

AUDITION SCENE #1 – Doctor, Keller and Kate

DOCTOR

She'll live.

KATE

Thank God.

(The DOCTOR leaves them together over the crib, packs his bag)

DOCTOR

You're a pair of lucky parents. I can tell you now, I thought she wouldn't.

KELLER

Nonsense, the child's a Keller, she has the constitution of a goat. She'll outlive us all.

DOCTOR

(Amiably) Yes, especially if some of you Kellers don't get a night's sleep. I mean you, Mrs. Keller.

KELLER

You hear, Katie?

KATE

I hear.

KELLER

(Indulgent) I've brought up two of them, but this is my wife's first, she isn't battle-scarred yet.

KATE

Doctor, don't be merely considerate, will my girl be all right?

DOCTOR

Oh, by morning she'll be knocking down Captain Keller's fences again.

KATE

And isn't there anything we should do?

KELLER

(Jovial) Put up stronger fencing, ha?

DOCTOR

Just let her get well, she knows how to do it better than we do. *(He is packed, ready to leave)* Main thing is the fever's gone, these things come and go in infants, never know why. Call it acute congestion of the stomach and brain.

KELLER

I'll see you to your buggy, Doctor.

DOCTOR

I've never seen a baby, more vitality, that's the truth.

(He beams a good night at the baby and KATE, and KELLER leads him downstairs with a lamp. They go down the porch steps, and across the yard, where the DOCTOR goes off Left; KELLER stands with the lamp aloft, KATE meanwhile is bent lovingly over the crib, which emits a bleat; her finger is playful with the baby's face)

KATE

Hush. Don't you cry now, you've been trouble enough. Call it acute congestion, indeed, I don't see what's so cute about a congestion, just because it's yours? We'll have your father run an editorial in his paper, the wonders of modern medicine, they don't know what they're curing even when they cure it. Men, men and their battle scars, we women will have to – *(But she breaks off, puzzled, moves her finger before the baby's eyes.)* Will have to – Helen? *(Now she moves her hand quickly.)* Helen. *(She snaps her fingers at the baby's eyes twice, and her hand falters; after a moment she calls out loudly.)* Captain. Captain, will you come – *(But she stares at the baby and her next call is directly at her ears.)*

(And now, still staring, KATE screams. KELLER in the yard hears it and runs with the lamp back to the house. KATE screams again, her look intent on the baby and terrible. KELLER hurries in and up.)

KELLER

Katie? What's wrong?

KATE

Look. *(She makes a pass with her hand in the crib at the baby's eyes.)*

KELLER

What, Katie? She's well, she needs only time to –

KATE

She can't see. Look at her eyes. *(She takes the lamp from him, moves it before the child's face.)* She can't see!

KELLER

(Hoarsely) Helen.

KATE

Or hear. When I screamed she didn't blink. Not an eyelash.

KELLER

Helen. Helen!

KATE

She can't *hear* you!

KELLER

Helen!

AUDITION SCENE #2 – James, Aunt Ev, Kate, Keller and Helen

JAMES

(Blandly) She only dug Martha's eyes out. Almost dug. It's always almost, no point worrying till it happens, is there?

(They gaze out while KATE reaches out for the scissors in Helen's hand. But HELEN pulls the scissors back; they struggle for them a moment, then KATE gives up and lets HELEN keep them. She tries to draw HELEN into the house. HELEN jerks away. KATE next goes down on her knees, takes HELEN'S hands gently, and using the scissors like a doll, makes HELEN caress and cradle them; she points HELEN'S finger houseward. HELEN'S whole body now becomes eager; she surrenders the scissors. KATE turns her toward the door and gives her a little push. HELEN scrambles up and toward the house, and KATE, rising, follows her.)

AUNT EV

How does she stand it? Why haven't you seen this Baltimore man? It's not a thing you can let go on and on, like the weather.

JAMES

The weather here doesn't ask permission of me, Aunt Ev. Speak to my father.

AUNT EV

Arthur. Something ought to be done for that child.

KELLER

A refreshing suggestion. What?

(KATE, entering, turns HELEN to AUNT EV, who gives her the towel doll).

AUNT EV

Why, this very famous oculist in Baltimore I wrote you about, what was his name?

KATE

Dr. Chisholm.

AUNT EV

Yes, I heard lots of cases of blindness people thought couldn't be cured he's cured, he just does wonders. Why don't you write him.

KELLER

I've stopped believing in wonders.

KATE

(Rocks the cradle.) I think the captain will write to him soon. Won't you, Captain?

KELLER

No.

JAMES

(Lightly) Good money after bad, or bad after good. Or bad after bad –

AUNT EV

Well, if it's just a question of money, Arthur, now you're marshal you have this Yankee money. Might as well –

KELLER

Not money. The child's been to specialists all over Alabama and Tennessee, if I thought it would do good I'd have her to every fool doctor in the country.

KATE

I think the captain will write to him soon.

KELLER

Katie. How many times can you let them break your heart?

KATE

Any number of times.

