

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 almshouse. (*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 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.

KATE. (*Not looking up.*) Miss Annie.

ANNIE. Yes.

KATE. (*A pause.*) Where would you—take Helen?

ANNIE. Ohh— (*Brightly.*) Italy?

KELLER. (*Wheeling.*) What?

ANNIE. Can't have everything, how would this garden house do? Furnish it, bring Helen here after a long ride so she won't recognize it, and you can see her every day. If she doesn't know. Well?

KATE. (*A sigh of relief.*) Is that all?

ANNIE. That's all.

KATE. Captain. (*KELLER turns his head; and KATE's request is quiet but firm.*) With your permission?

KELLER. (*Teeth in cigar.*) Why must she depend on you for the food she eats?

ANNIE. (*A pause.*) I want control of it.

KELLER. Why?

ANNIE. It's a way to reach her.

KELLER. (*Stares.*) You intend to *starve* her into letting you touch her?

ANNIE. She won't starve, she'll learn. All's fair in love and war, Captain Keller, you never cut supplies?

KELLER. This is hardly a war!

ANNIE. Well, it's not love. A siege is a siege.

KELLER. (*Heavily.*) Miss Sullivan. Do you *like* the child?

ANNIE. (*Straight in his eyes.*) Do you?

(*A long pause.*)

KATE. You could have a servant here—

ANNIE. (*Amused.*) I'll have enough work without looking after a servant! But that boy Percy could sleep here, run errands—

KATE. (*Also amused.*) We can let Percy sleep here, I think, Captain?

ANNIE. (*Eagerly.*) And some old furniture, all our own—

KATE. (*Also eager.*) Captain? Do you think that walnut bedstead in the barn would be too—

KELLER. I have not yet consented to Percy! Or to the house, or to the proposal! Or to Miss Sullivan's—staying on when I— (*But he erupts in an irate surrender.*) Very well, I consent to everything! (*He shakes the cigar at ANNIE.*) For two weeks. I'll give you two weeks in this

place, and it will be a miracle if you get the child to tolerate you.

KATE. Two weeks? Miss Annie, can you accomplish anything in two weeks?

KELLER. Anything or not, two weeks, then the child comes back to us. Make up your mind, Miss Sullivan, yes or no?

ANNIE. Two weeks. For only one miracle? (*She nods at him, nervously.*) I'll get her to tolerate me.

(KELLER marches out, and slams the door. KATE on her feet regards ANNIE, who is facing the door.)

KATE. (*Then.*) You can't think as little of love as you said. (*ANNIE glances questioning.*) Or you wouldn't stay.

ANNIE. (*A pause.*) I didn't come here for love. I came for money!

(KATE shakes her head to this, with a smile; after a moment she extends her open hand. ANNIE looks at it, but when she puts hers out it is not to shake hands, it is to set her fist in KATE'S palm.)

KATE. (*Puzzled.*) Hm?

ANNIE. A. It's the first of many. Twenty-six!

(KATE squeezes her fist, squeezes it hard, and hastens out after KELLER. ANNIE stands as the door closes behind her, her manner so apprehensive that finally she slaps her brow, holds it, sighs, and, with her eyes closed, crosses herself for luck.)

(*The LIGHTS dim into a cool silhouette scene around her, the LAMP paling out, and now, in formal entrances, persons appear around ANNIE with furniture for the room: PERCY crosses the stage with a rocking chair and waits; MARTHA from another direction bears in a stool, VINEY bears in a small table, and the other Negro SERVANT rolls in a bed partway from Left; and ANNIE, opening her eyes to put her glasses back on, sees them. She turns around in the room*