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Golden Hope

A Play for Girls in Two Acts

By

GLADYS RUTH BRIDGHAM

Author of "*Cynthia Looks Ahead*"

"*Mrs. Haywood's Help*"



PHILADELPHIA

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

1921

PS 3503
R53 G6
1921

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R53 G6
1921

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Golden Hope

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MAR 17 1921

no 1

Golden Hope

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MRS. GWENDOLYN SANDERSON-WASHBURN,
A society woman
AVERIL SANDERSON.....*Her sister; a playwright*
MRS. ESTELLE SANDERSON.....*Their aunt*
MERIAM HUNTLEY.....*Mrs. Washburn's secretary*
ALICE BECKWORTH, M. D.
MARY BLAKE.....*A detective*
BECKY }
ANNIE }*Mrs. Washburn's maids*
MISS LEROY.....*Hotel clerk*
SADIE BILLINGS.....*Maid at hotel*

Act I.—Library in Mrs. Washburn's home. June of any year.

Act II.—Room in Averil's apartment in a hotel at Sunset Beach. Four months later.

TIME OF PLAYING:—One hour and a half.

CHARACTERISTICS

AVERIL. Twenty-five; blind; sweet face and quiet manner. She is very uncertain in her movements in Act I, but much more sure in Act II.

GWENDOLYN. Thirty; typical young society woman.

ESTELLE. About fifty; short and stout; fussy and given to weeping.

DR. BECKWORTH. Thirty-five; rather masculine.

MISS HUNTLEY and MISS LEROY. Young business women from twenty-five to thirty.

BECKY. Seventeen; reddish hair; hangs in curls tied back in Act I; she wears it up in Act II. She is

small and rather pretty; there is something appealing and fascinating about her.

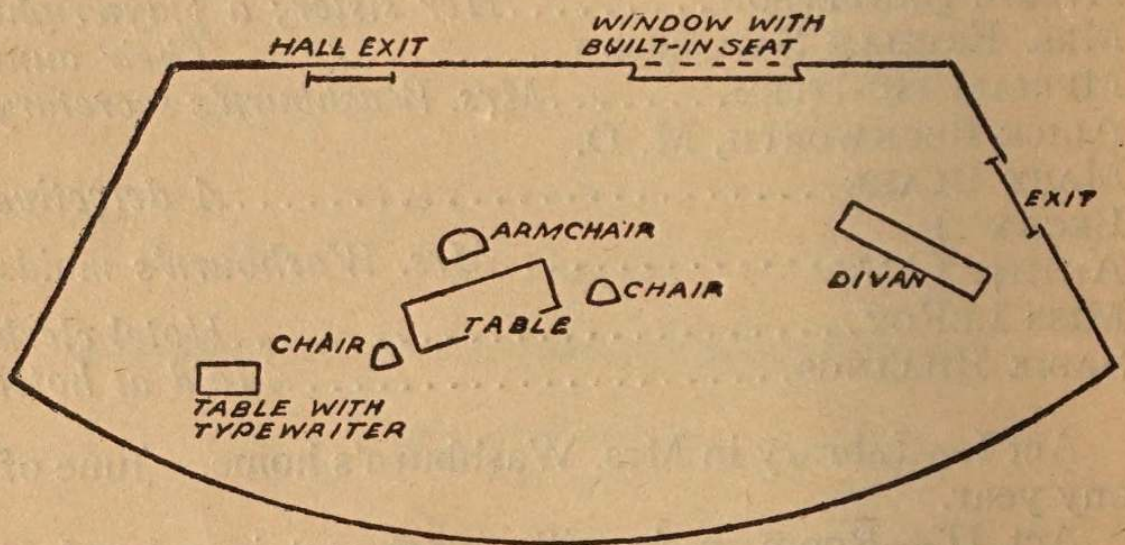
ANNIE is nineteen.

SADIE BILLINGS. Twenty-two.

MARY BLAKE. Thirty.

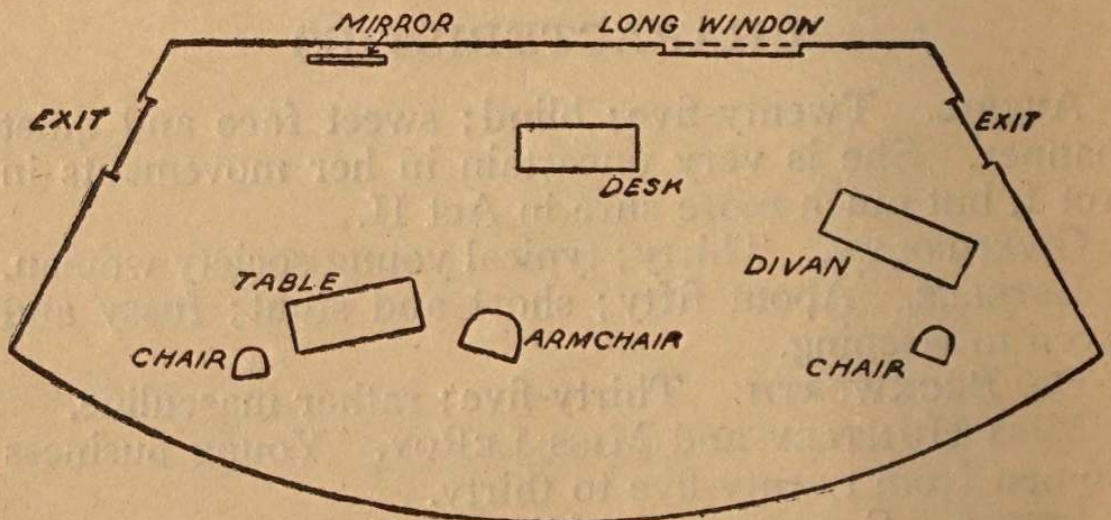
SCENE PLOTS

ACT I



SCENE.—The library in the home of Mrs. Gwendolyn Sanderson-Washburn.

ACT II



SCENE.—Room in Averil's apartment in hotel at Sunset Beach.

