JAMES. [Baffled] Hm?

KELLER. You'll learn, we don't just keep our children safe. They keep us safe.

[He rises. with his empty coffee cup and saucer.]

There are of course all kinds of separation, Katie has lived with one kind for five years. And another is disappointment. In a child.

[He goes with the cup out the rear door. JAMES sits for a long moment of stillness. In the garden house the lights commence to come up; ANNIE, haggard at the table, is writing a letter, her face again almost in contact with the stationery; HELEN, apart on the stool, and for the first time as clean and neat as a button, is quietly crocheting an endless chain of wool, which snakes all around the room.]

ANNIE. "I feel, every day, more, and, more, in—"

[She pauses, and turns the pages of a dictionary open before her; her finger descends the words to a full stop. She elevates her eyebrows, then copies the word.]

"—adequate."

[In the main house JAMES pushes up, and goes to the front doorway, after KATE.]

JAMES. Kate?

[KATE turns her glance. JAMES is rather weary.]

I'm sorry. Open my mouth, like that fairy tale. Frogs jump out.

KATE. No. It has been better. For everyone.

[She starts away, up center.]

ANNIE. [Writing] "If, only, there, were, someone, to, help, me, I need, a, teacher, as, much, as, Helen—"

JAMES. Kate.

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eyelids. Kate watches her through the window.]

Kate. What are you doing to your eyes?

[Annie glances around; she puts her smoked glasses on, and gets up to come over, assuming a cheerful energy.]

Annie. It's worse on my vanity! I'm learning to spell. It's like a surprise party, the most unexpected characters turn up.

Kate. You're not to overwork your eyes, Miss Annie.

Annie. Well.

[She takes the tray, sets it on her chair, and carries chair and tray to Helen.]

Whatever I spell to Helen I'd better spell right.

Kate. [Almost wistful] How—serene she is.

Annie. She learned this stitch yesterday. Now I can't get her to stop!

[She disentangles one foot from the wool chain, and sets the chair before Helen. Helen, at its contact with her knee, feels the plate, promptly sets her crocheting down, and tucks the napkin in at her neck, but Annie withholds the spoon; when Helen finds it missing, she folds her hands in her lap, and quietly waits. Annie twinkles at Kate with mock devoutness.]

Such a little lady, she'd sooner starve than eat with her fingers.

[She gives Helen the spoon, and Helen begins to eat, neatly.]

Kate. You've taught her so much, these two weeks. I would never have—

Annie. Not enough.

[She is suddenly gloomy, shakes her head.]

Obedience isn't enough. Well, she learned two nouns this morning, key and water, brings her up to eighteen nouns and three verbs.

Kate. [Hesitant] But—not—

Annie. No. Not that they mean things. It's still a finger-game, no meaning.

[She turns to Kate, abruptly.]

Mrs. Keller—

[But she defers it; she comes back, to sit in the bay and lift her hand.]

Shall we play our finger-game?

Kate. How will she learn it?

Annie. It will come.

[She spells a word; Kate does not respond.]

Kate. How?

Annie. [A pause] How does a bird learn to fly?

[She spells again.]

We're born to use words, like wings, it has to come.

Kate. How?

Annie. [Another pause, wearily] All right. I don't know how.

[She pushes up her glasses, to rub her eyes.]

I've done everything I could think of. Whatever she's learned here—keeping herself clean, knitting, stringing beads, meals, setting-up exercises each morning, we climb trees, hunt eggs, yesterday a chick was born in her hands—all of it I spell, everything we do, we never stop spelling. I go to bed with—writer's cramp from talking so much!

Kate. I worry about you, Miss Annie. You must rest.

Annie. Now? She spells back in her sleep,
her fingers make letters when she doesn't know! In her bones those five fingers know, that hand aches to—speak out, and something in her mind is asleep, how do I—nudge that awake? That's the one question.

**KATE.** With no answer.

**ANNIE.** [Long pause] Except keep at it. Like this.

[She again begins spelling—I, need—and Kate's brows gather, following the words.]

**KATE.** More—time?

[She glances at Annie, who looks her in the eyes, silent.]

