KATE, CAPTAIN KELLER pages 6-7

This scene begins as the Doctor exits, having left Kate alone with baby Helen. She has been reassured the baby will be fine, but quickly learns to her horror that Helen is both blind and deaf. (...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 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.) Captain!(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. 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!

(His face has something like fury in it, crying the child’s name; KATE almost fainting presses her knuckles to her mouth, to stop her own cry.)

JIMMY, SULLIVAN, (ANNIE, CRONES, DOCTOR) pages 55-57

Jimmy appears in five flashbacks in the play, revealing his dependence on Annie and some of the tragic events of their past. The flashback scenes will be surreal, Jimmy’s appearance will be ghost-like. Being a memory, Jimmy can only speak to Annie, he cannot touch her, so his voice must convey his desperation. Jimmy must also see the setting of the flash back, as this will not be staged. The audience will see the horrors through Jimmy’s reaction to them. He will at times be responding to voices of people not actually there. This part requires a great imagination and ability to show vulnerability.

This flashback scene begins in the sick ward of the Tewsbury Institute. Annie and Jimmy have snuck into the sick ward so they can be together against the rules. (They should be asleep separately in the women’s and men’s wards.) They need to keep quiet and not disturb the sick and dying residents, but it’s a scary place to be. As the crones begin speaking (they will be present in voice only), the setting changes. Annie now hears/remembers being encouraged to go to school and to leave Jimmy behind. This is terrifying to Jimmy as he is very young and would suffer physically and emotionally if Annie were to leave him. In actuality, he came to the Institute at age 2 and died at age 5, Annie is his lifeline! When the doctor’s voice comes in, we assume that Jimmy has fallen gravely ill. As Jimmy screams “Annie!” Annie re-experiences the pain of learning he has died. Jimmy will be ushered offstage after his death and his final line will be delivered as he exits the stage.

JIMMY. Annie? Annie, you there?

ANNIE. Hush.

JIMMY. Annie, what’s that noise?

ANNIE. (She tries not to answer; her own voice is drawn out of her, unwilling.) Just a cot, Jimmie.

JIMMY. Where they pushin’ it?

ANNIE. To the dead house.

JIMMY. Annie. Does it hurt, to be dead?

(ANNIE escapes by opening her eyes, her hand works restlessly over her cheek; she retreats into the book again, but the cracked old crones interrupt, whispering. ANNIE slowly lowers the book.)

FIRST CRONE. There is schools.

SECOND CRONE. There is schools outside--

THIRD CRONE. --schools where they teach blind ones, worse’n you--

FIRST CRONE. To read--

SECOND CRONE. To read and write--THIRD CRONE. There is schools outside where they--

FIRST CRONE. There is schools--
(Silence. ANNIE sits with her eyes shining, her hand almost in a caress over the book. Then:)

JIMMY. You ain’t goin’ to school are you, Annie?
ANNIE. (Whispering.) When I grow up.
JIMMY. You ain’t either, Annie. You’re goin’ to stay here and take care of me.
ANNIE. I’m goin’ to school when I grow up.

DOCTOR. (Slowly) Little girl. Little girl, I must tell you. Your brother will be going on a journey, soon.

FIRST CRONE. Good-bye, Annie.
SECOND CRONE. Write me when you learn how.
THIRD CRONE. Yeah, don’t tell anyone you came from--
FIRST CRONE. Yeah, don’t tell any--

(Percy has been moved to the garden house to run errands and care for Helen and Annie. Annie wakes him in the middle of the night as she has a brainstorm of how to reach Helen. Groggy and tired, he is thrust into contact with a wildly angry Helen. He fears the outcome of his participation, clearly Annie does not know how volatile and dangerous Helen can be, but Percy cannot refuse Annie. (...ANNIE, now in her nightgown, hurls a cup into a corner as though it were her grief, getting rid of its taste through her teeth.)

ANNIE. No! No pity, I won’t have it. (She comes to HELEN, prone on the floor.) On either of us. (She goes to her knees, but when she touches HELEN’S hand, the CHILD starts up awake, recoils, and scrambles away from her under the bed. ANNIE stares after her. She strikes her palm on the floor, with passion.) I will touch you! (She gets to her feet, and paces in a kind of anger around the bed, her hand in her hair, and confronting HELEN at each turn.) How, how? How do I-- (ANNIE stops. Then she calls out urgently, loudly.) Percy! Percy! (She moves swiftly to the drapes, at Left.) Percy, wake up! (PERCY’s voice comes in a thick, sleepy mumble, unintelligible.) Get out of bed and come in here, I need you. (ANNIE darts away, finds and strikes a match, and touches it to the hanging LAMP; the LIGHTS come up dimly in the room, and PERCY stands bare to the waist in torn overalls between the drapes, with eyes closed, swaying. ANNIE goes to him, pats his cheeks vigorously.) Percy. You awake?