Golden Hope

ACT I

SCENE.—*Library in the home of MRS. GWENDOLYN SANDERSON-WASHBURN. Late afternoon. Exit R. and a hall exit L. C. Large window with a built-in seat R. C. Large table C.; armchair back of table; small chairs right and left of table. Telephone on table. Small table with typewriter right front; divan left front.*

(*As curtain rises MERIAM HUNTLEY sits back of center table addressing envelopes. BECKY, a maid, stands at right of table putting the stamps on the envelopes as MERIAM hands them to her.*)

MERIAM (*handing last letter to BECKY*). Count them.

(*Consults a list as BECKY counts the envelopes.*)

BECKY. Nineteen.

MERIAM. Give them to Wilson. (*BECKY gathers up the envelopes and starts to exit, C. MRS. GWENDOLYN WASHBURN enters, C. MERIAM rises.*) Mrs. Washburn.

GWENDOLYN. I am very late. (*To BECKY, who is about to exit.*) Ring for Annie. (*BECKY steps back into room; touches bell near door; exits. To MERIAM.*) Where is my sister?

MERIAM. In her room. Dr. Beckworth is with her.

GWENDOLYN. And the specialist?

MERIAM. He has gone. He stayed but a short time.

GWENDOLYN (*with a gesture of impatience*). Oh! I wanted to see him!

MERIAM. Doubtless Dr. Beckworth understands.

(ANNIE, a maid, enters, R.)

GWENDOLYN (*hands her hat and coat to ANNIE*). Take my things, Annie, and tell Dr. Beckworth I would like to see her here before she leaves.

ANNIE. Yes'm.

(Exit, R.)

MERIAM (*indicating some letters on table*). These are ready for your signature.

GWENDOLYN (*taking MERIAM'S place at table*). Very well. I will do it at once.

MERIAM (*looking at GWENDOLYN sympathetically*). You are tired, Mrs. Washburn.

GWENDOLYN (*with a sigh*). Dead tired—but—(*suddenly straightening up*) I mustn't be. There is no time to be tired.

MERIAM. If I could only do more for you.

GWENDOLYN. Don't reproach yourself, Miss Huntley. You are indefatigable. I couldn't get along without you.

(MRS. ESTELLE SANDERSON enters, R.)

ESTELLE. Gwen, at last!

GWENDOLYN. Yes, I know I am late. I'm sorry.

ESTELLE (*reproachfully*). You might at least have told me you had come in. I have been on pins and needles for two hours and a quarter. It relieves me of a little care to know you are in the house. What are you doing?

GWENDOLYN. Signing these invitations.

ESTELLE. Invitations? For what?

GWENDOLYN. An afternoon reception for Mrs. Bedlowe.

ESTELLE. Gwendolyn, I protest! You went on with that dinner for Senator Keene. I did hope that would be the last while Averil is in the house. I haven't said anything before —

GWENDOLYN (*interrupting*). No, Aunt Stella, it wasn't necessary. Your looks were enough. I know you disapprove of (*makes a sweeping gesture over the table*) all this, but I have tried to do my duty by both sister and husband.

ESTELLE. There are times when it doesn't harm a husband to take a back seat.

GWENDOLYN (*shortly*). This isn't one of the times. (*Signs the last invitation. MERIAM gathers them up and quietly exits, c.*)

ESTELLE (*taking a chair down R.*). Well, of course, no one pays any attention to what I think or what I say.

GWENDOLYN (*a trifle impatiently*). You don't understand.

ESTELLE. Certainly not. You have lived so much longer and have had so much more experience. It is too bad I came. I thought I could help, but I can see now I am right in the way.

(*Takes out a handkerchief and begins to weep.*)

GWENDOLYN (*in despair*). Aunt Stella! (*Hesitates a second, then goes to her.*) You mustn't speak that way. You have been positively wonderful. Why, if you weren't here the house wouldn't be the same. You can't imagine how you would be missed.

ESTELLE (*recovering a little*). Well, I have tried —

GWENDOLYN (*patting her shoulder*). I know you have, Aunt Stella. Did you see the specialist?

ESTELLE. Of course I did. He said he didn't need me and I was quite at liberty to go, but I assure you I never left the room for a half second. I hope I know my duty when I see it.

GWENDOLYN (*crossing to table*). Did he offer any encouragement at all?

ESTELLE. My dear! The man is fit for a sanatorium.

GWENDOLYN (*turning, surprised*). Why, what do you mean?

ESTELLE. He said Averil's blindness is a state of her mind!

GWENDOLYN. How perfectly extraordinary!

ESTELLE. That's not the word at all. It's idiotic.

GWENDOLYN. Surely you have made a mistake. He couldn't have said that.

(ANNIE *steps into room, R.*)

ANNIE. Dr. Beckworth, Mrs. Washburn.

(DR. ALICE BECKWORTH *enters, R. ANNIE withdraws.*)

DR. BECKWORTH. Good-afternoon, Mrs. Washburn.

GWENDOLYN (*crosses to DR. BECKWORTH and shakes hands*). I am glad to see you, Dr. Beckworth. I hoped to be here when Dr. Staley came. My aunt has just been telling me that his verdict is rather surprising. That is, surprising to us. I suppose you were prepared.

DR. BECKWORTH. Well, not for quite such sweeping statements as he made.

GWENDOLYN. Won't you be seated, please? (DR. BECKWORTH *sits L. of table; GWENDOLYN back of table; ESTELLE remains down R.*) Of course you have the utmost confidence in Dr. Staley.

DR. BECKWORTH. I am bound to have unless he is actually proved in the wrong. You couldn't procure more expert advice in this country. The trouble is I am afraid your sister will not take the advice.

GWENDOLYN. Why?

DR. BECKWORTH. His advice is so contrary to her inclinations.

GWENDOLYN. What did he say?

DR. BECKWORTH. He told her not to lose interest in her work, and to choose a travelling companion and go from place to place.

GWENDOLYN. And she said —

ESTELLE (*suddenly sitting up very straight*). She said—after that man had talked fifteen minutes without taking a breath—certainly I never heard anything like him—no one could get a word in edgewise—she said—THANKS!

GWENDOLYN. He offered no hope at all?

DR. BECKWORTH. Not to her.

GWENDOLYN (*breathlessly*). But to you?

DR. BECKWORTH. Yes.

ESTELLE. Well, I'm glad you think so. If you call what he said hope——

DR. BECKWORTH (*decidedly; interrupting*). I certainly do—golden hope.