Here?

**ANNIE.** Spell it.

[Kate spells a word—no—shaking her head; Annie spells two words—why, not—back, with an impatient question in her eyes; and Kate moves her head in pain to answer it.]

**KATE.** Because I can't—
ANNIE. Spell it! If she ever learns, you'll have a lot to tell each other, start now.

[KATE painstakingly spells in air. In the midst of this the rear door opens, and KELLER enters with the setter BELLE in tow.]

KELLER. Miss Sullivan? On my way to the office. I brought Helen a playmate—

ANNIE. Outside please, Captain Keller.

KELLER. My dear child, the two weeks are up today, surely you don't object to—

ANNIE. [Rising] They're not up till six o'clock.

KELLER. [Indulgent] Oh, now. What difference can a fraction of one day—

ANNIE. An agreement is an agreement. Now you've been very good, I'm sure you can keep it up for a few more hours.

[She escorts KELLER by the arm over the threshold; he obeys, leaving BELLE.]

KELLER. Miss Sullivan, you are a tyrant.

ANNIE. Likewise. I'm sure. You can stand there, and close the door if she comes.

KATE. I don't think you know how eager we are to have her back in our arms—

ANNIE. I do know, it's my main worry.

KELLER. It's like expecting a new child in the house. Well, she is, so—composed, so—

[Gently]

Attractive. You've done wonders for her, Miss Sullivan.

ANNIE. [Not a question] Have I.

KELLER. If there's anything you want from us in repayment tell us, it will be a privilege to—

ANNIE. I just told Mrs. Keller. I want more time.

KATE. Miss Annie—

ANNIE. Another week.

[HELEN lifts her head, and begins to sniff.]

KELLER. We miss the child. I miss her. I'm glad to say, that's a different debt I owe you—

ANNIE. Pay it to Helen. Give her another week.

KATE. [Gently] Doesn't she miss us?

KELLER. Of course she does. What a wrench this unexplainable—exile must be to her, can you say it's not?

ANNIE. No. But I—

[HELEN is off the stool, to grope about the room; when she encounters BELLE, she throws her arms around the dog's neck in delight.]

KATE. Doesn't she need affection too, Miss Annie?

ANNIE. [Wavering] She—never shows me she needs it, she won't have any—caressing or—

KATE. But you're not her mother.

KELLER. And what would another week accomplish? We are more than satisfied, you've done more than we ever thought possible, taught her constructive—

ANNIE. I can't promise anything. All I can—

KELLER. [No break] —things to do, to behave like—even look like—a human child, so manageable, contented, cleaner, more—

ANNIE. [Withering] Cleaner.

KELLER. Well. We say cleanliness is next to godliness, Miss—

ANNIE. Cleanliness is next to nothing, she has to learn that everything has its name! That words can be her eyes, to everything in the world outside her, and inside too, what is she without words? With them she can

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think, have ideas, be reached, there's not a thought or fact in the world that can't be hers. You publish a newspaper, Captain Keller, do I have to tell you what words are? And she has them already—

KELLER. Miss Sullivan.

ANNIE. —eighteen nouns and three verbs, they're in her fingers now, I need only time to push one of them into her mind! One, and everything under the sun will follow. Don't you see what she's learned here is only clearing the way for that? I can't risk her unlearning it, give me more time alone with her, another week to—

KELLER. Look.

[He points, and ANNIE turns. HELEN is playing with Belle's claws; she makes letters with her fingers, shows them to Belle, waits with her palm, then manipulates the dog's claws.]

What is she spelling?

[A silence.]

KATE. Water?

[ANNIE nods.]

KELLER. Teaching a dog to spell.

[A pause]

The dog doesn't know what she means, any more than she knows what you mean, Miss Sullivan. I think you ask too much, of her and yourself. God may not have meant Helen to have the—eyes you speak of.

ANNIE. [Toneless] I mean her to.

KELLER. [Curiously] What is it to you?

[ANNIE'S head comes slowly up.]

You make us see how we indulge her for our sake. Is the opposite true, for you?

