

JAMES. —no, but shouldn't we give the devil his due, Father? The fact is we lost the South two years earlier when he outthought us behind Vicksburg.

KELLER. Outthought is a peculiar word for a butcher.

JAMES. Harness maker, wasn't he?

KELLER. I said butcher, his only virtue as a soldier was numbers and he led them to slaughter with no more regard than for so many sheep.

JAMES. But even if in that sense he was a butcher, the fact is he—

KELLER. And a drunken one, half the war.

JAMES. Agreed, Father. If his own people said he was I can't argue he—

KELLER. Well, what is it you find to admire in such a man, Jimmie, the butchery or the drunkenness?

JAMES. Neither, Father, only the fact that he beat us.

KELLER. He didn't.

JAMES. Is it your contention we won the war, sir?

KELLER. He didn't beat us at Vicksburg. We lost Vicksburg because Pemberton gave Bragg five thousand of his cavalry and Loring, whom I knew personally for a nincompoop before you were born, marched away from Champion's Hill with enough men to have held them, we lost Vicksburg by stupidity verging on treason.

JAMES. I would have said we lost Vicksburg because Grant was one thing no Yankee general was before him—

KELLER. Drunk? I doubt it.

JAMES. Obstinate.

KELLER. Obstinate. Could any of them compare even in that with old Stonewall? If he'd been there we would still have Vicksburg.

JAMES. Well, the butcher simply wouldn't give up, he tried four ways of getting around Vicksburg and on the fifth try he got around. Anyone else would have pulled north and—

KELLER. He wouldn't have got around if we'd had a Southerner in command, instead of a half-breed Yankee traitor like Pemberton— (*While this background talk is in progress, HELEN is working around the table, ultimately toward ANNIE'S plate. She messes with her hands in JAMES'S plate, then in KELLER'S, both men taking it so*

for granted they hardly notice. Then HELEN comes groping with soiled hands past her own plate, to ANNIE'S; her hand goes to it, and ANNIE, who has been waiting, deliberately lifts and removes her hand. HELEN gropes again, ANNIE firmly pins her by the wrist, and removes her hand from the table. HELEN thrusts her hands again, ANNIE catches them, and HELEN begins to flail and make noises; the interruption brings KELLER'S gaze upon them.) What's the matter there?

KATE. Miss Annie. You see, she's accustomed to helping herself from our plates to anything she—

ANNIE. (Evenly.) Yes, but I'm not accustomed to it.

KELLER. No, of course not. Viney!

KATE. Give her something, Jimmie, to quiet her.

JAMES. (Blandly.) But her table manners are the best she has. Well.

(He pokes across with a chunk of bacon at HELEN'S hand, which ANNIE releases; but HELEN knocks the bacon away and stubbornly thrusts at ANNIE'S plate, ANNIE grips her wrists again, the struggle mounts.)

KELLER. Let her this time, Miss Sullivan, it's the only way we get any adult conversation. If my son's half merits that description. (He rises.) I'll get you another plate.

ANNIE. (Gripping HELEN.) I have a plate, thank you.

KATE. (Calling.) Viney! I'm afraid what Captain Keller says is only too true, she'll persist in this until she gets her own way.

KELLER. (At the door.) Viney, bring Miss Sullivan another plate—

ANNIE. (Stonily.) I have a plate, nothing's wrong with the plate, I intend to keep it.

(Silence for a moment, except for HELEN'S noises as she struggles to get loose; the KELLERS are a bit non-plussed, and ANNIE is too darkly intent on HELEN'S manners to have any thoughts now of her own.)

JAMES. Ha. You see why they took Vicksburg?

KELLER. (*Uncertainly.*) Miss Sullivan. One plate or another is hardly a matter to struggle with a deprived child about.

ANNIE. Oh, I'd sooner have a more— (*HELEN begins to kick, ANNIE moves her ankles to the opposite side of the chair.*) —heroic issue myself, I—

KELLER. No, I really must insist you— (*HELEN bangs her toe on the chair and sinks to the floor, crying with rage and feigned injury; ANNIE keeps hold of her wrist, gazing down, while KATE rises.*) Now she's hurt herself.

ANNIE. (*Grimly.*) No, she hasn't.

KELLER. Will you please let her hands go?

KATE. Miss Annie, you don't know the child well enough yet, she'll keep—

ANNIE. I know an ordinary tantrum well enough, when I see one, and a badly spoiled child—

JAMES. Hear, hear.

KELLER. (*Very annoyed.*) Miss Sullivan! You would have more understanding of your pupil if you had some pity in you. Now kindly do as I—

ANNIE. Pity? (*She releases HELEN to turn equally annoyed on KELLER across the table; instantly HELEN scrambles up and dives at ANNIE'S plate. This time ANNIE intercepts her by pouncing on her wrists like a hawk, and her temper boils.*) For this tyrant? The whole house turns on her whims, is there anything she wants she doesn't get? I'll tell you what I pity, that the sun won't rise and set for her all her life, and every day you're telling her it will, what good will your pity do her when you're under the strawberries, Captain Keller?

KELLER. (*Outraged.*) Kate, for the love of heaven will you—

KATE. Miss Annie, please, I don't think it serves to lose our—

ANNIE. It does you good, that's all. It's less trouble to feel sorry for her than to teach her anything better, isn't it?

KELLER. I fail to see where you have taught her anything yet, Miss Sullivan!

ANNIE. I'll begin this minute, if you'll leave the room, Captain Keller!