GWENDOLYN. Tell me!

DR. BECKWORTH. Dr. Staley says your sister's condition now is a condition of her mind. An accident, a nervous shock caused her to lose her sight. Some day something might cause her to regain it.

ESTELLE. Did you ever hear anything so loony?

DR. BECKWORTH. That is why he wishes her to travel and mingle with people and to go on with her work.

GWENDOLYN. And he didn't think it best to tell her this?

DR. BECKWORTH. No. He says you can't tell how or when the thing might be accomplished, and, of course, there is the chance that it never will be accomplished. So he thinks it would be cruel to offer her the hope——

GWENDOLYN. He offers to the rest of us.

DR. BECKWORTH. Yes.

GWENDOLYN. But how—how are we ever going to induce her to come out of the shell she has crawled into?

ESTELLE (*getting out her handkerchief*). Of course we can't blame the poor child, but it does seem as if she might be willing to travel a little—and goodness knows I would go with her anywhere. I hope I know my duty when I see it.

GWENDOLYN. It is hard, Dr. Beckworth. She is so

sensitive. Just think! Not a person outside the doctors and members of the family know what has happened to her. She has a horror of the public, which we cannot induce her even to try to overcome.

DR. BECKWORTH. I know you have quite a problem, Mrs. Washburn, and (*rising*) I believe it is one for the family to solve. She pays little or no attention to what I say, and as for Dr. Staley, he might as well have been a fly buzzing around.

GWENDOLYN. I assure you we will do our best.

(*Rings bell.*)

ESTELLE. Yes, indeed. I hope I know my duty when I see it. I will go to the dear child at once. Good-afternoon, Dr. Beckworth.

(*Exit, R.*)

DR. BECKWORTH. Good-afternoon. (*Thoughtfully, looking after ESTELLE.*) Your sister has my deepest sympathy.

GWENDOLYN (*dryly*). She needs it.

DR. BECKWORTH (*turning quickly*). My dear Mrs. Washburn, you didn't think I meant ——

GWENDOLYN (*interrupting with a laugh*). Certainly not. (*ANNIE enters, c.*) You will be in to-morrow?

DR. BECKWORTH. About the same time.

GWENDOLYN. We will try to accomplish something to-night.

DR. BECKWORTH. I wish you success.

(*Exit, c. ANNIE starts to follow.*)

GWENDOLYN (*bowing to DR. BECKWORTH*). Thank you. Oh, Annie! (*ANNIE stops by door.*) Tell Miss Huntley I would like to see her. (*ANNIE exits. Telephone rings. GWENDOLYN goes to telephone.*) Hello! Yes. I am sorry. I couldn't possibly call her. Who is this? Oh, Mr. Harrison, yes! Miss Huntley told me you had called several times. Yes, this is Mrs. Washburn. Why, my sister has been seriously indisposed. I don't know when she will feel able

to talk with you. No-o, the doctor doesn't say she mustn't do any more work. She—she—well, she doesn't seem inclined to want to do any work. I am going to talk with her right away and if she feels able I will have her call you. I promise to let you know what she says, anyway. Not at all. Good-bye. (MERIAM *enters*.) Miss Huntley, if we can induce my sister to do any more work, would you be willing to go away with her for a while?

MERIAM. Why—Mrs. Washburn—I—I—why ——

GWENDOLYN. Of course I have taken you by surprise. You can have time to think.

MERIAM. I don't need time if you think I would be a suitable person. I am not used to—to —— (*Stops abruptly*.) Pardon me.

GWENDOLYN. To blind people. You may as well say it, Miss Huntley. I am sure you are as used as the rest of us, and I have no doubt would do much better. We say the most awkward things and make all kinds of unfortunate breaks.

MERIAM. I am willing to try if you wish it.

GWENDOLYN. It is very kind of you to be so ready to help. I certainly do wish it, although I don't know what I shall do without you. If my sister will only be favorably disposed —— (BECKY *enters*, c.) Well, Becky?

BECKY (*steps forward and hands GWENDOLYN a card*). Are you at home, ma'am?

GWENDOLYN (*glances at card*). Yes.

(*Exits.*)

MERIAM. Becky, take off your cap and apron and put on a hat and coat. I am going to send you way down-town to do some errands. (*Smiles at her*.) It is nice out.

BECKY (*delighted*). Yes'm.

(*Exits, R.* MERIAM *goes to typewriter and starts some work; slight pause.* BECKY *reënters, R., with hat and coat.*)

MERIAM (*goes to table*). Here is the list of things I want and the places to buy them. The charge accounts are marked. The other things you will pay for. (*Opens a drawer and takes out a money-box; looks over some bills.*) There is nothing small here. You will have to take a twenty. Be careful what you are doing, girlie.

BECKY. Leave it to me, ma'am.

(ANNIE *enters, c.; goes to MERIAM and hands her a card.*)

ANNIE. Miss Huntley, this young woman wants to see you.

MERIAM (*impatiently*). Another reporter! It's Miss Sanderson she wants to see, and it is quite impossible! Well, I'll go. (*Starts for door; looks back.*) Take those letters on the table, Becky.

(*Exit, c.*)

BECKY (*taking some letters from table*). Why can't anyone see Miss Sanderson?

ANNIE (*looks cautiously out, c.*). Search me! Must be loony, I guess. Something's the matter with her. (*Turns to BECKY and speaks cautiously.*) Becky! This woman that's come ain't no newspaper reporter. She's Mary Blake.

BECKY. Th' detective?

ANNIE. Yere.

BECKY. My Gawd!

ANNIE. I'm afraid she's onto you, kid!

BECKY. What'll I do? If I lose this job there ain't nothin' left. I can't get in nowhere, an' I wanted ter stay straight this trip.

ANNIE. Well, of course, we ain't sure she's come about you.

BECKY. Sure's as I want to be. She lost me the other job and she's goin' ter lose me this one. Why can't they let a girl alone? Jest 'cause we slip up once is no sign we're going to forever.

ANNIE (*looking out, c.*). Hush, for goodness' sake!

They're coming. Take your mail an' lay low an' listen. Miss Huntley will think you're out.

BECKY (*grabs her pocketbook from table and the remainder of the letters*). I get yer!