ANNIE. [Then] Half a week?

KELLER. An agreement is an agreement.

ANNIE. Mrs. Keller?

KATE. [Simply] I want her back.

[KATE leaving the window joins him around back, while KELLER closes the door; they are shut out.]

Only the garden house is daylit now, and the light on it is narrowing down. ANNIE stands watching HELEN work Belle's claws. Then she settles beside them on her knees, and stops Helen's hand.]

ANNIE. [Gently] No.

[She shakes her head, with Helen's hand to her face, then spells.]

Dog. D. o. g. Dog.

[She touches Helen's hand to Belle. Helen dutifully pats the dog's head, and resumes spelling to its paw.]

Not water.

[Helen rolls to her feet, brings a tumbler of water back from the tray, and kneels with it, to seize Helen's hand and spell.]


[Helen thrusts Helen's hand into the tumbler. Helen lifts her hand out dripping, wipes it daintily on Belle's hide, and, and the tumbler from Annie, endeavors to thrust Belle's paw into it. Annie sits watching, wearily.]
I don’t know how to tell you. Not a soul in
the world knows how to tell you. Helen,
Helen.

[She bends in compassion to touch her lips to
HELEN’s temple, and instantly HELEN pauses, her hands off the dog, her head
slightly averted. The lights are still narrowing, and BELLE slinks off. After a moment
ANNIE sits back.]

Yes, what’s it to me? They’re satisfied. Give
them back their child and dog, both house­broken, everyone’s satisfied. But me, and
you.

[HELEN’s hand comes out into the light,
groping.]
Reach. Reach!

[ANNIE extending her own hand grips
HELEN’s; the two hands are clasped. tense
in the light, the rest of the room changing in
shadow.]

I wanted to teach you—oh, everything the
earth is full of, Helen, everything on it that’s
ours for a wink and it’s gone, and what we are
on it, the—light we bring to it and leave be­
thind in—words, why, you can see five thou­
sand years back in a light of words, every­
thing we feel, think, know—and share, in
words, so not a soul is in darkness, or done
with, even in the grave. And I know, I know,
one word and I can—put the world in your
hand—and whatever it is to me, I won’t take
less! How, how, how do I tell you that this—

[She spells.]
—means a word, and the word means this
thing, wool?

[She thrusts the wool at HELEN’s hand;
HELEN sits, puzzled. ANNIE puts the crocheting aside.]

Or this—s, t, o, o, l—means this thing, stool?

[She claps HELEN’s palm to the stool. HELEN
waits, uncomprehending. ANNIE snatches
up her napkin, spells:]
Napkin!

[She forces it on HELEN’s hand, waits, dis­
cards it, lifts a fold of the child’s dress, spells.]
Dress!

[She lets it drop, spells.]
F, a, c, e, face!

[She draws HELEN’s hand to her cheek, and
pressing it there, staring into the child’s re­
ponseless eyes, hears the distant belfry
begin to toll, slowly: one, two, three, four,
five, six.

On the third stroke the lights stealing in
around the garden house show us figures
waiting: VINEY, the other servant, MARTHA,
PERCY at the drapes, and JAMES on the dim
porch. ANNIE and HELEN remain, frozen.
The chimes die away. Silently PERCY
moves the drape-rod back out of sight; VI­
NEY steps into the room—not using the
door—and unmakes the bed; the other ser­
vant brings the wheelbarrow over, leaves it
handy, rolls the bed off; VINEY puts the bed
linens on top of a waiting boxful of HELEN’s
toys, and loads the box on the wheelbar­
row; MARTHA and PERCY take out the chairs,
with the trayful, then the table; and JAMES,
coming down and into the room, lifts AN­
NIE’s suitcase from its corner. VINEY and
the other servant load the remaining odds
and ends on the wheelbarrow, and the ser­
vant wheels it off. VINEY and the children
departing leave only JAMES in the room
with ANNIE and HELEN. JAMES studies the
two of them, without mockery, and then,
quietly going to the door and opening it,
bears the suitcase out, and housewards.
He leaves the door open.
KATE steps into the doorway, and stands. ANNI E lifting her gaze from HELEN sees her; she takes HELEN's hand from her cheek, and returns it to the child's own, stroking it there twice, in her mother-sign, before spelling slowly into it:

M. o. t. h. e. r. Mother.

[HELEN with her hand free strokes her cheek. suddenly forlorn. ANNI E takes her hand again.]