PERCY. No’m.

ANNIE. How would you like to play a nice game?

PERCY. Whah?

ANNIE. With Helen. She’s under the bed. Touch her hand.

(Percy and Helen are engaged in here; when she sees the suitcase she remembers, and lifts it once again toward the bed. But the voices are with her, as she halts with suitcase in hand.)

FIRST CRONE. Good-bye, Annie.

DOCTOR. Write me when you learn how.

SECOND CRONE. Don’t tell anyone you came from here. Don’t tell anyone--

(He moves swiftly to the drapes, then turns toward the bed. It goes into ANNIE like a sword, she double onto it; the book falls to the floor. IT takes her a racked moment to find herself and what she was engaged in here; when she sees the suitcase she remembers, and lifts it once again toward the bed. But the voices are with her, as she halts with suitcase in hand.)

FIRST CRONE. Good-bye, Annie.

SECOND CRONE. Write me when you learn how.

THIRD CRONE. Yeah, don’t tell anyone you came from--

FIRST CRONE. Yeah, don’t tell any--

(The echoing VOICES fade. After a moment ANNIE lays the suitcase on the bed; and the last VOICE comes faintly, from far away.)

JIMMY. Annie. It hurts, to be dead. Forever.

PERCY, HELEN, ANNIE (pages 68-71)

Percy, HELEN, and ANNIE are engaged in a game of hide and seek. Percy has been moved to the garden house to run errands and care for Helen and Annie. Annie wakes him in the middle of the night as she has a brainstorm of how to reach Helen. Groggy and tired, he is thrust into contact with a wildly angry Helen. He fears the outcome of his participation, clearly Annie does not know how volatile and dangerous Helen can be, but Percy cannot refuse Annie. (...ANNIE, now in her nightgown, hurls a cup into a corner as though it were her grief, getting rid of its taste through her teeth.)

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FIRST CRONE. Good-bye, Annie.

DOCTOR. Write me when you learn how.

SECOND CRONE. Don’t tell anyone you came from here. Don’t tell anyone--

(He moves swiftly to the drapes, then turns toward the bed. It goes into ANNIE like a sword, she double onto it; the book falls to the floor. IT takes her a racked moment to find herself and what she was engaged in here; when she sees the suitcase she remembers, and lifts it once again toward the bed. But the voices are with her, as she halts with suitcase in hand.)

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THIRD CRONE. Yeah, don’t tell anyone you came from--

FIRST CRONE. Yeah, don’t tell any--

(The echoing VOICES fade. After a moment ANNIE lays the suitcase on the bed; and the last VOICE comes faintly, from far away.)

JIMMY. Annie. It hurts, to be dead. Forever.
and ANNIE puts it away rudely.) No, why should I talk to you? I'm teaching Percy a new word. L. K is this— (HELEN now yanks their hands apart; she butts PERCY away, and thrusts her palm out insistently. ANNIE's eyes are bright, with glee.) Ho, you're jealous, are you! (HELEN's hand waits, intractably waits.) All right. (ANNIE spells it into, milk; and HELEN after a moment spells it back to ANNIE. ANNIE takes her hand, with her whole face shining. She gives a great sigh.) Good! So I'm finally back to where I can touch you, him? Touch and go! No love lost, but here we go. (She puts the jug of milk into HELEN's hand and squeezes PERCY's shoulder.) You can go to bed now, you've earned your sleep. Thank you. (PERCY, stumbling up, weaves his way out through the drapes. HELEN finishes drinking, and hold the jug out, for ANNIE; when ANNIE takes it, HELEN crawls onto the bed, and makes for sleep. ANNIE stands, looks down at her.) Now all I have to teach you is—one word. Everything.

ANAGNOS, ANNIE page 15-17
This scene is located at the Perkins Institute in Boston. Michael Anagnos is the head of the institute since his father-in-law retired six years ago. Anagnos has been contacted by none other than Alexander Graham Bell, asking him to find a teacher for Helen. Anagnos sees this as an opportunity to promote his school— as the school got much attention for its work with a previous blind and deaf student, but also as somewhat of a loss— as he knows this is a great opportunity for his secretly favorite student, Annie Sullivan. Anagnos knows Annie well, she is a wild card, frequently challenging his (and all) authority and the social norms and expectations of the day. Still, he must admire her for everything she has overcome. There is no guarantee she will succeed— especially if she cannot win over the southern sensitivities of the Keller family. Annie has leapt at the challenge of teaching Helen, however, studying every minute since she learned of the assignment. Were this a different time and place, Anagnos might have had romantic feelings for Annie as he is so inspired by her.

