

**THE MIRACLE WORKER**

Written by  
William Gibson

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**1** **â€¢** **NIGHT. INI . NURSERY.**

**0**

We see three faces in lamplight, looking down. They have been through a long vigil and it shows in their tired eyes and disarranged clothing. One is a young gentlewoman with a sweet girlish face, KATE KELLER; the second is an elderly DOCTOR, stethoscope at neck, thermometer in fingers; the third is a gruff gentleman in his forties with chin whiskers, CAPTAIN ARTHUR KELLER.

**DOCTOR**

Shetll live.  
KATE closes her eyes.  
I can tell you now, I thought she  
wouldn't,

**KELLER**

**(INDULGENT)**

I've brought up two of them, but  
this is my wife's first, she  
isn't battle-scarred yet.

**KATE**

Doctor. Will my girl be all right?

**0 DOCTOR**

Oh, by morning she'll be knocking  
down Captain Kellerfs fences again.

**KATE**

Is there nothing we should do?

**KELLER**

**(JOVIAL)**

Put up stronger fencing, ha?

**DOCTOR**

Just let her get well, she knows  
how to do it better than we do.  
These things come and go in infants,  
never know why. Call it acute  
congestion of the stomach and brain.

KELL ? moves after the DOCTOR, we hear them off-camera;  
we see only KATE'S face hovering over us, her hand adjust-  
ing the blanket.

**KELLER**

I'll see you to your buggy, Doctor.

**(CONTINUED)**

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1. CONTINUED

**DOCTOR (OFF CAMERA)**

0 Main thing is the fever's gone.  
I've never seen a baby, more  
vitality, that's the truth --  
Their voices and footsteps fade. KATE is bent lovingly  
over the crib, which emits a bleat; her finger is play-  
ful 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 a con-  
gestion, 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 --  
Helen, Helen Captain, Captain,  
will you come.

(She screams)

**2. NIGHT. EXT. SIDE OF KELLER HOUSE.**

KELLER standing lamp in hand watching the doctor's buggy recede in the night. Suddenly from the house behind him comes a knifing scream. KELLER wheels, the scream comes again and the CAMERA follows KELLER's run with the lamp across the yard.

**3. NIGHT. INT. KELLER HOUSE.**

KELLER runs into the house and up the dark stairs.

**4. NIGHT. INT. HELEN'S NURSERY.**

KELLER bursts into the bedroom where KATE is screaming at the crib, her look intent on the baby and terrible.

**KELLER**

Katie, what's wrong?

**KATE**

Look.

**(CONTINUED)**

**3**

c o.w- u UED

She makes a pass with her hand in the crib, at the baby's eyes.

**I**

KATE (Cont'd)

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.

**A K T E**

Or hear. When I screamed she  
didn't blink. Not an eyelash --

**KELLER**

Helen. Heleni

**KATE**

She can't hear you!

**YELLER**

**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.

**FADE OUT**

**5. DAY. INT. KELLER HOUSE - TITLE SHOT.**

The stairs in the Keller House. In the foreground we see  
the bannisters, in the background the wall. A shadow of  
the erratic, staggering figure of 5 year old HELEN appears  
on the wall, moving slowly. The two Negro children  
scamper past -- their excited laughter coming to us, in  
contrast to the mute HELEN. In CU, in the FG, HELEN'S  
little hands come into the frame, grasping the bannister  
rail.

**6. DAY. EXT. YARD - TITLE SHOT.**

HIGH LONG SHOT lookin', down on lines of bed sheets hung  
up in the Keller yard to dry. It appears to be a kind of

**(CONTINUED)**

**6. CONTINUED**

maze, the sheets blowing in the wind; and staggering among  
them is the figure of the child, HELEN 5 years old, reach-  
ing out, struggling, buffeted by the damp, blowing sheets,  
CRANE DOWN towards the figure. HELEN lashes out, her  
face frightened, unknowing --- she pulls down a sheet, be-  
comes tangled in its folds, almost hysterical. In the BG

KATE comes rushing from the house -- to help her.