M. o. t. h.

[But KATE is trembling with such impatience that her voice breaks from her, harsh.]

KATE. Let her come!

[ANNIE lifts HELEN to her feet, with a turn, and gives her a little push. Now HELEN begins groping, sensing something, trembling herself; and KATE falling one step in onto her knees clasps her, kissing her. HELEN clutching her, tight as she can. KATE is inarticulate, choked, repeating HELEN'S name again and again. She wheels with her in her arms, to stumble away out the doorway; ANNIE stands unmoving, while KATE in a blind walk carries HELEN like a baby behind the main house, out of view.]

ANNIE is now alone on the stage. She turns, gazing around at the stripped room, bidding it silently farewell, impassively, like a defeated general on the deserted battlefield. All that remains is a stand with a basin of water; and here ANNIE takes up an eyecup, bathes each of her eyes, empties the eyecup, drops it in her purse, and tiredly locates her smoked glasses on the floor. The lights alter subtly; in the act of putting on her glasses ANNIE hears something that stops her, with head lifted. We hear it too, the voices out of the past, including her own now, in a whisper:]  

BOY'S VOICE. You said we'd be together, forever— You promised, forever and— Annie!

ANAGNOS' VOICE. But that battle is dead and done with, why not let it stay buried?

ANNIE'S VOICE. [Whispering] I think God must owe me a resurrection.

ANAGNOS' VOICE. What?

[A pause, and ANNIE answers it herself, heavily.]

ANNIE. And I owe God one.

BOY'S VOICE. Forever and ever—

[ANNIE shakes her head.]

—forever, and ever, and—

[ANNIE covers her ears.]

—forever, and ever, and ever—

[It pursues ANNIE; she flees to snatch up her purse, wheels to the doorway, and KELLER is standing in it. The lights have lost their special color.]

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 wanted 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.

[Pause]
HELEN finds KATE behind her, and thrusts the keys at her.

KATE. What? Oh.

[To EV]

Keys.

[She pockets them, lets HELEN feel them.]

Yes, I'll keep the keys. I think we've had enough of locked doors, too.

[James, having earlier put ANNIE's suitcase inside her door upstairs and taken himself out of view around the corner, now reappears and comes down the stairs as ANNIE and KELLER mount the porch steps. Following them into the family room, he pats ANNIE's hair in passing, rather to her surprise.]

JAMES. Evening, general.

[He takes his own chair opposite.

VINEY bears the empty water pitcher out to the porch. The remaining suggestion of garden house is gone now, and the water pump is unobstructed; VINEY pumps water into the pitcher.

KATE surveying the table breaks the silence.]

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.

[ANNIE has lifted her eyes suspiciously at JAMES, who winks expressionlessly and inclines his 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 knew.

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 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 ANNE stops her arm.]

KELLER. [Not noticing] Reverend looked in at the 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 in midmotion.]

JAMES. [Not noticing] I've always suspected those hens.

AUNT EV. Of what?

JAMES. I think they're Papist. Has he tried—

[He stops, too, following KELLER's eyes. ANNE now stops 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. ANNE, with everyone now watching, for the third time puts the napkin on HELEN. HELEN yanks it off, and throws it down. ANNE 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. ANNE 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 ANNE'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—outside! I'm the child's aunt!

KATE. [Distressed] Will once hurt so much, Miss Annie? I've—made all Helen's favorite foods, tonight.

[An pause]

KELLER. [Gently] It's a homecoming party, Miss Annie.

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[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.


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.

[But the moment ANNIE rising reaches for her hand, HELEN begins to fight and kick, clutching to the tablecloth, and uttering laments. ANNIE again tries to loosen her hand, and KELLER rises.]