ANAGNOS... 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.)

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.

ANAGNOS. (A bit shocked.) What?

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

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?

ANAGNOS. Like?

ANNIE. Well— Bright or dull, to start off.

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?

ANAGNOS. Only if you can spell it.

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

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

ANNIE. Maybe it's empty, too?

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

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

ANAGNOS. Perhaps YOU should tell it?

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

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.

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.

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?

ANAGNOS. (Smiles.) That is only half true, Annie.
BLIND GIRLS, ANNIE page 17-19

Although Annie only attended Perkins for a short time, Annie is a big sister and inspiration to the girls at the school. The scene takes place at the Perkins Institute for the Blind where well to do families have sent their blind children for a chance at learning and creating some sense of a future. The children become each other’s families, being separated from their own. It is likely that most rarely see their families. The girls are elated that Annie has this wonderful chance to become a teacher, nervous about her prospects of working with a girl who is both blind and deaf and sad at losing Annie. Each girl reacts differently based on her age. The girls have pooled their resources to purchase a doll to give to Helen and in this scene they are giving it to Annie along with some glasses to protect her eyes from the sun. They are saying goodbye to Annie with mixed bravery, pride and sadness, not realizing Annie, with tears in her eyes is feeling the same.

The lines of this scene will be broken up and assigned to individual girls once the parts are cast. Some blind girls may either act in flashback scenes or dance, so please make sure to indicate if you have dance experience on your information sheet.

A CHILD. Annie?
ANNIE. (Her voice cheerful) Here, Beatrice.
(As soon as they locate her voice they throng joyfully to her, speaking all at once; ANNIE is down on her knees to the smallest, and the following are the more intelligible fragments in the general hubbub.)
CHILDREN. There’s a present. We bought you a going-away present, Annie!
ANNIE. Oh, now you shouldn’t have--
CHILDREN. We did, we did, where’s the present?
SMALLEST CHILD. (Mournfully.) Don’t go, Annie, away.
CHILDREN. Alice has it! Alice! Where’s Alice? Here I am! Where? Here! (An arm is aloft out of the group, waving a present; ANNIE reaches for it.)
ANNIE. I have it. I have it, everybody, should I open it?
CHILDREN. Open it! Everyone be quiet! Do, Annie! She’s opening it. Sssh! (A settling of silence while ANNIE unwraps it. The present is a pair of smoked glasses, and she stands still.) Is it open, Annie?
ANNIE. It’s open.
CHILDREN. It’s for your eyes, Annie. Put them on, Annie! ‘Cause Mrs. Hopkins said your eyes hurt since the operation. And she said you’re going where the sun is fierce.
ANNIE. I’m putting them on now.
SMALLEST CHILD. (Mournfully) Don’t go, Annie, where the sun is fierce.
CHILDREN. Do they fit all right?
ANNIE. Oh, they fit just fine.
CHILDREN. Did you put them on? Are they pretty, Annie?

ANNIE. Oh, my eyes feels hundreds of per cent better already, and pretty, why, do you know how I look in them? Slendiloquent. Like a race horse!
CHILDREN. (Delighted.) There’s another present! Beatrice! We have a present for Helen, too! Give it to her, Beatrice. Here, Annie! (This present is an elegant doll, with movable eyelids and a momma sound.) It’s for Helen, And we took up a collection to buy it. And Laura dressed it. ANNIE. It’s beautiful!
CHILDREN. So don’t forget, you be sure to give it to Helen from us, Annie!
ANNIE. I promise it will be the first thing I give her. If I don’t keep it for myself, that is, you know I can’t be trusted with dolls!
SMALLEST CHILD. (Mournfully.) Don’t go, Annie, to her.
ANNIE. (Her arm around her.) Sarah, dear. I don’t want to go.
SMALLEST CHILD. Then why are you going?
ANNIE. (Gently.) Because I’m a big girl now, and big girls have to earn a living. It’s the only way I can. But if you don’t smile for me first, what I’ll just have to do is-- (She pauses, inviting it.)
SMALLEST CHILD. What?
ANNIE. Put you in my suitcase, instead of this doll. And take YOU to Helen in Alabama!