(HELEN, meanwhile, sits on the floor to explore the doll with her fingers, and her hand pauses over the face: this is no face, just a blank area of towel, and it troubles her. Her hand searches for features and taps questioningly for eyes, but no one notices. She then yanks at her aunt's dress and taps again vigorously for eyes.)

AUNT EV

What child?

(Obviously not hearing, HELEN commences to go around, from person to person, tapping for eyes, but no one attends or understands.)

KATE

(No break.) As long as there's the least chance. For her to see. Or hear, or –

KELLER

There isn't. Now I must finish here.

KATE

I think, with your permission, Captain, I'd like to write.

KELLER

I said no, Katie.

AUNT EV

Why, writing does no harm, Arthur, only a little bitty letter. To see if he can help her.

KELLER

He can't.

KATE

We won't know that to be a fact, Captain, until after you write.

KELLER

(Rising, emphatic) Katie, he can't.

(He collects his papers.)

JAMES

(Facetiously.) Father stands up, that make it a fact.

KELLER

You be quiet! I'm badgered enough here by females without your impudence.

(JAMES shuts up, makes himself scarce. HELEN now is groping among things on Keller's desk, and paws his papers to the floor. KELLER is exasperated.)

Katie.

(KATE quickly turns HELEN away and retrieves the papers.)

I might as well try to work in a henyard as in this house –

JAMES

(Placating) You really ought to put her away, Father.

KATE

(Staring up) What?

JAMES

Some asylum. It's the kindest thing.

AUNT EV

Why, she's your sister, James, not a nobody –

JAMES

Half-sister, and half – mentally defective, she can't even keep herself clean. It's not pleasant to see her about all the time.

KATE

Do you dare? Complain of what you *can* see?

KELLER

(Very annoyed.) This discussion is at an end! I'll thank you not to broach it again, Ev.

(Silence descends at once. HELEN gropes her way with the doll, and KELLER turns back for a final word, explosive:)

I've done as much as I can bear. I can't give my whole life to it! The house is at sixes and sevens from mornings till night over the child, it's time some attention was paid to Mildred here instead!

KATIE

(Gently dry.) You'll wake her up, Captain.

KELLER

I want some peace in the house, I don't care how, but one way we won't have it is by rushing up and down the country every time someone hears of a new quack. I'm as sensible to this affliction as anyone else, it hurts me to look at the girl.

KATE

It was not our affliction I meant you to write about, Captain.

(HELEN is back at AUNT EV, fingering her dress, and yanks two buttons from it.)

AUNT EV

Helen! My buttons.

(HELEN pushes the buttons into the doll's face. KATE now sees, comes swiftly to kneel, lifts HELEN'S hand to her own eyes in question.)

KATE

Eyes?

(HELEN nods energetically.)

She wants the doll to have eyes.

(Another kind of silence now while KATE takes pins and buttons from the sewing basket and attaches them to the doll as eyes. KELLER stands, caught, and watches morosely. AUNT EV blinks and conceals her emotion by inspecting her dress.)

AUNT EV

My goodness me, I'm not decent.

KATE

She doesn't know better, Aunt Ev. I'll sew them on again.

JAMES

Never learn with everyone letting her do anything she takes it into her mind to –

KELLER

You be quiet!

JAMES

What did I say now?

KELLER

You talk too much.

JAMES

I was agreeing with you!

KELLER

Whatever it was. Deprived child, the least she can have are the little things she wants.

(JAMES, very wounded, stalks out of the room onto the porch; he remains there, sulking.)

AUNT EV

(Indulgently) It's worth a couple of buttons, Kate, look.

(HELEN now has the doll with eyes and cannot contain herself for joy; she rocks the doll, pats it vigorously, kisses it.)

This child has more sense than all these men Kellers, if there's any way to reach that mind of hers.

AUDITION SCENE #3 – Mr. Anagnos and Annie

MR. ANAGNOS

-who could do nothing for the girl, of course. It was Dr. Bell who thought she might somehow be taught. I have written the family only that a suitable governess, Miss Annie Sullivan, has been found here in Boston – *(The Lights begin to come up, Down Left, on a long table and chair. The table contains equipment for teaching the blind by touch – a small replica of the human skeleton, stuffed animals, models of flowers and plants, piles of books. The chair contains a girl of 20, ANNIE SULLIVAN, with a face which in repose is grave and rather obstinate, and when active is impudent, combative, twinkling with all the life that is lacking in Helen's and handsome; there is a crude vitality to her. Her suitcase is at her knees. ANAGNOS, a stocky bearded man, comes into the light only towards the end of his speech.)* – and will come. It will no doubt be difficult for you there, Annie. But it has been difficult for you at our school too, hm? Gratifying, yes, when you came to us and could not spell your name, to accomplish so much here in a few years, but always an Irish battle. For independence. *(He studies Annie, humorously; she does not open her eyes.)* This is my last time to counsel you, Annie, and you do lack some – by some I mean *all*-what, tact or talent to bend. To others. And what has saved you on more than one occasion here at Perkins is that there was nowhere to expel you to. Your eyes hurt?