KELLER. [Tolerant] I’m afraid you’re the difficulty, Miss Annie. Now I’ll keep her to what she’s learned, you’re quite right there—

[He takes HELEN’s hands from ANNIE, pats them; HELEN quiets down.]

—but I don’t see that we need send her from the table, after all, she’s the guest of honor. Bring her plate back.

ANNIE. If she was a seeing child, none of you would tolerate one—

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.]

There. It’s not unnatural, most of us take some aversion to our teachers, and occasionally another hand can smooth things out.

[He puts a fork in HELEN’s hand; HELEN takes it. Gentally]

Now. Shall we start all over?

[He goes back around the table, and sits. ANNIe stands watching. HELEN is motionless, thinking things through, until with a wicked glee she deliberately flings the fork on the floor. After another moment she plunges her hand into her food, and crams a fistful into her mouth.]
JAMES. [Wearily] I think we've started all over—

[Keller shoots a glare at him, as Helen plunges her other hand into Annie's plate. Annie at once moves in, to grasp her wrist, and Helen flinging out a hand encounters the pitcher; she swings with it at Annie; Annie falling back blocks it with an elbow, but the water flies over her dress. Annie gets her breath, then snatches the pitcher away in one hand, hoists Helen up bodily under the other arm, and starts to carry her out, kicking. Keller stands.]

ANNIE. [Savagely polite] Don't get up!

KELLER. Where are you going?

ANNIE. Don't smooth anything else out for me, don't interfere in any way! I treat her like a seeing child because I ask her to see, I expect her to see, don't undo what I do!

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.

KELLER. What!

JAMES. [A swallow] I said—let her go. She's right.

[Keller glares at the chair and him. James takes a deep breath, then headlong:]

She's right, Kate's right, I'm right, and you're wrong. If you drive her away from here it will be over my dead—chair, has it never occurred to you that on one occasion you might be consummately wrong?

[Keller's stare is unbelieving, even a little fascinated. Kate rises in trepidation, to mediate.]

KATE. Captain.

[Keller stops her with his raised hand; his eyes stay on James's pale face, for a long hold. When he finally finds his voice, it is gruff.]

KELLER. Sit down, everyone.

[He sits. Kate sits. James holds onto his chair. Keller speaks mildly.]

Please sit down, Jimmie.

[James sits, and a moveless silence prevails; Keller's eyes do not leave him. Annie has pulled Helen downstairs again by one hand, the pitcher in her other hand, down the porch steps, and across the yard to the pump. She puts Helen's hand on the pump handle, grimly.]

ANNIE. All right. Pump.

[She forces Helen's hand to work the handle, then lets go. And Helen obeys. She pumps till the water comes, then Annie puts the pitcher in her other hand and guides it under the spout, and the water tumbling half into and half around the pitcher douses Helen's hand. Annie takes over the handle to keep water coming, and does automatically what she has done so many times before, spells into Helen's free palm:]
Water. W. a. t. e. r. Water. It has a—name—

[And now the miracle happens. Helen drops the pitcher on the slab under the spout, it shatters. She stands transfixed. Annie freezes on the pump handle: there is a change in the sundown light, and with it a change in Helen's face, some light coming into it we have never seen there, some struggle in the depths behind it; and her lips tremble, trying to remember something the muscles around them once knew, till at last it finds its way out, painfully, a baby sound buried under the debris of years of dumbness.]

HELEN. Wah. Wah.

[And again, with great effort]

Wah. Wah.

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[HELEN plunges her hand into the dwindling water, spells into her own palm. Then she gropes frantically, Annie reaches for her hand, and Helen spells into Annie's hand.]

ANNIE. [Whispering] Yes.

[HELEN spells into it again.]

Yes!

[HELEN grabs at the handle, pumps for more water, plunges her hand into its spurt and grabs Annie's to spell it again.]