(ANNIE *exits, R.* BECKY *slips into window and pulls curtain in front of her.* MERIAM and MARY BLAKE *enter, C.*)

MERIAM. Sit down, Miss Blake. Now what can I do for you?

(MARY *sits down R.* MERIAM *by table.*)

MARY. Miss Sanderson is stopping here?

MERIAM. You know that she is. Why ask?

MARY. Nothing like first-hand information. Why does she refuse to be interviewed?

MERIAM. Ask her.

MARY. Delighted if I could get near enough. Is it true that she refuses to see anyone?

MERIAM. It is. We have nothing to give out. You know all about the plays she has already written, and I can't tell you that she ever intends to write another.

MARY. Miss Huntley, I didn't come here to ask you questions about Miss Sanderson. I used that as an excuse to get in. I don't represent a paper. (*Suddenly rises and crosses to MERIAM.*) I represent something quite different.

(*She opens her coat and shows MERIAM a small button on the inside.*)

MERIAM (*surprised and startled*). Miss Blake! What in the world?

MARY. Don't be alarmed, Miss Huntley. We can manage this very quietly. Is there a girl working for you about seventeen, rather pretty, short, cute looking, auburn hair—almost red?

MERIAM. Yes. Becky Marston.

MARY. Lately known as Flora March. Real name Julia Heckler. You had better nail everything down.

MERIAM. Miss Blake, I engaged this girl myself. Her references were excellent. I think you have made a mistake.

MARY. If I have I will withdraw with apologies. Will you give me a chance to see this girl?

MERIAM. Certainly (*rises and rings bell*)—if she is in the house. (*Returns to table.*) I gave her some errands to do down-town, but she may not have started yet. May I ask what you want of the girl?

MARY. She has served time for stealing. After she came back her first job was with the A. T. Crawford Co. Mr. Crawford called me to watch a Billings girl who was employed there. I ran across this Heckler girl the first day. As she was holding a position where the temptation and opportunity were great, I felt it a duty to warn Mr. Crawford.

MERIAM. Surely.

MARY. I only suggested that he be more careful, change her position or something like that, but he wouldn't have her in the place. After she left we found that the Billings girl was entirely innocent. This Heckler girl had been quietly getting away with several hundred dollars' worth of goods and throwing the suspicion onto the Billings girl. I have a warrant for the Heckler girl's arrest.

MERIAM. I can't believe it.

MARY. She is an expert little crook. Mighty clever! Always has been.

(ANNIE enters, R.)

MERIAM. Annie, has Becky gone?

ANNIE. Yes'm.

MERIAM. Very well. That is all. (ANNIE withdraws. To MARY.) I am afraid she will be gone some time.

MARY (*looking at her watch*). And I have another appointment in half an hour. Would it be convenient for me to call in the morning? (*Rising.*)

MERIAM. Yes, and I will see that Becky is here. I hope you will find that our girl isn't the one you want.

I like Becky and I can't make your story fit. Why, I have been in the habit of trusting her with money ever since she came here. Of course she hasn't been here very long, but she seems such an honest little thing.

MARY. It is quite possible I have followed a wrong clue. We had quite a time tracing her. I assure you I have been known to make mistakes.

MERIAM. Let us hope this is one of the times.

(They exeunt, c. BECKY comes forward cautiously.

ANNIE enters, r. AVERIL SANDERSON enters, r., unnoticed; stops uncertainly, then moves along, her hand against wall; steps inside curtain.)

ANNIE. It is you she's after.

BECKY. Yere. Tryin' ter get me for somethin' I ain't done. I knew that Billings girl was liftin' the goods, but I never supposed she was tryin' ter hide behind me.

ANNIE. What you goin' ter do?

BECKY. Get out o' here. Blake's coming back in the mornin' ter get a look at me. I'll get a night's start and it'll take time ter catch up the trail. Maybe I can get clear o' them fer good. It ain't no use tryin' ter be straight. Once yer slip up it's for always as far as them folks is concerned. My Gawd! *(With a sob.)* I was trying to do right! I wanted to be straight!

ANNIE. Have you got any money? I got a little.

BECKY. Thanks, Annie. Yer the best ever. I don't need it. I can take care o' myself.

ANNIE. Where will you go?

BECKY. It will be best if you don't know.

ANNIE. You don't think I'd squeal?

BECKY. I know you wouldn't, but it'll be dead easy to say you don't know when you don't.

(Starts for door, r.)

ANNIE. You goin' right now?

BECKY. No, I'll be back. I got a little matter to take care of before I start. Besides, I want ter give

Miss Huntley her things and her change. I don't want to raise no suspicions too soon.

ANNIE. You are a wise one, kid.

BECKY. I need to be. See you later.

(*Exit, R.*)

(*MERIAM enters, C.; glances around the room.*)

MERIAM. Annie, whom were you talking to?

ANNIE (*confused*). Me, ma'am?

MERIAM (*sharply*). Yes, you. I distinctly heard you speaking. You certainly weren't talking to yourself.

AVERIL (*suddenly appears between the curtains in the window*). I am here, Miss Huntley.

MERIAM (*surprised, in a hushed voice*). Miss Sanderson!

(*ANNIE stares with her mouth open.*)

AVERIL. I am rather chilly. This dress is very thin. Annie is going to my room for a wrap.

MERIAM. Why, certainly. (*To ANNIE.*) You understand what it is that Miss Sanderson wants?

ANNIE (*pulling herself together*). I—I think so. It's —

AVERIL (*quickly*). Trimmed with fur—on the back of the chair by the window.

ANNIE (*with a gasp*). Yes'm.

(*Exit, R., hurriedly.*)

MERIAM (*embarrassed*). I am glad you are downstairs, Miss Sanderson. It is a lovely afternoon. This is a beautiful time of year. Everything looks so pretty in June.

(*Stops with a little gasp, realizing what she has said.*)

AVERIL. Yes, June is a beautiful month. It is especially beautiful in my own home. My home is beautiful all summer long. We have an old-fashioned garden, the same kind my grandmother had in her day.

Hollyhocks and larkspur and marigolds and sweet peas. And there is an orchard and the birds sing so sweetly in the cherry trees. I can still enjoy the bird songs and the fragrance of the flowers.