ANNIE

My ears, Mr. Anagnos. *(And now she has opened her eyes; they are inflamed, vague, slightly crossed, clouded by the granular growth of trachoma, and she often keeps them closed to shut out the pain of light.)*

MR. ANAGNOS

(Severely) Nowhere but back to Tewksbury, where children learn to be saucy. Annie, I know how dreadful it was there, but that battle is dead and done with, why not let it stay buried.

ANNIE

(Cheerily) I think God must owe me a resurrection.

MR. ANAGNOS

(A bit shocked.) What?

ANNIE

(Taps her brow.) Well, He keeps digging up that battle!

MR. ANAGNOS

That is not a proper thing to say, Annie. It is what I mean.

ANNIE

(Meekly.) Yes. But I know what I'm like, what's this child like?

MR. ANAGNOS

Like?

ANNIE

Well – Bright or dull, to start off.

MR. ANAGNOS

No one knows. And if she is dull, you have no patience with this?

ANNIE

Oh, in grownups you have to, Mr. Anagnos. I mean in children it just seems a little – precocious, can I use that word?

MR. ANAGNOS

Only if you can spell it.

ANNIE

Premature. So I hope at least she's a bright one.

MR. ANAGNOS

Deaf, blind, mute – who knows? She is like a little safe, locked, that no one can open. Perhaps there is a treasure inside.

ANNIE

Maybe it's empty too.

MR. ANAGNOS

Possible. I should warn you, she is much given to tantrums.

ANNIE

Means something is inside. Well, so am I, if I believe all I hear. Maybe you should warn *them*.

MR. ANAGNOS

(Frowns.) Annie, I wrote them no word of your history. You will find yourself among strangers now, who know nothing of it.

ANNIE

Well, we'll keep them in a state of blessed ignorance.

MR. ANAGNOS

Perhaps *you* should tell it?

ANNIE

(Bristling.) Why? I have enough trouble with people who don't know.

MR. ANAGNOS

So they will understand. When you have trouble.

ANNIE

The only time I have trouble is when I'm right. *(But she is amused at herself, as is ANAGNOS.)* Is it my fault it's so often? I won't give them trouble, Mr. Anagnos, I'll be so ladylike they won't notice I've come.

MR. ANAGNOS

Annie, be – humble. It is not as if you have so many offers to pick and choose. You will need their affection, working with this child.

ANNIE

(Humorously.) I hope I won't need their pity.

MR. ANAGNOS

Oh, we can all use some pity. *(Crisply.)* So. You are no longer our pupil, we throw you into the world, a teacher. *If the child can be taught.* No one expects you to work miracles, even for twenty-five dollars a month. Now, in this envelope a loan, for the railroad, which you will repay me when you have a bank account. But in this box, a gift. With our love. *(ANNIE, opens the small box he extends, and sees a garnet ring. She looks up, blinking, and down.)* I think other friends are ready to say goodbye. *(He moves as though to open doors.)*

ANNIE

Mr. Anagnos. *(Her voice is trembling.)* Dear Mr. Anagnos, I – *(But she swallows over getting the ring on her finger; and cannot continue until she finds a woebegone joke.)* Well, what should I say, I'm an ignorant opinionated girl, and everything I am I owe to you?

MR. ANAGNOS

(Smiles.) That is only half true, Annie.

ANNIE

Which half? I crawled in here like a drowned rat. I thought I died when Jimmie died, that I'd never again – come alive. Well, you say with love so easy, and I haven't *loved* a soul since and I never will, I suppose, but this place gave me more than my eyes back. Or taught me how to spell, which I'll never learn anyway, but with all the fights and the trouble I've been here it taught me what help is, and how to live again, and I don't want to say goodbye. Don't open the door, I'm crying.

MR. ANAGNOS

(Gently.) They will not see.

AUDITION SCENE #4 – James, Annie and Kate

JAMES

(Coolly.) Miss Sullivan?

ANNIE

(Cheerily.) Here! At last, I've been on trains so many days I thought they must be backing up every time I dozed off –

JAMES

I'm James Keller.

ANNIE

James? *(The name stops her.)* I had a brother Jimmie. Are you Helen's?

JAMES

I'm only half a brother. You're to be her governess?

ANNIE

(Lightly.) Well. Try!

JAMES

(Eyeing her.) You look like half a governess. *(KATE enters. ANNIE stands moveless, while JAMES takes her suitcase. KATE's gaze on her is doubtful, troubled)* Mrs. Keller, Miss Sullivan. *(KATE takes her hand.)*

KATE

(Simply.) We've met every train for two days.

ANNIE

(She looks at KATE's face, and her good humor comes back.) I changed trains every time they stopped, the man who sold me that ticket ought to be tied to the tracks –

JAMES

You have a trunk, Miss Sullivan?

ANNIE

Yes. *(She passes JAMES a claim check, and he bears the suitcase out behind them. ANNIE holds the battered book. KATE is studying her face, and ANNIE returns the gaze; this is a mutual appraisal, southern gentlewoman and working-class Irish girl, and ANNIE is not quite comfortable under it.)* You didn't bring Helen, I was hoping you would.

KATE

No, she's home.

(A pause. ANNIE tries to make ladylike small talk, though her energy now and then erupts; she catches herself up whenever she hears it.)

