

WENDLA AND GIRLS:

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.  
 Mama who gave me  
 No way to handle things. Who made me so bad.

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

## SCENE 2

*School. The Boys sit upright at their desks, reciting from Virgil's Aeneid. They stand, one after the other, for their recitation. Herr Sonnenstich walks the aisles beside them, listening.*

HERR SONNENSTICH: Again.

OTTO (Mid-recitation):

. . . vi superum saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram . . .

HERR SONNENSTICH ("Well done"): Better, Herr Lammhermeier.  
 Continue, Herr Zirschnitz.

GEORG:

. . . multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem.

HERR SONNENSTICH: Herr Rilow. From the beginning.

HANSCHEN:

Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris—

HERR SONNENSTICH: Herr Robel. And . . .

ERNST:

. . . Italiam, fato profugus, Laviniaque venit  
 litora—

HERR SONNENSTICH: Herr Stiefel.

(But, alas, Moritz is asleep.)

Herr Stiefel.

MORITZ (Waking): Sir? . . .

HERR SONNENSTICH: Continue, please. (Moritz hesitates) Herr  
 Stiefel . . .

MORITZ (Haltingly):

. . . Laviniaque venit . . .

HERR SONNENSTICH: Yes . . . ?

MORITZ:

. . . litora . . . multum enim—

HERR SONNENSTICH: "Multum enim"?

MORITZ (Taking another stab at it):

. . . multum olim—

START

HERR SONNENSTICH (Losing patience): "Olim"?! "Multum  
 olim" . . . ?! So then, somehow the Pious Aeneas has "already"  
 suffered much "in the days still to come" . . . ?

(No response.)

Herr Stiefel?

(No response.)

Do you have any idea what you're saying, Herr Stiefel?

(Moritz is too mortified to respond. Melchior rises.)

MELCHIOR: If you please!

HERR SONNENSTICH: Pardon me?

MELCHIOR (*Covering gracefully*): If you please, Herr Sonnenstich . . . can't we at least consider "multum olim" as a plausible conjecture for how the text might read?

HERR SONNENSTICH: Herr Gabor. We are hardly here today to conjecture about textual conjectures. The boy has made an error.

MELCHIOR: Yes. But an understandable error, sir. Indeed, if we could only entertain the fitness of the conjecture—

HERR SONNENSTICH: "Multum olim"?!

MELCHIOR: Look to the fresh rhetorical balance—"multum olim" introducing "*multa quoque*"—a parallel, sir, between what Aeneas has already suffered in war and those sufferings on land and sea just ahead.

HERR SONNENSTICH: Herr Gabor, since the days of Servius, Aulus Gellius, and Claudius Donatus—nay, since the moment of Virgil's death—our world has been littered with more than sufficient critical commentary on textual conjecture.

MELCHIOR: With all respect, sir, are you then suggesting there is no further room for critical thought or interpretation? Why indeed, then, do we even—

HERR SONNENSTICH (*Striking Melchior with his teacher's cane*): I am suggesting no such thing. I am confirming that Herr Stiefel has made an error. And I am asking—nay, demanding—that you emend his faulty text and proceed from there. Do I make myself clear?

(Melchior's jaw locks.)

Herr Gabor?

(No response. He strikes Melchior more forcefully.)

Herr Gabor, do I make myself clear?

MELCHIOR: Yes, Herr Sonnenstich: "litora multum ille."

HERR SONNENSTICH: All of you—together with Melchior Gabor:

"Laviniaque venit . . ."

END

BOYS:

. . . litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto  
vi superum saevae memorem Iunonis ob . . .

(*The Boys' recitation grows louder, more insistent, more numbing—as if somehow we were entering into Melchior's psychic experience of it. A bit of contemporary, electronic music drifts through. Shimmering song light finds Melchior. He turns out and sings—like a rocker in concert:*)

MELCHIOR:

BOYS:

|                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| All that's known        | . . . iram;           |
| In History, in Science, | multa quoque et bello |
| Overthrown              | passus, dum conderet  |
| At school, at home,     | urbem . . .           |
| by blind men.           |                       |

|                         |                               |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| You doubt them,         | Arma virumque cano, Troiae    |
| And soon they bark      | qui primus ab oris            |
| and hound you—          | Italiam, fato profugus,       |
| Till everything you say | Laviniaque venit              |
| is just another bad     | litora, multum ille et terris |
| about you.              | iactatus et alto              |
|                         | vi superum saevae memorem     |

|                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| All they say          | Iunonis ob iram;      |
| Is, "Trust in What Is | multa quoque et bello |
| Written."             | passus, dum conderet  |
| Wars are made,        | urbem . . .           |
| And somehow that is   |                       |
| wisdom.               |                       |

Thought is suspect,  
And money is their idol,  
And nothing is okay unless it's scripted in their Bible.