

ANNA

Martha, careful—your braids coming loose.

MARTHA

(Concerned)

No.

THEA

Just let it. Isn't it a nuisance for you—day and night. You may 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.