ANNIE

You – live far from town, Mrs. Keller?

KATE

Only a mile.

ANNIE

Well, I suppose I can wait one more mile. But don't be surprised if I get out to push the horse!

KATE

Helen's waiting for you, too. There's been such a bustle in the house, she expects something, heaven knows what. *(Now she voices part of her doubt, not as such, but ANNIE understands it.)* I expected – a desiccated spinster. You're very young.

ANNIE

(Resolutely.) Oh, you should have seen me when I left Boston. I got much older on this trip.

KATE

I mean, to teach anyone as difficult as Helen.

ANNIE

I mean to try. They can't put you in jail for trying!

KATE

Is it possible, even? To teach a deaf-blind child *half* of what an ordinary child learns – has that ever been done?

ANNIE

Half?

KATE

A tenth.

ANNIE

(Reluctantly.) No. *(KATE's face loses its remaining hope, still appraising her youth.)* Dr. Howe did wonders, but – an ordinary child? No, never. But then I thought when I was going over his reports – *(She indicates the one in her hand.)* – he never treated them like ordinary children. More like – eggs everyone was afraid would break.

KATE

(A pause.) May I ask how old you are?

ANNIE

Well, I'm not in my teens, you know! I'm twenty.

KATE

All of twenty.

ANNIE

(She takes the bull by the horns, valiantly.) Mrs. Keller, don't lose heart just because I'm not on my last legs. I have three big advantages over Dr. Howe that money couldn't buy for you. One is his work behind me, I've read every word he wrote about it and he wasn't exactly what you'd call a man of few words. Another is to *be* young, why I've got energy to do anything. The third is, I've been blind. *(But it costs her something to say this.)*

KATE

(Quietly.) Advantages.

ANNIE

(Wry.) Well, some have the luck of the Irish, some do not.

KATE

(She smiles; she likes her.) What will you try to teach her first?

ANNIE

First, last, and – in between, language.

KATE

Language.

ANNIE

Language is to the mind more than light is to the eye. Dr. Howe said that.

KATE

Language. *(She shakes her head.)* We can't get through to teach her to sit still. You *are* young, despite your years, to have such – confidence. Do you, inside?

ANNIE

(She studies her face; she likes her, too.) No to tell you the truth I'm as shaky inside as a baby's rattle.

(They smile at each other, and KATE pats her hand.)

KATE

Don't be. (*JAMES returns to usher them off.*) We'll all do what we can to help, and to make you feel at home. Don't think of us as strangers, Miss Annie.

ANNIE

(*Cheerily.*) Oh, strangers aren't so strange to me. I've known them all my life!

AUDITION SCENE #5– Keller, Kate and Annie

KELLER

Katie, I will not *have* it! Now you did not see when that girl after supper tonight went to look for Helen in her room-

KATE

No.

KELLER

The child practically climbed out of her window to escape from her! What kind of teacher *is* she? I thought I had seen her at her worst this morning, shouting at me, but I come home to find the entire house disorganized by her – Helen won't stay one second in the same room, won't come to the table with her, won't let herself be bathed or undressed or put to bed by her, or even by Viney now, and the end result is that *you* have to do more for the child than before we hired this girl's services! From the moment she stepped of the train she's been nothing but a burden, incompetent, impertinent, ineffectual, immodest –

KATE

She folded her napkin, Captain.

KELLER

What?

KATE

Not ineffectual. Helen did fold her napkin.

KELLER

What n heaven's name is so extraordinary about folding a napkin?

KATE

(With some humor.) Well. It's more than you did, Captain.

KELLER

Katie. I did not bring you all the way out here to the garden house to be frivolous. Now, how does Miss Sullivan propose to teach a deaf-blind pupil who won't let her even touch her?

KATE

(A pause.) I don't know.

KELLER

The fact is, today she scuttled any chance she ever had of getting along with the child. If you can see any point or purpose to her staying on here longer, it's more than –

KATE

What do you wish me to do?

KELLER

I want you to give her notice.

KATE.

I can't.

KELLER

Then if you won't, I must. I simply will not- *(He is interrupted by a knock at the back door: KELLER after a glance at KATE moves to open the door; ANNIE in her smoked glasses is standing outside. KELLER contemplates her, heavily.)* Miss Sullivan.

ANNIE

Captain Keller. *(She is nervous, keyed up to seizing the bull by the horns again, and she assumes a cheeriness which is not unshaky.)* Viney said I'd find you both over here in the garden house. I thought we should – have a talk?

KELLER

(Reluctantly.) Yes, I – Well, come in. *(ANNIE enters, and is interested in this room; she rounds on her heel, anxiously, studying it. KELLER turns the matter over to KATE, sotto voce.)* Katie.

KATE

(Turning it back, courteously.) Captain.

KELLER

(He clears his throat, makes ready.) I, ah- wanted first to make my position clear to Mrs. Keller, in private. I have decided I – am not satisfied – in fact, am deeply dissatisfied – with the manner in which –

ANNIE

(Intent.) Excuse me, is this little house ever in use?

