

ACT TWO

Scene One

Scene: Evening in MELCHIOR's study. The window is open, the lamp burns on the table. MELCHIOR and MORITZ sit on the sofa.

MORITZ. I'm quite lively again now, just a bit on edge. But I slept all through Greek. I'm surprised old Tongue-twister didn't twist my ear. I just scrapped in on time this morning. My first thought when I woke up was irregular verbs. Damnation-hell-and-fireworks, I conjugated all through breakfast and all the way to school, till everything was green in front of my eyes . . . I must have gone blank about three. The pen made one more blot in my book. When Mathilde woke me up, the lamp was smoking and the blackbirds were singing their hearts out in the lilac under the window. Suddenly I felt so completely miserable again. I fastened my collar and put a brush through my hair. . . . But you feel satisfied when you've forced something out of yourself.

MELCHIOR. May I roll you a cigarette?

MORITZ. Thanks, I'm not smoking. . . . If I can only keep it up! I'll work and work till my eyes drop out. Ernst Robel's already failed six times since the holidays . . . Three times in Greek, twice with Bonebreaker, the last time in Literary History. I've only been in that pitiful condition five times, and it's definitely not happening again! Robel won't shoot himself! Robel's parents didn't sacrifice everything for him. He can become a

moon. MELCHIOR climbs over the churchyard wall.



MELCHIOR (jumping down inside). That pack won't follow me here. While they search the brothels, I can get my breath back and sort myself out . . . Jacket in shreds, pockets empty. I couldn't defend myself against a child. I'll keep moving through the woods during the day . . . I knocked a cross down - the frost's killed all the flowers anyway. Everything's bare! The kingdom of death!

This is worse than climbing out of the skylight! Like falling and falling into nothing! I wasn't prepared for this! I should have stayed where I was!

Why her and not me? Why not the guilty? Providence, or a riddle? I'd break stones, starve - how can I even walk upright? One crime leads to another: I'm sinking in a swamp. I haven't got the strength to finish it . . . It was not wrong! It was not wrong! It was not wrong!

No one's ever walked over graves and been so full of envy. No - I wouldn't have the courage! O, if I could go mad - tonight!

I must look over there among the new ones. The wind whistles, on each gravestone in a different key - listen, the voices of pain! The wreaths are rotting on the marble crosses. They fall to pieces and jog up and down on their long strings. It's a forest of scarecrows on all the graves. Taller than houses. Even the devil

Scene Two

Scene: Churchyard in pouring rain. **REVEREND BALDBELLY** stands in front of the open grave with an umbrella in his hand. On his right, **HERR STIEFEL**, his friend, **ZIEG** and **UNCLE PROBST**. On the left, **HEADMASTER SUNSTROKE** and **PROFESSOR BONEBREAKER**. **STUDENTS** make up the rest of a circle. Some distance off, **MARTHA** and **ILSE** stand by a half-fallen gravestone.

BALDBELLY. Whosoever spurns the grace with which the Eternal Father blesses all who are born in sin, he shall die the death of the spirit. And whosoever in flesh and pride denies the worship owed to God and lives and serves evil, he shall die the death of the body. But whosoever sacriliciously casts aside the cross with which the Almighty inflicts this life of sin, verily, verily, I say unto you, he shall die the eternal death. (He throws a shovel of earth into the grave.) But we go forth on the path of thorns, let us praise the Lord, the All Merciful, and thank him for his unsearchable gift of predestination. For as surely as this died the three-fold death, as surely will Lord God lead the righteous to salvation and eternal life. Amen.

HERR STIEFEL (with tear-choked voice as he throws a shovel of earth into the grave). That boy wasn't mine. That boy wasn't mine. I had my doubts about that boy since he was a tot.

SUNSTROKE (throws a shovel of earth into the grave). While suicide is the greatest conceivable offense against