**7. NIGHT. INT. LIVING ROOM KELLER HOUSE - TITLE SHOT.**

There is a Christmas tree with decorations and in a WIDE SHOT we see HELEN, 7 years old, reaching up into tree. At a window we see the faces of Percy 8 years, and Martha, 7 years, looking in. HELENrS hand gets a Christmas ball and rips it down, shattering at her feet. CRAB IN AND AROUND coming to the side of the tree, seeing HELENTS hands, another ball, she pulls it down. We see her face, blurred out, through the pine branches and needles, and beyond her the other children watching.

**8. DAY. EXT. AFIELD - TITLE SHOT.**

A WIDE HIGH SHOT. We see the lonely expanse of field with 0 a low grass sprouting up, in the BG is the Keller house perhaps. Going slowly across the field is the figure of the child HELEN, Patty Duke. From in under CAMERA comes KATE, following her.

**(CONTINUE SCRIPT)**

**9. OMIT.**

**10. DAY. EXT. BACKYARD KELLER HOUSE AND PUMP - TITLE SHOT.**

Scene will be out MOS up until RINGING OF BELL:  
Now we are in leaf-dappled sunlight in the Keller yard, on three kneeling children and an old dog around the pump.  
V INEY with jug on way to barn to get milk.  
The dog is a setter named BELLE, and she is sleeping. Two of the children are Negroes, MARTHA and PERCY. The third child is HELEN, quite unkempt, in body a vivacious little person with a fine head, attractive, but noticeably blind, one eye larger and protruding; her gestures are abrupt, insistent, lacking in human restraint, and her face never

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**(CONTINUED)**

**10. CONTINUED**

smiles. She is flanked by the other two, in a litter of 0 paper-doll cutouts, and while they speak, HELEN'S hands thrust at their faces in turn, feeling baffledly at the movements of their lips. The CAMERA is on this; the dialogue is only background.

**MARTHA**

**(SNIPPING)**

First Itm gonna cut off this doe-  
torts leg, one, two, now then --

**PERCY**

Why you cuttin' off that doctor's  
legs?

**MARTHA**

I'm gonna give him a operation.  
Now I'm gonna cut off his arms,  
one, two. Now I'm gonna fix up  
She pushes HELEN'S hand away from her mouth.  
You stop that.

**PERCY**

Cut off his stomach, that's a  
good operation.

**0**

**MARTHA**

No, I'm gonna cut off his head  
first, he got a bad cold.

**PERCY**

Ain't gonna be much of that doc-  
tor left to fix up, time you  
finish all them opera--  
But HELEN is poking her fingers inside his mouth, to feel  
his tongue; he bites at them, annoyed, and she jerks them  
away. HELEN now fingers her own lips, moving them in  
imitation, but soundlessly. Again the CAMERA on this.

**MARTHA**

What you do, bite hand?

**PERCY**

That's how I do, she keep pokint.  
her fingers in my mouth, I just  
bite 'em off.

(CONTINUED)

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10. CONTI

**:1ARTEA**

-.That she tryin' do now?

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**PEERCY**

She tryint talk. She gonna get read. Looka her try in' talk.. ILLEN is scowling, the lips under her fingertips moving in silence, growing more and more frantic, until in a bizarre rage she bites at her own fingers. This sends PERCY off into laughter, but alarms :MARTHA.

**MARTI**

Hey, you stop now. She pulls EELEI' S hand down, You just sit quiet and But at once HELEIT topples LTARTHA on her back, knees pinning her shoulders down, and ;-ravs the sissors. MARTHA screams, hile her tied b\_nchlets of hair fl17 off in snips of the scissors. PERCY darts to the bell stria on the porch, yanks it W THE DELL

**RIPGS.**

bOA. DAY. INT. LIVID ROOLI

**E**

CAPTAIN X LLER is at work at his deal. JA ES is at his ease in conversation with KATE and AUNT EV. KATE is serving a cool refreshment. ITAR RINGING OF BELL. KATE rushes out the door followed more slowly by A"MITT W, leaving behind JAILS & FELLER.

**11. KATE O? ?` NINC DOOR ONTO ARCH SEES THE SCONE.**

Five years have done much to her, the girlish playfulness is gone, she is a woman settled in grief.

**BATE**

(for the thousandth time)

Helen.