KELLER

(With patience.) In the hunting season. If you will give me your attention, Miss Sullivan. *(ANNIE turns her smoked glasses upon him; they hold his unwilling stare.)* I have tried to make allowances for you because you come from a part of the country where people are – women, I should say – come from who – well, for whom – *(It begins to elude him.)* – allowances must – be made. I have decided, nevertheless, to – that is, decided I – *(Vexedly.)* Miss Sullivan, I find it difficult to talk through those glasses.

ANNIE

(Eagerly, removing them.) Oh, of course.

KELLER

(Dourly.) Why do you wear them, the sun has been down for an hour.

ANNIE

(Pleasantly, at the lamp.) Any kind of light hurts my eyes.

KELLER

(A silence; KELLER ponders her, heavily.) Put them on. Miss Sullivan, I have decided to – give you another chance.

ANNIE

(Cheerfully.) To do what?

KELLER

To – remain in our employ. *(ANNIE'S eyes widen.)* But on two conditions. I am not accustomed to rudeness in servants or women, and that is the first. If you are to stay, there must be a radical change of manner.

ANNIE

(A pause.) Whose?

KELLER

(Exploding.) Yours, young lady, isn't it obvious? And the second is that you persuade me there's the slightest hope of your teaching a child who flees from you now like the plague, to anyone else she can find in this house.

ANNIE

(A pause.) There isn't.

KATE

(She stops sewing, and fixes here eyes upon ANNIE.) What, Miss Annie?

ANNIE

It's hopeless here. I can't teach a child who runs away.

KELLER

(Nonplussed.) Then – do I understand you – propose –

ANNIE

Well, if we all agree it's hopeless, the next question is what –

KATE

Miss Annie. *(She is leaning toward ANNIE, in deadly earnest; it commands both ANNIE and KELLER.)* I am not agreed. I think perhaps you – underestimate Helen.

ANNIE

I think everybody else here does.

KATE

She did fold her napkin. She learns, she learns, do you know she began talking when she was six months old? She could say “water.” Not really – “Wahwah.” “Wahwah,” but she meant water, she knew what it meant, and only six months old, I never saw a child so – bright, or outgoing – (*Her voice is unsteady, but she gets it level.*) It’s still in her, somewhere, isn’t it? You should have seen her before her illness, such a good-tempered child –

ANNIE

(*Agreeably.*) She’s changed.

KATE

(*A pause, KATE not letting her eyes go; her appeal at last is unconditional, and very quiet.*) Miss Annie, put up with it. And with us.

KELLER

Us!

KATE

Please? Like the lost lamb in the parable, I love her all the more.

ANNIE

Mrs. Keller, I don’t think Helen’s worst handicap is deafness or blindness. I think it’s your love. And pity.

KELLER

Now what does that mean?

ANNIE

All of you here are so sorry for her you’ve kept her – like a pet, why, even a dog you housebreak. No wonder she won’t let me come near her. It’s useless for me to try to teach her language or anything else here. I might as well –

KATE

(*Cuts in.*) Miss Annie, before you came we spoke of putting her in an asylum.

ANNIE

(*She turns back to regard her. A pause.*) What kind of asylum?

KELLER

For mental defectives.

KATE

I visited there. I can’t tell you what I saw, people like – animals, with – *rats* in the halls, and – (*She shakes her head on her vision.*) What else are we to do, if you give up?

ANNIE

Give up?

KATIE

You said it was hopeless.

ANNIE

Here. Give up, why, I only today saw what has to be done, to begin! *(She glances from KATE to KELLER, who stare, waiting; and she makes it as plain and simple as her nervousness permits.)* I – want complete charge of her.

KELLER

You already have that. It has resulted in –

ANNIE

No, I mean day and night. She has to be dependent on me.

KATE

For what?

ANNIE

Everything. The food she eats, the clothes she wears, fresh – *(She is amused at herself, though very serious.)* – air, yes, the air she breathes, whatever her body needs is a – primer, to teach her out of. It's the only way, the one who lets her have it should be her teacher. *(She considers them in turn; they digest it, KELLER frowning, KATE perplexed.)* Not anyone who loves her, you have so many feelings they fall over each other like feet, you won't use your chances and you won't let me.

KATE

But if she runs away from you – to us –

ANNIE

Yes, that's the point. I'll have to live with her somewhere else.

KELLER

What!

ANNIE

Till she learns to depend on and listen to me.

KATE

(Not without alarm.) For how long?

ANNIE

As long as it takes. *(A pause. She takes a breath.)* I packed half my things already.

KELLER

Miss – Sullivan! *(But when ANNIE attends upon him he is speechless, and she is merely earnest.)*

ANNIE

Captain Keller, it meets both your conditions. It's the one way I can get back in touch with Helen, and I don't see how I can be rude to you again if you're not around to interfere with me.