CAPTAIN KELLER, KATE, ANNIE page 58-60

This scene occurs in the cottage/garden house, away from the rest of the family. Annie has ordered the family from the breakfast table, in spite of Captain Keller’s protests. Annie’s unorthodox manners challenge his authority in front of his family on a good day, but this is just too much. Keller has deliberately taken Kate out of earshot of the rest of the family so he can speak freely. He wants Annie fired and he wants Kate to do it. Family and community members already frown on his indulgence of Kate, insisting that the proper thing to do as “man of the house” is to send Helen to an asylum-- harsh, but necessary. Unexpectedly, he finds Kate has an even stronger resolve to support Helen’s education, having seen Annie make progress with Helen (folding her napkin.) He realizes he must do the deed himself just as Annie enters the room. As he forms the words, he comes to realize Annie has no concept that she’s done anything to offend him. He loses his steam as he tries to get through to her and relents to allow her to stay on at great expense to his own pride.

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 off the train she’s been nothing but a burden, incompetent, impertinent, ineffectual, immodest—

KELLER. She folded her napkin, Captain.

KELLER. What?

KATE. Not ineffectual. Helen did fold her napkin.

KELLER. What in 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 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 hell, 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 to make my position clear to Mrs. Keller, in private. I have decided I--am not satisfied--in fact, I 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 smoke 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--

(Angrily.) 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 in 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.

CAPTAIN KELLER, KATE, ANNIE page 60-62
This side begins as Annie enters the cottage (see previous scene description.) Having seen progress in the breakfast battle, Annie has come up with a new strategy--she must have Helen isolated from the family in order to teach her. She seeks out the Kellers to discuss this with them and finds them alone in the garden house which is being used mostly as storage. She must convince the Kellers to trust her to do this—or she fears she may never reach Helen. When they resist, she tells them what Helen will face should the family decide instead to institutionalize Helen, using graphic descriptions of her own past.

Kate has been on an emotional ride in this section of the story. Allowing Annie, in her worst fears to torture Helen in the previous breakfast scene has resulted in an unexpected success. Folding her napkin is proof to Kate that Helen can be trained to live with the family. At being taken to the cottage and ordered to fire Annie, Kate finds a new strength within herself to refuse and stand up for Helen. When Annie tells the Captain she cannot teach Helen within the family home, Kate comes to Helen’s defense and holds up Helen’s past accomplishments as proof of her intelligence and her potential. She relieved that Annie is not suggesting that Helen is hopeless, but is frightened by the idea of giving Annie more unsupervised authority over Helen and must overcome her protective instincts to convince her husband to set his pride aside and fear aside to try Annie’s plan.

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(Exploding.) Miss Sullivan, I find it difficult to talk through those glasses.

KATE. (Nonplussed.) Then--do I understand you--propose--

KELLER. You already have that. It has resulted in--

ANNIE. No, I mean day and night. She has to be dependant 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 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—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 kind who—keep after other girls, especially young ones, and some 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 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 dead house, 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.

ANNIE, CAPTAIN KELLER, KATE, JAMES, HELEN
pages 26-28

Annie has been preparing to meet Helen for six months, reading everything she can get her hands on, racking her brain to think of new ways to reach a deaf and blind pupil. Annie is also fearful that Helen will not have the capacity to learn or will be grossly disfigured which is disturbing to Annie. She is not good at social niceties and this combined with her eagerness to meet Helen doesn’t make Annie’s first impression with the Kellers terribly positive.

Her first interaction with Helen is one of exploration and ultimately relief.

The Kellers, having spent time with Alexander Graham Bell, are expecting much more from this new teacher. Expecting a woman with a stern hand and years of experience, they are taken back by Annie who is young, somewhat slight, and has Yankee sensibilities.

KELLER. (He descends, and crosses toward the carriage; this conversation begins offstage and move on. Very courtely.) 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. 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 onto the porch; she is mess, 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 propertied 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 see HELEN on the porch. A moment of silence. Then ANNIE begins across the yard to her, lugging her suitcase.)

KELLER. (Sotto voce.) Katie—

(KATE silences him with a hand on his arm. When ANNIE finally reaches the porch steps she stops, contemplating HELEN 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, un pitying, 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 for a moment, then follows her in, and together they get the suitcase up the steps into ANNIE’s room.