She is down the steps at once to them, seizing  
Helen's wrists and lifting her off MARTHAs VINE-  
runs in and chases MARTHA and PERCY OFF.

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6A.

11. 4 : ' ? 1 A ± 17-T I )

Let KATE J (C O L ' ~ T I D  
Let me have those scissors,

E

KATE reaches for the scissors in HELEN'S hand. Put  
HELEN pulls the scissors back, they struggle for  
then: a moment, then KATE gives up, lets HELEN keep  
them.

She tries to drive HELEN into the house. HELEN  
jerks away. KATE next goes down on her knees, takes  
HELEN'S hands gently, and using the scissors like  
a doll, makes HELEN caress and cradle them; she  
points with her finger houseward. HELEN'S whole  
body now becomes easier; she surrenders the scissors,  
KATE turns her toward the door and pushes her a little  
back. HELEN scrambles up and toward the house, and  
KATE follows her,

12. DAY. INT. TELLER'S LIVING ROOM.

There is a cradle with a sleeping infant, TRED:  
C. P. T. IN KE!, L. R in spectacles is working over news-  
paper pages at a corner desk; a benign AMT EV,  
wearing a hat, with a sewing basket on a sofa is put-  
ting the finishing stitches on a big shapeless doll  
made out of towels; an innocent young man of I. T. E. S  
are, JAS. L. T. R turns from the window to look at  
HELEN. HELEN halts, her hands alert to grope, and  
KATE turns her to the AUNT, who gives her the doll,  
the AUNT is meanwhile speaking to TELLER.

**AUNT EV**

Arthur, something ought to be done for that child.

**T-**

A refresh,; ng suggg;estion. 'Â°l .at?

**AUNT EV**

'-Thy, this ver-T famous Perkins School in Poston; they're just supposed to do wonders.

**IC'ELLER**

The child's been to speci lists everywhere. The- couldn't help her in Baltimore or 1,1 -7aslaington, could they?

7.

12. CO:' 'I]' ' T J'

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t'iin the Cap;':ain will write to the Perkins School soon.

**KELL' R**

:ratie, Howe many times can you let- then brew.{ your heart? Any number of tines, h T e foreroinz and follovrin" dialo,ue is peripheral to the we are on }EL ' T 1 She sits on the or to explore the doll t71th h.r fingers, gravely, and her hand pauses over the face: this is no face, a blan area, and it troubles her. CLOS'\_' UP on her finger-- tips searching for flaatures. She tans ouestioninSly f'o:' eyes, but no one notices. She then yanks at her \_Jfl''T1S dress, and taps amain viForousRy for eyes.

0 C O:T'! I ICJ n

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**12. CONTINUED**

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**AUNT EV**

What, child?

Obviously not hearing, HELEN commences to go around from person to person, tapping her eyes, but no one attends or understands.

**KATE**

(No break)

As long as there's the least chance. For her to see. Or hear, or --

**KELLER**

There isn't. Now I must finish here.

**KATE**

I think, with your permission, Captain, I'd like to write to the Perkins School.

**KELLER**

I said no, Katie.

**O AUNT EV**

Why, writing does no harm, Arthur, only a little bitty letter. To see if they can help her.

**FELLER**

They can't.

**KATE**

We won't know that; to be a fact, Captain, until after you write.

13. HELEN NOW IS GROPING AMONG THING.' ON FELLER'S DESK,

AND

**PAWS HIS PAPERS TO THE FLOOR. KJMLIM IS EXASPERATED.**

**K I J,ER**

Katie.

KATE quickly turns HELEN away, and retrieves the papers.  
I might as well tÂ°y to work in a  
henyard as in th.s house --

**(CONTINUED)**

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13. C ONTINU.D

**JAMES**

**(PLACATING)**

You really ought to put her away,  
Father.

**KATE**

(Staring up)  
What?

**JAMES**

Some asylum. It's the kindest  
thing.

**AUNT EV**

Why, she's your sister, James,  
not a nobody --

**JAMES**

Half sister, and half-mentally  
defective, she can't even keep  
herself clean. It's not pleasant  
to see her about all the time.

**KATE**

Do you dare? Complain of what  
0 you can see?