KELLER

(Red-faced.) And what is your intention if I say no? Pack the other half, for home, and abandon your charge to-

ANNIE

The asylum? *(She waits, appraises KELLER'S glare and KATE'S uncertainty, and decides to use her weapons.)* I grew up in such an asylum. The state alms-house. *(KATE'S head comes up on this, and KELLER stares hard; ANNIE'S tone is cheerful enough, albeit level as gunfire.)* Rats – why, my brother Jimmie and I used to play with the rats because we didn't have toys. Maybe you'd like to know what Helen will find there, not on visiting days? One ward was full of the – old women, crippled, blind, most of them dying, but even if what they had was catching there was nowhere else to move them, and that's where they put us. There were younger ones across the hall, prostitutes mostly, with T.B., and epileptic fits, and a couple of the kinds who – keep after other girls, especially young ones, and the insane. Some just had the D.T.s The youngest were in another ward to have babies they didn't want, they started at thirteen, fourteen. They'd leave afterwards, but the babies stayed and we played with them, too, though a lot of them had – sores all over from the diseases you're not supposed to talk about, but not many of them lived. The first year we had eighty, seventy died. The room Jimmie and I played in was the deadhouse, where they kept the bodies till they could dig –

KATE

(Closes her eyes.) Oh, my dear –

ANNIE

-the graves. *(She is immune to KATE'S compassion.)* No, it made me strong. But I don't think you need send Helen there. She's strong enough. *(She waits again; but when neither offers her a word, she simply concludes.)* No, I have no conditions, Captain Keller.

AUDITION SCENE #6 – Keller and Annie

KELLER

Miss – Annie. *(He has an envelope in his fingers.)* I've been waiting to give you this.

ANNIE

(After a breath.) What?

KELLER

Your first month's salary. *(He puts it in her hand.)* With many more to come, I trust. It doesn't express what we feel, it doesn't pay our debt. For what you've done.

ANNIE

What have I done?

KELLER

Taken a wild thing, and given us back a child.

ANNIE

(Presently.) I taught her one thing, no. Don't do this, don't do that -

KELLER

It's more than all of us could, in all the years we –

ANNIE

I wanted to teach her what language is. I want to teach her yes.

KELLER

You will have time.

ANNIE

I don't know how. I know without it to do nothing but obey is – no gift, obedience without understanding is a – blindness, too. Is that all I've wished on her?

KELLER

(Gently.) No, no –

ANNIE

Maybe. I don't know what else to do. Simply go on, keep doing what I've done, and have – faith that inside she's – That inside it's waiting. Like water, underground. All I can do is keep on.

KELLER

It's enough. For us.

ANNIE

You can help, Captain Keller.

KELLER

How?

ANNIE

Even learning no has been at a cost. Of much trouble and pain. Don't undo it.

KELLER

Why should we wish to –

ANNIE

(Abruptly.) The world isn't an easy place for anyone, I don't want her just to obey but to let her have her way in everything is a lie, to *her*, I can't – *(Her eyes fill, it takes her by surprise, and she laughs through it.)* And I don't even love her, she's not my child! Well. You've got to stand between that lie and her.

KELLER

We'll try.

ANNIE

Because *I* will. As long as you let me stay, that's one promise I'll keep.

KELLER

Agreed. We've learned something too, I hope. *(A pause.)* Won't you come now, to supper?

ANNIE

Yes. *(She wags the envelope, ruefully.)* Why doesn't God pay His debts each month?

KELLER

I beg your pardon?

ANNIE

Nothing. I used to wonder how I could – *(The LIGHTS are fading on them, simultaneously RISING on the family room of the main house, where VINEY is polishing glassware at the table set for dinner.)* – earn a living.

KELLER

Oh, you do.

ANNIE

I really do. Now the question is, can I survive it!

KELLER

(He smiles, offers his arm.) May I?

AUDITION SCENE #7 –Annie and James

ANNIE

I always wanted to live in a doll's house.

(She sets the suitcase out of the way, and continues; VINEY, at Left, appears to position a rod with drapes for a doorway, and the other SERVANT, at Center, pushes in a wheelbarrow loaded with a couple of boxes of HELEN'S toys and clothes. ANNIE helps lift them into the room, and the SERVANT pushes the wheelbarrow off. In none of this is any heed taken of the imaginary walls of the garden house, the furniture is moved in from every side and itself defines the walls. ANNIE now drags the box of toys into Center, props up the doll conspicuously on the top; with the people melted away, except for JAMES, all is again still. The LIGHTS turn again without pause, rising warmer.)

JAMES

You don't let go of things easily, do you? How will you – win her hand now, in this place.

ANNIE

(Curtly.) Do I know? I lost my temper, and here we are!

JAMES

(Lightly.) No touching, no teaching. Of course, you *are* bigger –

ANNIE

I'm not counting on force, I'm counting on her. That little imp is dying to know.

JAMES

Know what?

ANNIE

Anything. Any and every crumb in God's creation. I'll have to use that appetite too. *(She gives the room a final survey, straightens the bed, arranges the curtains.)*

JAMES

(A pause.) Maybe she'll teach you.

ANNIE

Of course.

JAMES

That she isn't. That there's such a thing as – dullness of heart. Acceptance. And letting go. Sooner or later we all give up, don't we?

ANNIE

Maybe you all do. It's my idea of the original sin.

JAMES

What is?

ANNIE

(Witheringly.) Giving up.

JAMES

(Nettled.) You won't open her. Why can't you let her be? Have some – pity on her, for being what she is-

ANNIE

If I'd ever once thought like that, I'd be dead!