(There is a slight pause. MERIAM stands with her hands tightly clasped, biting her lip, unable to speak. ESTELLE hurries in, R., followed by GWENDOLYN.)

ESTELLE *(hurries to AVERIL and puts a fur-trimmed jacket over her shoulders)*. Your jacket, dear child. Annie said you wanted it. Why didn't you tell me? You know I love to do things for you. You know I can always see my duty and do it.

AVERIL. I fully realize that, Aunt Stella.

GWENDOLYN. I am so glad to have you come down here, Averil. Sit down, dear. *(Takes her hand and leads her to an armchair.)* We wanted to talk with you.

AVERIL. It is time for me to come down. I must begin to get used to some other room. I intend to go home the last of the week.

ESTELLE
GWENDOLYN { *(together)*. Home?

(MERIAM takes some things from table and is about to quietly exit.)

GWENDOLYN. Don't go, Miss Huntley. *(To AVERIL.)* Surely, Averil, you are going to listen to Dr. Staley.

AVERIL *(calmly)*. He didn't say anything worth listening to.

GWENDOLYN. I think he did, dear. It is a splendid idea for you to travel.

ESTELLE. And I will go with you. I hope I know my duty when I see it.

AVERIL. I will travel—back home. That is all.

GWENDOLYN. Averil, Mr. Harrison has called up several times. Will you talk with him to-morrow morning?

AVERIL. No.

GWENDOLYN (*in despair*). Why?

AVERIL. Because he wants me to write another play. I shall never write another word.

ESTELLE. Averil, my dear!

GWENDOLYN. I can't see why you feel as you do about your work. I have been talking with Miss Huntley, and she is willing to act as your secretary —

AVERIL (*interrupting*). That is very kind. I appreciate it, but I have no need of her services. What do you think I have to write about?

GWENDOLYN. Well, at any rate, Averil, you must not think of going home. If you are not going to travel, you must stay here with me.

AVERIL. I have been here altogether too long. I realize how I have upset your household. It must not go on any longer.

GWENDOLYN. Surely, Averil, you understand how welcome —

AVERIL. I surely do. I realize your kindness and your husband's. I also realize that his career depends somewhat upon his wife, and I do not wish to be an added burden for you any longer. I shall go home this week.

GWENDOLYN	} (<i>together</i>).	{	Averil!
MERIAM			Miss Sanderson —
ESTELLE			Dear child, listen!

AVERIL (*rising*). I don't feel equal to argument. My mind is quite made up. I will go back to my room, if you don't mind.

ESTELLE (*putting an arm around her*). Let me go with you.

(*They exeunt, R.*)

GWENDOLYN (*looking after them*). A problem for the family! How little Dr. Beckworth understands. (*ANNIE enters, C.*) What is it, Annie?

ANNIE. Mr. Washburn has come in. He would like to see you if convenient.

GWENDOLYN. Very well. (*ANNIE withdraws.*) Poor man! Between my social duties and family

duties I never know whether there is going to be a minute for my husband.

(Exit, c. MERIAM goes to typewriter; slight pause while she works. BECKY enters, c.; she just drags herself across the room.)

BECKY. Miss Huntley!

MERIAM *(turns)*. Why, Becky! What has happened?

BECKY. I slipped and twisted my ankle. I couldn't get down the street. I thought maybe Annie could go instead.

MERIAM. Surely.

BECKY. Here's the list and the money.

MERIAM *(taking them)*. I think I will go myself. I have been in all day. The air will be good for me. You speak to one of the maids and have her go to your room with you. Call a doctor if necessary. I will speak to Mrs. Washburn and see that you are excused for to-night and as long as necessary. Is the pain very bad?

BECKY *(limping to the door, r.)*. Kind o' fierce.

MERIAM. It is too bad. I am sorry. Be sure you call for all that you need.

BECKY. Thank you, ma'am. You always been orful good to me, Miss Huntley.

(Exit, r. MERIAM exits, c.; slight pause. AVERIL steps into room, r.)

AVERIL. Miss Huntley! *(Pause.)* Isn't there any one here? *(She sighs. A clock is heard striking five; she counts as it strikes.)* One—two—three—four—five! Five o'clock! Only five! *(She covers her face with her hands and shivers.)* Only five! Only five! *(She gropes her way to the table and then to the divan; she sinks down on the divan; buries her face in one of the pillows. The light from the window has been growing more dim; the room is about half-lighted; BECKY looks cautiously into room, r.; slips*

quickly into room; leans back against wall, listening; tiptoes across to door, c.; looks out; she has no limp; she softly closes door, c.; goes swiftly to table, c.; she tries drawer with several keys; finds one that fits; opens drawer: takes out money-box; removes a roll of bills; returns box to drawer; locks drawer. AVERIL sits up; listens. BECKY steps away from table towards door, r.) Who is it?

BECKY (*turns with a gasp; stares at AVERIL*). It's—
it's —

AVERIL (*rising*). Who is it?

BECKY. Just me, ma'am. Becky, the maid.

AVERIL. Oh! And what are you doing?

BECKY (*swallowing*). I—I—why, I wanted to see you, ma'am.

AVERIL. To see me? And why did you expect to see me here?

BECKY. I—I seen you come down here.

AVERIL. Oh! And am I such an object of curiosity?

BECKY. I seen a swell play that you wrote once.

AVERIL (*smiling slightly*). Oh, that's it. What play did you see?

BECKY. "Day Dreams." It was at the Majestic. A feller I went with used ter usher there an' he got passes to the gallery. Gee! We had a swell time that night. I been wantin' to see you ever since you come here.

AVERIL. Are you disappointed?

BECKY. No, ma'am. You are jest as beautiful as I knowed you'd be.

AVERIL. I actually believe you are sincere, little girl. You are little, aren't you?

BECKY. Well, not very big, sure.

AVERIL. I would like to know how you look.

BECKY (*surprised and pleased*). Would you really? I'll come where you can see me better.

(*Crosses towards AVERIL.*)

AVERIL. I cannot see you at all, Becky.

BECKY. You can't see—— (*Stops and looks at AVERIL wonderingly.*) Then that's why folks——

(*Stops abruptly.*)

AVERIL. Yes. That is why people are not allowed to see me.