**KELLER**

(Very annoyed)  
This discussion is at an end]  
HELEN gropes her way with the doll back to AUNT EV.  
The house is at sixes and sevens

from morning 'til night over the  
child I want some peace here, I  
don't care how, but one way we  
won't have it is by rushing up and  
down the country every time someone  
hears of a new quack. I'm as  
sensible to this affliction as --

**14. HELEN WITH AUNT EV**

fingering her dress, yanks two buttons from it.

**AUNT EV**

Helena My buttons.

**(CONTINUED)**

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**14. CONTINUED**

HELEN pushes the buttons into the doll's face. KATE  
0 now sees, comes swiftly to kneel, lifts HELEN'S hand to  
her own eyes in question.

**KATE**

Eyes?

HELEN nods energetically.

She wants the doll to have eyes.

Another kind of silence now, while KATE takes pins and  
buttons from the sewing basket and attaches them to the  
doll as eyes. KELLER stands, caught, and watches  
morosely, AUNT EV blinks and conceals her emotion by  
inspecting her dress.

**AUNT EV**

My goodness me, I'm not decent.

**KATE**

She doesn't know better, Aunt Ev.  
I'll sew them on again.

**AUNT EV**

**(INDULGENTLY)**

40 It's worth a couple of buttons,  
Kate, look.

HELEN now has the doll with eyes, and cannot contain  
herself for joy; she rocks the doll, pats it vigorously,  
kisses it.

This child has more sense than  
all these men Kellers, if there's  
ever any way to reach that mind  
of hers.

**15. HELEN SUDDENLY SCRAMBLES TOWARD THE CRADLE, AND UN-  
HESITATINGLY OVERTURNS IT.**

The swaddled baby tumbles out and CAPTAIN KELLER barely  
manages to dive and catch it in time.

**KELLER**

Helen!

All are in commotion, the baby screams, but HELEN un-  
perturbed is lying her doll in its place, KATE on her

**(CONTINUED)**

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**11**

**15. CONTINUED**

knees, pulls her hands off the cradle, wringing them;  
0 HELEN is bewildered.

**KATE**

Helen, Helen, you're not to do  
such things, how can I make you

**UNDERSTAND--**

**KELLER**

(Hoarsely, handing the  
baby to AUNT EV)  
Katie.

**KATE**

How can I get it into your head,  
my darling, my poor --

**KELLER**

Katie, some way of teaching her  
an iota of discipline has to be

**KATE**

**(FLARING)**

How can you discipline an afflicted  
child? Is it her fault?  
O HELEN'S fingers have fluttered to her Mother's lips,  
vainly trying to comprehend their movements; we are  
close on these two.

**KELLER**

I didn't say it was her fault.

**KATE**

Then whose? I don't know what to  
do. How can I teach her, beat her  
-- until she's black and blue?

**KELLER**

It's not safe to let her run around  
loose. Now there must be a way of  
confining her, somehow, so she can't---

**KATE**

Where, in a cage? She's a growing  
child, she has to use her limbs!

**KELLER**

Answer me one thing, is it fair to  
Mildred here?

**(CONTINUUM)**

12

15. CONTINUED

S

**KATE**

**(INEXORABLY)**

Are you willing to put her away?  
Now HELEN'S face darkens in the same rage as at herself  
earlier, and her hand strikes at KATE'S lips. KATE  
catches her again, and HELEN begins to kick, struggle,  
twist.

**KELLER**

Now what?

**KATE**

She wants to talk, like -- be like  
you and me.  
She holds HELEN struggling until we HEAR from the child  
her first sound so far, an inarticulate weird noise in  
her throat such as an animal in a trap might make; and  
KATE releases her. The second she is free, HELEN  
blunders away collides violently with a chair, falls,  
and sits weeping. KATE comes to her, embraces, caresses,  
soothes her, and buries her own face in her hair, until  
she can control her voice.

**O KATE**

Every day she slips further away.  
I don't know how to call her back.

**AUNT EV**

Oh, I've a mind to write to Boston  
myself. If that School can't help  
her, maybe they'll know somebody  
who can.

**KELLER**

(Presently, heavily)  
I'll write to Perkins, Katie.  
He stands with the baby in his clasp, staring at HELEN'S  
head, hanging down on KATE'S arm.