JAMES

(Pleasantly.) You will be. Why trouble? *(ANNIE turns to glare at him; he is mocking.)* Or will you teach me? *(And with a bow, he drifts off.)*

AUDITION SCENE #8 – Martha, Percy, Helen, and Kate

MARTHA

(Snipping.) First I'm gonna cut off this doctor's leg, one, two, now then –

PERCY

Why you cuttin' off that doctor's leg?

MARTHA

I'm gonna give him a operation. Now I'm gonna cut off his arms, one, two. Now I'm gonna fix up – *(She pushes HELEN'S hand away from her mouth.)* You stop that.

PERCY

Cut off his stomach, that's a good operation.

MARTHA

No, I'm gonna cut off his head first, he got a bad cold.

PERCY

Ain't gonna be much of that doctor left to fix up, time you finish all them opera –

(But HELEN is poking her fingers inside his mouth, to feel his tongue; he bites at them, annoyed, and she jerks them away. HELEN now fingers her own lips, moving them in imitation, but soundlessly.)

MARTHA

What you do, bite her hand?

PERCY

That's how I do, she keep pokin' her fingers in my mouth, I just bite 'em off.

MARTHA

What she tryin' to do?

PERCY

She tryin' talk. She gonna get mad. Looka her tryin' talk.

(HELEN is scowling, the lips under her fingertips moving in ghostly silence, growing more and more frantic, until in a bizarre rage she bites at her own fingers. This sends PERCY off into laughter, but alarms MARTHA.)

MARTHA

Hey, you stop now. *(She pulls HELEN'S hand down.)* You just sit quiet and –

(But at once HELEN topples MARTHA on her back, knees pinning her shoulders down, and grabs the scissors. MARTHA screams. PERCY darts to the bell string on the porch, yanks it, and the bell rings. Inside, the LIGHTS have been gradually coming up on the main room, where we see the family informally

gathered, talking, but in pantomime: KATE sits darning socks near a cradle, occasionally rocking it; CAPTAIN KELLER in spectacles is working over newspaper pages at a table; a benign visitor in a hat, AUNT EV, is sharing the sewing basket, putting the finishing touches on a big shapeless doll made out of towels; an indolent young man, JAMES KELLER, is at the window watching the children. With the ring of the bell, KATE is instantly on her feet and out the door onto the porch, to take in the scene; now we see what these five years have done to her, the girlish playfulness is gone, she is a woman steeled in grief.)

KATE

(For the thousandth time.) Helen. (She is down the steps at once to them, seizing HELEN'S wrists and lifting her off MARTHA; MARTHA runs off in tears and screams for momma, with PERCY after her.) Let me have those scissors.

AUDITION SCENE #9 – Viney, Kate, James, Helen and Keller

VINEY

Let Mr. Jimmie go by hisself, you been pokin' that garden all day, you ought to rest your feet.

KATE

I can't wait to see her, Viney.

VINEY

Maybe she ain't gone be on this train neither.

KATE

Maybe she is.

VINEY

And maybe she ain't.

KATE

And maybe she is. Where's Helen?

VINEY

She upstairs, smellin' around. She know somethin' funny's goin' on.

KATE

Let her have her supper as soon as Mildred's in bed, and tell Captain Keller when he comes that we'll be delayed tonight.

VINEY

Again.

KATE

I don't think we need say *again*. Simply delayed will do.

(She runs upstairs to ANNIE'S room. VINEY speaking after her.)

VINEY

I mean that's what he gone say. "What again?"

(VINEY works at setting the table. Upstairs KATE stands in the doorway, watching HELEN'S groping exploration.)

KATE

Yes, we're expecting someone. Someone for my Helen. *(HELEN happens upon her skirt, clutches her leg; KATE in tired dismay kneels to tidy her hair and soiled pinafore.)* Oh, dear, this was clean not an hour ago. *(HELEN feels her bonnet, shakes her head darkly, and tugs to get it off, KATE retains it with one hand, diverts HELEN by opening her other hand under her nose.)* Here. For while I'm gone. *(HELEN*

sniffs, reaches, and pops something into her mouth, while KATE speaks a bit guiltily.) I don't think one peppermint drop will spoil your supper.

(She gives HELEN a quick kiss, evades her hands, and hurries downstairs again. Meanwhile, CAPTAIN KELLER has entered the yard from around the rear of the house, newspaper under arm, cleaning off and munching on some radishes; he sees JAMES lounging at the porch post.)

KELLER

Jimmie?

JAMES

(Unmoving.) Sir?

KELLER

(Eyes him.) You don't look dressed for anything useful, boy.

JAMES

I'm not. It's for Miss Sullivan.

KELLER

Needn't keep holding up that porch, we have wooden posts for that. I asked you to see that those strawberry plants were moved this evening.

JAMES

I'm moving your – Mrs. Keller, instead. To the station.

KELLER

(Heavily.) Mrs. Keller. Must you always speak of her as though you haven't met the lady?

(KATE comes out on the porch, and JAMES inclines his head.)

JAMES

(Ironic.) Mother. *(He starts off the porch, but sidesteps KELLER'S glare like a blow.)* I said mother!