BECKY (*breathlessly*). But you'll get over it? It ain't forever?

AVERIL. I am afraid it is.

BECKY (*eagerly*). But, Miss Sanderson, that girl in your play—in "Day Dreams"—she was——

AVERIL. Was blind. Yes.

BECKY. And she got over it.

AVERIL. A play, Becky. This is a grim reality.

BECKY (*timidly*). But—but—you——

AVERIL (*encouragingly*). Yes?

BECKY. You are going to try, ain't you?

AVERIL (*a trifle impatiently*). Try? What do you mean?

BECKY. You really thought the things you wrote, didn't you?

AVERIL. I suppose I did—then. How little I understood.

BECKY. But couldn't you think that way again, don't you suppose?

AVERIL. Indulge in day dreams? Try to believe that somewhere out in the world is a magic touch that would open my eyes?

BECKY. It couldn't do no harm, and she was so happy doing it, and she made so many other people happy. Couldn't you do it, Miss Sanderson? And maybe—somewhere——

AVERIL. Child, who are you that dares to offer me Golden Hope?

BECKY (*eagerly*). But it might be true, Miss Sanderson. It might be real. Ain't you going out in the world to see?

AVERIL (*with a half laugh*). Would you go with me?

BECKY (*slowly*). I—go with—you?

AVERIL. I couldn't go alone. Some one would have to be my eyes. (*Suddenly and determinedly.*) Becky, would you run away with me to-night?

BECKY. Run away? You mean not let no one know?

AVERIL. Yes. If I am going I want to escape from every one who ever knew me.

BECKY. But could we?

AVERIL. I think so. They would waste a lot of time because they would believe I had gone home. They would go there first.

BECKY (*suddenly realizing the situation*). And they'd never dream o' me goin' with you. Oh, Miss Sanderson, do you mean—really mean it? Just me and you?

AVERIL. Yes, I do mean it. I don't know what has happened to me but—(*slowly*) somewhere a voice is calling. (*Suddenly changing.*) Becky, you will have to do many things for me before we can start. You will have to work fast. Have you much to do to get ready yourself?

BECKY. Just one thing and I will do it now. (*Goes to table; unlocks drawer; opens money-box and puts the roll of bills in; locks the drawer again.*) I got something of Mrs. Washburn's and I want to put it where it belongs before I go with—you. There! I'm ready.

AVERIL. All right. (*Holding out her hand to BECKY.*) You will have to take me, you know.

BECKY (*timidly taking her hand*). And we're really going alone? Where am I going to take you?

AVERIL. I don't know. Somewhere out in the great world to seek that magic touch. Just you and me, Becky! Just you and me!

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—Room in AVERIL'S apartment in hotel at Sunset Beach. Exits R. and L.; a full length window which opens like a door L. C., supposed to lead onto a balcony; a table with writing materials at right front of the window; a long mirror on wall at R. C.; a divan, chairs and a small table with vase of flowers.

(As curtain rises AVERIL sits in armchair down L.; she is knitting; BECKY stands before mirror arranging her hair.)

AVERIL. I don't hear you saying anything. Aren't you pleased with yourself?

BECKY (*turning from mirror*). Pleased? I never believed I could look like I do. (BECKY'S *tone of voice and conversation are much improved.*) I've always been such a fright. I look almost—almost pretty. Silk dress—(*lifts her skirt a little*) silk petticoat, silk stockings, a girdle with tassels. I always wanted a girdle and I adore tassels! The shade of blue is heavenly and my hair is up! Oh, I can't believe it's me!

AVERIL. That's not surprising. Sometimes I have hard work to believe it's I.

BECKY (*eagerly*). Oh, Miss Sanderson, this morning first thing when I woke up I thought—maybe we'll find it here!

AVERIL. You are still looking, Becky? After four months?

BECKY. Four months ain't long. I mean—*isn't*. Of course I'm looking. I'll always be looking till you find it. (*Goes to window.*) And this is such a beautiful place. This is the loveliest place we been.

AVERIL (*smiling*). You always say that.

BECKY. I guess I do. Any place is beautiful where you are, but I think this is the best of all. The water is so blue, and lovely little whitecaps, and the sky is the same blue with lovely little white clouds.

AVERIL. Becky, you are the most convincing little person I ever met. I can see just how you look, and I can see the view from that window. I can see how happy you are.

BECKY. Happy? I been in heaven ever since that first night.

AVERIL. I am glad, dear, and I am glad this is a beautiful place. It was your choice, and something good should happen here.

BECKY. It has already for me. You found the magic touch for me, Miss Sanderson—(*looks down at her dress*) and I just got to find it for you.

AVERIL (*spreading out her work and running her hand over it*). I believe I am getting quite expert, Becky.

BECKY. It's wonderful! (*Takes up the work.*) And not a mistake!

AVERIL. I wonder what my folks would say to my activity.

BECKY. I suppose you got to tell them some day.

AVERIL. Why, yes, we can't hide forever. We certainly have done well. I expected they would trace me before this. Perhaps I have been wrong to keep them in suspense, but I couldn't bear to break the spell.

BECKY. You wrote them you was all right.

AVERIL. Yes, but I am not sure they ever received it. You know I told that bell-boy to mail the letter two weeks after we left. He could easily have forgotten.

BECKY. I hate to think we'll ever have to go back.

(*There is a knock at door R. BECKY opens door.*)

MISS LEROY (*outside*). Good-morning, Miss Emerson. May I come in, please?

BECKY. Certainly. (*MISS LEROY enters, R. BECKY*

turns to AVERIL.) Miss Siberly, it is Miss LeRoy, the hotel clerk.

AVERIL. Good-morning.

MISS LEROY. Good-morning, Miss Siberly. I hope you are finding your rooms comfortable.

AVERIL. Quite, thank you. Everything is delightful.

MISS LEROY. I am glad, I am sure. Miss Siberly, I don't want to alarm you, but I hope there is nothing missing from your rooms this morning.

AVERIL. Missing?

MISS LEROY. Yes. I regret to say that several rooms were entered last night and jewels and money were taken. All the rooms were on this floor, and open from this balcony, so I thought —

(She hesitates.)