AUNT EV, JAMES, KATE, KELLER, HELEN, ANNIE

pages 85-91

The scene begins with pleasant banter around the table. James and his father are conversing pleasantly for a change. Helen has returned home after two weeks isolated with Annie and hopes are high as the family sees positive changes in Helen and anticipates even more. Unfortunately, Helen is soon up to her old tricks, knowing that her family indulges bad behavior. It is Helen’s chance to show Annie she is no longer in charge. Annie must fight to maintain control of Helen, barking at the family as they interfere. Aunt Ev, always Helen’s friend and defender, protests Annie’s discipline and her impudence toward the family. James, in this personally pivotal scene, stands up to his father for the first time—telling him in no uncertain terms that the Captain is wrong to interfere with Annie.

KATE. Will you say grace, Jimmie?

(They bow their heads, except for HELEN, who palms her empty plate and then reaches to be sure her mother is there. JAMES considers a moment, glances across at ANNIE, lowers his head again, and obliges.)

JAMES. (Lightly) And Jacob was left alone, and wrestled with an angel until the breaking of the day; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him; and the angel said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And Jacob said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. Amen. (ANNAIE has lifted her eyes suspiciously at JAMES, who winks expressionlessly and inclines her head to HELEN.) Oh, you angel. (The OTHERS lift their faces; VINEY returns with the pitcher, setting it down near KATE, then goes out the rear door; and ANNIE puts a napkin around HELEN.)

AUNT EV. (That’s a very strange grace, James.

KELLER. Will you start the muffins, Ev?

JAMES. It’s from the Good Book, isn’t it?

AUNT EV. (Passing a plate.) Well, of course it is. Didn’t you know?

JAMES. Yes. I know.

KELLER. (Serving.) Ham, Miss Annie?

ANNIE. Please.

AUNT EV. (Then why ask?

JAMES. I meant it IS from the Good Book, and therefore a fitting grace.

AUNT EV. (Well. I don’t know about THAT.

KATE. (With the pitcher.) Miss Annie?

ANNIE. Thank you.

AUNT EV. (There’s an awful lot of things in the Good Book that I wouldn’t care to hear just before eating. (When ANNIE reaches for the pitcher, HELEN removes her napkin and drops it to the floor. ANNIE is filling HELEN’s glass when she notices it; she considers HELEN’s bland expression for a moment, then bends, retrieves it, and tucks it around HELEN’s neck again.)

JAMES. Well, fitting in the sense that Jacob’s thigh was out of joint and so is this piggie’s.

AUNT EV. (I declare, James--

KATE. Pickles, Aunt Ev?

AUNT EV. (Oh, I should say so, you know my opinion of your pickles--

KATE. This is the end of them, I’m afraid. I didn’t put up nearly enough last summer, this year I intend to-- (She interrupts herself, seeing HELEN deliberately lift off her napkin and drop it again to the floor. She bends to retrieve it, but ANNIE stops her arm.)

KELLER. (Not noticing.) Reverend looked in at that office today to complain his hens have stopped laying. Poor fellow, he was out of joint, all he could-- (He stops too, to frown down the table at KATE, HELEN, and ANNIE in turn, all suspended mid motion.)

JAMES. (Not noticing.) I’ve always suspected those hens.

AUNT EV. (Of what?

JAMES. I think they’re Papists. Has he tried-- (He stops, too, following KELLER’s eyes. ANNIE now stoops to pick the napkin up.)

AUNT EV. (James, now you’re pulling my--lower extremity, the first thing you know we’ll be-- (She stops, too, hearing herself in the silence. ANNIE, with everyone now watching, for the third time puts the napkin on HELEN. HELEN yanks it off, and throws it down. ANNIE rises, lifts HELEN’s plate, and bears it away. HELEN feeling it gone, slides down and commences to kick up under the table; the dishes jump. ANNIE contemplates this for a moment, then coming back takes HELEN’s wrists firmly and swings her off the chair. HELEN struggling gets one hand free, and catches at her mother’s skirt; when KATE takes her by the shoulders, HELEN hangs, quiet.)

KATE. Miss Annie.

ANNIE. No.

KATE. (A pause.) It’s a very special day.
ANNIE. (Grimly.) It will be, when I give in to that. (She tries to disengage HELEN’s hand; KATE lays hers on ANNIE’s.)

KATE. Please. I’ve hardly had a chance to welcome her home--

ANNIE. Captain Keller.

KELLER. (Embarrassed.) Oh. Katie, we---had a little talk, Miss Annie feels that if we indulge Helen in these--

AUNT EV. (But what’s the child done?)

