

Act I, Scene 1

WENDLA is revealed in song light – as if at a mirror. She gently explores her newly maturing body, pulls on a near-transparent schoolgirl dress.

#1 – Mama Who Bore Me**WENDLA**

MAMA WHO BORE ME.
MAMA WHO GAVE ME
NO WAY TO HANDLE THINGS. WHO MADE ME SO SAD.

MAMA, THE WEEPING.
MAMA, THE ANGELS.
NO SLEEP IN HEAVEN, OR BETHLEHEM.

SOME PRAY THAT, ONE DAY, CHRIST WILL COME A-CALLIN'.
THEY LIGHT A CANDLE, AND HOPE THAT IT GLOWS.
AND SOME JUST LIE THERE, CRYING FOR HIM TO COME AND
FIND THEM.
BUT WHEN HE COMES, THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO GO...

MAMA WHO BORE ME.
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NO WAY TO HANDLE THINGS. WHO MADE ME SO BAD.

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*(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!

#2 – *Mama Who Bore Me (Reprise)*

(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)

GIRLS

MAMA WHO BORE ME.
MAMA WHO GAVE ME
MAMA THE ANGELS. WHO MADE ME SO SAD.

WENDLA & GIRLS

MAMA WHO BORE ME.
MAMA WHO GAVE ME
NO WAY TO HANDLE THINGS. WHO MADE ME SO SAD.

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(End of Act I, Scene 1)