AVERIL. We haven't missed anything as yet. Beth, will you look, please? *(BECKY exits, L.)* Won't you sit down, Miss LeRoy?

MISS LEROY *(with a half laugh as she takes a chair)*. I will try to. I am too uneasy to sit still. We are making a quiet investigation. If it is any of our help we may be able to spot them without too much publicity. These things are very unfortunate.

AVERIL. Of course it hurts the reputation of a hotel.

MISS LEROY. You can't imagine how much. Once let the newspapers get it and we lose any number of guests until the affair has been forgotten.

AVERIL. I suppose you can call a private detective if necessary.

MISS LEROY. We have already done so. Fortunately there is a very successful one spending her vacation here. I spoke to Miss Blake immediately, and it will be very easy for her to work, as no one suspects she is in that line of business.

BECKY *(enters L.)*. Miss Siberly!

AVERIL. Yes?

BECKY. The lock to your smallest case was forced,

but nothing has been disturbed. They must have been scared off.

MISS LEROY. You are sure nothing is missing?

BECKY. Yes, Miss LeRoy. I packed everything myself.

AVERIL. And as yet we have unpacked but two or three things.

MISS LEROY. You are fortunate. That is probably the only thing that saved you.

AVERIL. I know when it happened. I heard some one moving and I spoke. I thought it was Beth. I asked her if it was morning. When she didn't reply I decided that I heard some one outside or in another room.

MISS LEROY. I am relieved that it is no worse. I hope, Miss Siberly, this won't change your plans any.

AVERIL. About remaining in these rooms, you mean?

MISS LEROY. Yes.

AVERIL. Certainly not. We shall be perfectly safe. They are not likely to strike twice in the same place.

MISS LEROY. Thank you. So kind of you to take it that way. Two of your neighbors are moving out this morning.

AVERIL. Well, don't worry about us. Will you be kind enough to send a maid to help Beth unpack?

MISS LEROY. Certainly. At once. Anything else I can do?

AVERIL. I think not, thank you.

MISS LEROY. Good-morning.

AVERIL. Good-morning and good luck!

MISS LEROY. Thank you.

(Exit, R.)

BECKY (*looking after* MISS LEROY). Oh, Miss Sanderson! And I was so happy!

AVERIL (*lightly*). Well, surely you are not going to let this spoil your happiness. We are fortunate to escape so easily. Why should we mourn?

BECKY. But I—I—wish it hadn't happened. (*With*

a catch in her voice.) I—I wish this kind of a thing hadn't happened. Just when we were looking for something good.

AVERIL. And we are going to keep on looking. This thing doesn't concern us in the least. I think I will go out on the balcony and get some air. It is nice out, isn't it?

BECKY (*goes to window and opens it*). Oh, yes, it's grand!

AVERIL (*makes her way to window*). This is an easy room, isn't it?

BECKY. Yes'm. (*Takes a sweater from back of a chair.*) Perhaps you will need a wrap.

(*Follows AVERIL out window.*)

AVERIL (*outside*). What glorious air!

(*There is a knock at door R.; pause; another knock; pause; SADIE BILLINGS opens door; steps into room. BECKY comes to window and looks in.*)

SADIE. Miss Emerson?

BECKY (*entering*). Yes.

SADIE. I came up to help you unpack.

BECKY (*coming forward*). Oh, yes! (*Suddenly stops.*) Sadie Billings!

SADIE (*looks at her for a minute in astonishment*). My gosh! Julia Heckler! Well, wouldn't that get you! You! Miss Emerson! You! Companion to Miss Siberly! And will you look at the glad rags! Say, how'd you get away with it, kid?

BECKY. I advise you to be a little bit careful.

SADIE. Oh, soft pedal! You don't kid yourself, do you, that——

BECKY (*interrupting*). I think you will be just what I said—careful. What are you doing in this hotel?

SADIE. Working. (*With a sneer.*) I ain't so lucky as some folks.

BECKY. Get too hot for you at Crawford's?

SADIE. What do you mean?

BECKY. What I say.

(*Goes to window and looks out.*)

SADIE. You got a nerve all right.

BECKY (*coming forward*). Not a comparison with yours.

SADIE. Say! You have grown uppish since the good old days, all right, all right. Does your swell employer know how you left your job?

BECKY. No, she doesn't know I was accused of what you did.

SADIE. Look here! My husband works in this hotel, and he'll make you——

BECKY (*with a laugh*). Your husband?

SADIE. Yes, my husband. Joe Billings.

BECKY. Joe, that worked at Crawford's?

SADIE. That's him.

BECKY. Were you married then?

SADIE. Sure.

BECKY. You're well matched, I'll say. Well, I don't need your valuable services, Mrs. Billings. Unpacking other people's goods would be just in your line, but I can manage to worry through by myself.

SADIE. I bet you can. Must be a cinch for you to work for a blind woman.

BECKY. You've said enough, Sadie Billings. I could lose you your job here in about three minutes.

SADIE. And I could return the compliment.

BECKY (*thoughtfully*). Yes, probably.

SADIE. And I bet you don't want me to do it.

BECKY. No, I don't. And that's the reason I'm going to keep still about you. I don't suppose I ought to. I suppose I ought to tell what I know. I warn you if anything more is missing around here I will tell.

SADIE. What are you trying to put over now?

BECKY (*sarcastically*). I suppose you don't know about the robberies last night?

SADIE. No, I don't. What do you mean?

BECKY. That's rich!

SADIE (*very much excited; goes to BECKY and grabs her arm*). Julia Heckler, tell me! What happened last night?

BECKY (*looking at her curiously*). You actually look as if you mean it.

SADIE. I do mean it. Tell me!

BECKY (*watching her intently*). The rooms on this floor leading onto the balcony were entered last night.

SADIE (*with a gasp*). Did they get much?

BECKY. I don't know how much. I suppose you will be trying to tell me next that you didn't lift those things at Crawford's.

SADIE. I didn't.

(MARY BLAKE *looks in at window.*)

BECKY. Well, I haven't got no reason to believe in you, but you do look as if you were telling the truth.

SADIE. I—— (*Catches sight of MARY. MARY withdraws.*) Kid!

BECKY. What is it?

(*Turns quickly towards window.*)

SADIE. Mary Blake! She's on the balcony!