**16. DAY. EXT. BOSTON STATION - SHOOTING UP INTO VESTIBULE**

**OF TRAIN.**

M.R. ANAGNOS on platform with ANNIE'S suitcase, is reach-  
ing up to help ANNIE mount steps. CAMERA is behind

**ANNIE.**

**O (CONTINUED)**

13

**16. C 013TINUM**

**ANAGNOS**

O -- only that a suitable governess has been found here and will come. It will no doubt be difficult for you there, Annie, but it has been difficult for you at our school too, hmmm?

**17. CAMERA IN VESTIBULE - SEE ANNIE AND ANAGNOS FROM REAR.**

**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 benefit. To others. And what has saved you on one or more occasions at Perkins is that there was nowhere to expel you to. Above ANNIE'S seat ANAGNOS puts her suitcase, looking down at her. Your eyes hurt?

**O 18. CU ANNIE - WEARING SMOKED GLASSES.**

**ANNIE**

My ears, Mr. Anagnos.

**ANAGNOS**

**(SEVERELY)**

Nowhere but back to that dreadful place where children learn to be saucy. Annie, I know how unhappy 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?

**14**

**19. ANNIE TAPS HER BROW.**

**ANNIE**

O Well, he keeps digging up that battle.

**ANAGNOS**

That is not a proper thing to say.  
Annie, be humble.  
He extends a gift to her..  
You'll need their affection, working with this child.

ANNIE, not quite comprehending, looks at gift.  
A gift with our affection.

ANNIE opens a small box and sees a garnet ring. She looks up, blinking, then down.

**ANNIE**

Dear Mr. Anagnos,  
(Her voice is trembling)

**I --**

But she swallows over getting the ring on her finger and cannot continue until she finds a woebegone joke.

**O**

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.

**ANNIE**

Which half?

The train lurches. ANAGNOS bends and kisses her on the cheek and says,

**ANAGNOS**

Goodbye. Goodbye.

**ANNIE**

(She calls after him

**LOUDLY)**

I won't give them any trouble.  
I'll be so ladylike they won't  
notice I've come.

**(CONTINUED)**

15

**19. CONTINUED**

0 Passengers behind ANNIE turn reacting to her shout. She is conscious of this and sinks down'in seat. Past ANNIE, through window of train, we see ANAGNOS join 5 or 6 blind girls on the platform, and the train departs.

**BEGIN MONTAGE SEQUENCES OF TRAIN SHOTS.**

**20. ANNIE, TRAVELING, SITTING IN SEAT OF MOVING TRAIN.**

**21. SCENE IN FILTHY TRAIN, ANNIE READING PERKINS REPORT.**

**SEAT DIFFERENT INDICATING ANOTHER TRAIN.**

**22. ANNIE DESCENDING FROM TRAIN VESTIBULE INTO DARKNESS OF STATION PLATFORM. IN BG PORTION OF SIGN "WASHINGTON".**

**23. ANNIE ATTEMPTING TO SLEEP ON A NIGHT TRAIN WITH PERKINS REPORT OVER FACE.**

**24. ANNIE SITTING ON SEAT OF MOVING TRAIN.**

Suddenly train rushes into a tunnel, and darkness comes

over the scene.

**YOUNG JIMMIE (VO)**

Where are we going, Annie?

**YOUNG ANNIE (VO )**

Jimmie.

**YOUNG JIMMIE (VO)**

Where are we going?

**YOUNG ANNIE (VO)**

I said I'm taking care of you.

**YOUNG JIMMIE (VO)**

Where we go...

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**25. STYLIZED TEWKESBURY ADMISSIONS OFFICE.**

YOUNG JIMMIE and YOUNG ANNIE are standing in front of desk. We do not see man sitting behind desk, but we hear his voice.

**25. CONTINUED**

11A13' S VOICE

Annie Sullivan, aged nine, virtually  
0 blind; Jaynes Sullivan, aged seven,  
-- what's the matter with your legs sonny?

**GIRL**

It's his hip, N ster, he was born  
that way.

is AN' S VOICE

Can't he walk without that crutch?  
The GIRL shakes her head.

**THE END**