ANNIE. She’s learned not to throw things on the floor and kick. It took us the best part of two weeks and--

AUNT EV. (But only a napkin, it’s not as if it were breakable!)

ANNIE. And everything she’s learned is? Mrs. Keller, I don’t think we should--play tug-of-war for her, either give her to me or you keep her from kicking.

KATE. What do you wish to do?

ANNIE. Let me take her from the table.

AUNT EV. (Oh, let her stay, my goodness, she’s only a child, she doesn’t have to wear a napkin if she doesn’t want to her first evening--

ANNIE. (Level.) And ask outsiders not to interfere.

AUNT EV. ( (Astonished.) Out--outsi--I’m the child’s aunt!)

KATE. (Distressed.) Will once hurt so much, Miss Annie? I’ve--made all Helen’s favorite foods, tonight.

(A pause.)

KELLER. (Gently.) It’s a homecoming party, Miss Annie. (ANNIE after a moment releases HELEN. But she cannot accept it, at her own chair she shakes her head and turns back, intent on KATE.)

ANNIE. She’s testing you. You realize?

JAMES. (To ANNIE.) She’s testing you.

KELLER. Jimmie, be quiet. (JAMES sits, tense.) Now she’s home, naturally she--

ANNIE. And wants to see what will happen. At your hands. I said it was my main worry, is this what you promised me not half an hour ago?

KELLER. (Reasonably.) But she’s not kicking, now--

ANNIE. And not learning not to. Mrs. Keller, teaching her is bound to be painful, to everyone. I know it hurts to watch, but she’ll live up to just what you demand of her, and no more.

JAMES. (Palely.) She’s testing YOU.

KELLER. (Testily.) Jimmie.

JAMES. I have an opinion, I think I should--

KELLER. No one’s interested in hearing your opinion.

ANNIE. I’m interested, of course she’s testing me. Let me keep her to what she’s learned and she’ll go on learning from me. Take her out of my hands and it all comes apart. (KATE closes her eyes, digesting it; ANNIE sits again, with a brief comment for her.) BE bountiful, it’s at her expense. (She turns to James, flatly.) Please pass me more of--her favorite foods.

(Then KATE lifts HELEN’s hand, and turning her toward ANNIE, surrenders her; HELEN makes for her own chair.)

KATE. (Low.) Take her, Miss Annie.

ANNIE. (Then.) Thank you.

KELLER. (Embarrassed.) Oh. Katie, we---had a little talk, Miss Annie feels that if we indulge Helen in these--

JAMES. (Wearily.) I think we’ve started all over--

KELLER. Well, she’s not, I think some compromise is called for. Bring her plate, please. (ANNIE’s jaw sets, but she restores the plate, while KELLER fastens the napkin around HELEN’s neck; she permits it.)

JAMES. (Palely.) She’s testing YOU.

KELLER. Where are you taking her?

JAMES. (To KELLER.) She’s testing YOU.

KELLER. Where are you taking her?

ANNIE. To make her fill this pitcher again! (She thrusts out with HELEN under her arm, but HELEN escapes up the stairs and ANNIE runs after her. KELLER stands rigid. AUNT EV is astounded.)

AUNT EV. (You let her speak to you like that, Arthur? A creature who works for you?)

KELLER. (Angrily.) No, I don’t.

(He is starting after ANNIE when JAMES, on his feet with shaky resolve, interposes his chair between them in KELLER’s path.)
JAMES. Let her go.

JAMES, ANNIE pages 65-66
James largely reflects society’s views of Helen and her limitations. Hiring Annie to train Helen will be nothing but an exercise in futility in his opinion. In this scene, he is surprised to see Annie teaching Helen to spell. Bathing Helen, getting her to sit still would have been a mammoth task, but spelling lessons are beyond comprehension yet finds himself intrigued by Annie’s determination. As he warns Annie of Helen’s limitations, a seed of doubt is planted in his opinion of the outcome of Annie’s efforts.

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.)

VINEY, KATE, HELEN, KELLER pages 20-23
James is going for the third day in a row to pick Annie up at the train station as there was confusion over when she would arrive. Fond of Kate, Viney encourages her to stay home and rest, but Kate is too anxious to sit home and wait. As Kate leaves, Helen enters the room and Viney ingratiates herself to Helen with a treat. These scenes establish Viney’s more personal relationship with Kate and reflect her less effective methods of coping with Helen (which are the same as the family’s). It also explores how far she can assert her opinions with Captain 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 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?”
(HELEN 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 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 eat her supper you fill her up with that trash?
KELLER. (Roars.) Tend to your work!