KATE

Captain.

KELLER

Evening, my dear.

KATE

We're off to meet the train, Captain. Supper will be a trifle delayed tonight.

KELLER

What, again?

KATE

(Backing out.) With your permission, Captain.

(And they are gone. KELLER watches them offstage, morosely. Upstairs HELEN meanwhile has groped for her mother, touched her cheek in a meaningful gesture, waited, touched her cheek, waited, then found the open door, and made her way down. Now she comes into the family room, touches her cheek again; VINEY regards her.)

VINEY

What you want, honey, your momma? *(HELEN touches her cheek again. VINEY goes to the sideboard, gets a tea-cake, gives it into HELEN'S hand; HELEN pops it into her mouth.)* Guess one little tea-cake ain't gone ruin your appetite.

(She turns HELEN toward the door. HELEN wanders out onto the porch, as KELLER comes up the steps. Her hands encounter him, and she touches her cheek again, waits.)

KELLER

She's gone. *(He is awkward with her; when he puts his hand on her head, she pulls away. KELLER stands regarding her, heavily.)* She's gone, my son and I don't get along, you don't know that I'm your father, no one likes me, and supper's delayed. *(HELEN touches her cheek, waits. KELLER fishes in his pocket.)* Here. I brought you some stick candy, one nibble of sweets can't do any harm. *(He gives her a large stick candy; HELEN falls to it. VINEY peers out the window.)*

VINEY

(Reproachfully.) Cap'n Keller, now how'm I gone get her to eat her supper you fill her up with that trash?

KELLER

(Roars.) Tend to your work!

AUDITION SCENE #10 – Viney, Keller, Kate, Annie, and James

TAKE A LOOK AT THE STAGE DIRECTIONS IN ITALICS FOLLOWING THIS SCENE.

VINEY

Cap'n Keller! Cap'n Keller, they comin'! *(She goes back into the house, as KELLER comes out on the porch to gaze.)* She sure 'nuff came, Cap'n.

KELLER

(He descends, and crosses toward the carriage; this conversation begins Offstage and moves On. Very courtly.) Welcome to Ivy Green, Miss Sullivan. I take it you are Miss Sullivan –

KATE

My husband, Miss Annie, Captain Keller.

ANNIE

(Her best behavior.) Captain, how do you do.

KELLER

A pleasure to see you, at last. I trust you had an agreeable journey?

ANNIE

Oh, I had several! When did this country get so big?

JAMES

Where would you like the trunk, Father?

KELLER

Where Miss Sullivan can get at it, I imagine.

ANNIE

Yes, please. Where's Helen?

KELLER

In the hall, Jimmie -

KATE

We've put you in the upstairs corner room, Miss Annie, if there's any breeze at all this summer, you'll feel it –

(In the house the setter, BELLE, flees into the family room, pursued by HELEN with groping hands; the dog doubles back out the same door, and HELEN still groping for her makes her way out to the porch; she is messy, her hair tumbled, her pinafore now ripped, her shoelaces untied. KELLER acquires the suitcase, and ANNIE gets her hands on it too, though still endeavoring to live up to the general air of propriety manners.)

KELLER

And the suitcase –

ANNIE

(Pleasantly.) I'll take the suitcase, thanks.

KELLER

Not at all, I have it, Miss Sullivan.

ANNIE

I'd like it.

KELLER

(Gallantly.) I couldn't think of it, Miss Sullivan. You'll find in the south we –

ANNIE

Let me.

KELLER

-view women as the flowers of civiliza-

ANNIE

(Impatiently.) I've got something in it for Helen! *(She tugs it free; KELLER stares.)* Thank you. When do I see her?

KATE

There. There is Helen.

(ANNIE turns and sees HELEN on the porch. A moment of silence. Then ANNIE begins across the yard to her, lugging her suitcase.)

KELLER

(Sotto voce.) Katie –

(KATIE silences him with a hand on his arm. When ANNIE finally reaches the porch steps she stops, contemplating HELEN for a last moment before entering her world. Then she drops the suitcase on the porch with intentional heaviness, HELEN starts with the jar; and comes to grope over it. ANNIE puts forth her hand, and touches HELEN'S. HELEN at once grasps it, and commences to explore it, like reading a face. She moves her hand on to ANNIE'S forearm, and dress; and ANNIE brings her face within reach of HELEN'S fingers, which travel over it, quite without timidity, until they encounter and push aside the smoked glasses. ANNIE'S gaze is grave, unpitying, very attentive. She puts her hands on HELEN'S arms, but HELEN at once pulls away and they confront each other with a distance between. Then HELEN returns to the suitcase, tries to open it, cannot. ANNIE points HELEN'S hand overhead. HELEN pulls away, tries to open the suitcase again; ANNIE points her hand overhead again. HELEN points overhead, a question, and ANNIE drawing HELEN'S hand to her own face, nods. HELEN now begins tugging the suitcase toward the door; when ANNIE tries to take it from her, she fights her off and backs through the

doorway with it. ANNIE stands a moment, then follows her in, and together they get the suitcase up the steps into ANNIE'S room.)