla kneels. Flustered, Frau Bergman buries the girl's head in her apron.)

WENDLA *(Waits)*: Yes? . . .

FRAU BERGMAN: Child, I . . .

WENDLA: Mama.

FRAU BERGMAN: All right, then. In order for a woman to conceive a child . . .

You follow me?

WENDLA: Yes, Mama.

FRAU BERGMAN: For a woman to bear a child, she must . . . in her own personal way, she must . . . love her husband. Love him, as she can love only him. Only him . . . she must love—with her whole . . . heart.

There. Now, you know everything.

WENDLA: Everything? . . .

FRAU BERGMAN *(“Yes”)*: Everything. So help me.

WENDLA *(Not budging)*: Mama!

(The lights shift—we are back in the song world. Contemporary music sounds. The Girls appear. Wendla rises and joins them. Shedding her nineteenth-century formality, she sings, as do all the Girls, in the manner of a contemporary young woman.)