

Scene 3: Kate = \_\_\_\_\_ Keller = \_\_\_\_\_ Annie = \_\_\_\_\_

------(BEGIN SCENE)-----

*In the darkness down left a hand strikes a match and lights a hanging oil lamp. It is KELLER'S hand, and his voice accompanies it, very angry; the lights rising here before they fade on ANNIE show KELLER and KATE inside a suggestion of a garden house, with a bay window seat toward center and a door at back.*

**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—

**Kate.** 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 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 clears his throat, makes ready.*]

**Keller.** 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—

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**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.

[*A silence; KELLER ponders her, heavily.*]

**Keller**. 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 stops sewing and fixes her eyes upon ANNIE.*]

**Kate**. What, Miss Annie?

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

**Keller** (*nonplused*). 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.

[*A pause, KATE not letting her eyes go; her appeal at last is unconditional, and very quiet.*]

**Kate**. Miss Annie, put up with it. And with us.

**Keller**. Us!

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**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 turns back to regard her. A pause.]

**Annie.** 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?

**Kate.** 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 from you—to us—

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

-----**(END SCENE)**-----