Yes! Oh, my dear—

[She falls to her knees to clasp Helen's hand, but Helen pulls it free, stands almost bewildered, then drops to the ground, pats it swiftly, holds up her palm, imperious. ANNIE spells into it:]
Ground.
[HELEN spells it back.]
Yes!
[HELEN whirls to the pump, pats it, holds up her palm, and ANNE spells it into it.]
Pump.
[HELEN spells it back.]
Yes! Yes!
[Now HELEN is in such an excitement she is possessed, wild, trembling, cannot be still, turns, runs, falls on the porch steps, claps it, reaches out her palm, and ANNE is at it instantly to spell.]
Step.
[HELEN has no time to spell back now, she whirls groping, to touch anything, encounters the trellis, shakes it, thrusts out her palm, and ANNE while spelling to her cries wildly at the house.]
Trellis. Mrs. Keller! Mrs. Keller!
[Inside, KATE starts to her feet. HELEN scrambles back onto the porch, groping, and finds the bell string, tugs it; the bell rings, the distant chimes begin tolling the hour, all the bells in town seem to break into speech while HELEN reaches out and ANNE spells feverishly into her hand. KATE hurries out, with KELLER after her; AUNT EV is on her feet, to peer out the window; only JAMES remains at the table, and with a napkin wipes his damp brow. From up right and left the servants—VINEY, the two Negro children, the other servant—run in, and stand watching from a distance as HELEN, ringing the bell, with her other hand encounters her mother’s skirt; when she throws a hand out, ANNE spells into it:]
Mother.
[KELLER now sets HELEN’s hand, she tou-
Then Helen gropes, feels nothing, turns all around, pulls free, and comes with both hands groping, to find Annie. She encounters Annie's thighs, Annie kneels to her, Helen's hand pats Annie's cheek impatiently, points a finger, and waits; and Annie spells into it:

Teacher.

[HeLEN spells it back, slowly; Annie nods.]

Teacher.

[She holds Helen's hand to her cheek. Presently Helen withdraws it, not jerkily, only with reserve, and retreats a step. She stands thinking it over, then turns again and stumbles back to her parents. They try to embrace her, but she has something else in mind, it is to get the keys, and she hits Kate's pocket until Kate digs them out for her.

Annie with her own load of emotion has retreated, her back turned, toward the pump, to sit; Kate moves to Helen, touches her hand questioningly, and Helen spells a word to her. Kate comprehends it, their first act of verbal communication, and she can hardly utter the word aloud, in wonder, gratitude, and deprivation; it is a moment in which she simultaneously finds and loses a child.]

Kate. Teacher?

[Annie turns; and Kate, facing Helen in her direction by the shoulders, holds her back, holds her back, and then relinquishes her. Helen feels her way across the yard, rather shyly, and when her moving hands touch Annie's skirt she stops. Then she holds out the keys and places them in Annie's hand. For a moment neither of them moves. Then Helen slides into Annie's arms, and lifting away her smoked glasses, kisses her on the cheek. Annie gathers her in.

Kate torn both ways turns from this, gestures the servants off, and makes her way into the house, on Keller's arm. The servants go, in separate directions.

The lights are half down now, except over the pump. Annie and Helen are here, alone in the yard. Annie has found Helen's hand, almost without knowing it, and she spells slowly into it, her voice unsteady, whispering:]

Annie. I, love, Helen.

[She clutches the child to her, tight this time, not spelling, whispering into her hair.]

Forever, and—

[She stops. The lights over the pump are taking on the color of the past, and it brings Annie's head up, her eyes opening, in fear; and as slowly as though drawn she rises, to listen, with her hand on Helen's shoulders. She waits, waits, listening with ears and eyes both, slowly here, slowly there; and hears only silence. There are no voices. The color passes on, and when her eyes come back to Helen she can breathe the end of her phrase without fear:]

—ever.

[In the family room Kate has stood over the table, staring at Helen's plate, with Keller at her shoulder; now James takes a step to move her chair in, and Kate sits, with head erect, and Keller inclines his head to James; so it is Aunt Ev, hesitant, and rather humble, who moves to the door.

Outside Helen tugs at Annie's hand, and Annie comes with it. Helen pulls her toward the house; and hand in hand, they cross the yard, and ascend the porch steps, in the rising lights, to where Aunt Ev is holding the door open for them.

The curtain ends the play.]