BECKY (*with a cry*). No, no!

SADIE. I saw her. She looked in the window.

BECKY. Sadie Billings, if Mary Blake is in this building you'll tell the truth about Crawford's. I didn't take that stuff. You say you didn't. Who did?

SADIE. How should I know?

BECKY. I don't know how you should, but you do. You had something to do with it, and you're going to tell how much or how little.

SADIE (*backing towards door R.*). No, I can't. I don't know nothing. I ain't got nothing to tell.

(*Exit, R. BECKY stands looking after her, her hands tightly clasped.*)

AVERIL (*enters by window*). Becky!

BECKY (*trying to pull herself together*). Yes'm?

AVERIL. I am getting brave. I went alone down all those steps to the beach. What do you think of that?

BECKY. I—I—am glad. (*Watches AVERIL make her way to chair down L.*) Oh, Miss Sanderson, you won't let them take me, will you? Promise me you won't! Promise me.

AVERIL. Take you? My dear! What do you mean? What are you talking about?

BECKY (*beginning to cry*). I didn't do it! They think I did, but I didn't.

AVERIL (*somewhat alarmed*). Becky, what are you talking about?

BECKY. Oh, don't ask me!

AVERIL (*sharply*). Becky, come here!

BECKY (*with a gasp*). Oh, Miss Sanderson, don't speak to me that way. I'll die if you go back on me!

AVERIL (*firmly*). Becky, you must do just as I say. Come over here.

BECKY (*throwing herself down by AVERIL's chair*). Oh, Miss Sanderson, I'm so miserable.

AVERIL (*leaning forward and putting her hand on the girl's head*). Now, tell me all there is to tell.

BECKY. I can't bear to tell you. You've been an angel to me, and you will despise me.

AVERIL (*gently*). Becky, you love me, don't you?

BECKY. You know I worship you.

AVERIL. Do you think anything I ever did in the past could change your love?

BECKY. I know it couldn't.

AVERIL. Then you mustn't be afraid to tell me whatever there is to tell. Nothing you have ever done can make any difference now. Did you never hear that "perfect love casteth out fear"? I am not afraid to have you tell me. I love you, too, little girl.

BECKY (*wonderingly*). You—love—me?

AVERIL. Yes, and we must neither of us be afraid of the past. It doesn't count. The only girl I know or care about is the dear little girl who made me dare to hope. But if I am to help you it will be necessary to know what is troubling you.

BECKY. I did time once in a reformatory—for stealing.

AVERIL (*putting her arm around her*). Yes, dear?

BECKY. Is that all you're going to say?

AVERIL. Tell me how it happened.

BECKY. I wasn't but fourteen. My mother and father died when I was a kid. I lost the job I had, and I guess I got scared. I thought I was starving to death and I took—money—to—to buy food.

AVERIL (*holding her closer*). Yes?

BECKY. After I come out, I worked at Crawford's and after that at your sister's. The night you took me away a detective had been there with a warrant for my arrest. They think I stole things at Crawford's, but I didn't. The detective is here, Miss Sanderson. She was on the balcony this morning. She must have seen me. What am I going to do?

AVERIL. Trust me. No matter what I say or do, trust me. Can you?

BECKY. Oh, yes! (*Knock at door R. BECKY turns toward the door shuddering.*) Oh, Miss Sanderson!

AVERIL. Remember! There is nothing to fear. Run in the other room and wait until I call you, and then do just as I say. I promise to protect you. (*There is another knock. BECKY exits, L., hurriedly.*) Come in.

(MARY BLAKE *enters, R.; she leaves the door open.*)

MARY. Miss Siberly?

AVERIL. Yes.

MARY. Miss Sanderson really, isn't it?

AVERIL. Yes, who are —

(GWENDOLYN and ESTELLE *enter, R.*)

GWENDOLYN. Averil! At last!

ESTELLE. Averil, dear child!

AVERIL (*rising*). Gwendolyn! Aunt Stella!

(*They embrace.*)

GWENDOLYN. Averil, we have searched and searched for you!

ESTELLE. I should say we had! I hope we know our duty when we see it.

GWENDOLYN. How could you keep me in such suspense, dear?

AVERIL. I wrote you that I was all right. Didn't you receive the letter?

GWENDOLYN. Yes, but it only made me the more anxious to see you. And, my dear, the strange way you have tried to keep away from us ——

ESTELLE (*interrupting*). The queerest thing the way you have done!

AVERIL. Didn't you urge me to travel?

GWENDOLYN. Yes, we did, but we hardly expected you to run away in the night and hide yourself from us for months.

ESTELLE (*getting out a handkerchief*). I don't think we deserved it. I always tried to see my duty ——

AVERIL. And did it, Aunt Stella. You have nothing to reproach yourself with. It probably seemed queer to you. It was just a sudden and freak notion on my part.

GWENDOLYN. And this seems the strangest of all, Averil. We understand you have a girl with you who worked for me. (*Suddenly turns to MARY.*) Oh, pardon me! I forgot. Averil, Miss Blake, a detective, is with us.

AVERIL. How do you do, Miss Blake?

MARY. I am glad to know you, Miss Sanderson. You must pardon my intrusion, but I was very sure I recognized the Heckler girl, and as you answered a description I had been given of Miss Sanderson, I took the liberty of telephoning to your aunt and sister.

GWENDOLYN. Just think! Our hotel is within sight of this one. And we were trying to locate you miles away.

AVERIL. We were miles away until last night. We have just arrived.

ESTELLE. And it's true?

AVERIL. Certainly. We are really here.

ESTELLE. You know that isn't what I mean. I don't see how you can be frivolous. Is this girl with you?

AVERIL. Yes, Becky is with me.

GWENDOLYN. And you are calling her Beth Emerson? Your companion?

AVERIL. Yes.

ESTELLE. Well, I never! I am completely at a loss to understand you, Averil. Choose that—that—creature for a companion when I told you I was ready and glad to go anywhere with you.

MARY. Miss Sanderson didn't understand, of course. I am very sorry, but I must ask to see this girl. I have a warrant for her arrest.

ESTELLE. Land knows, I hope you'll keep it quiet, Miss Blake. Sounds well, doesn't it? Miss Sanderson's companion arrested——

AVERIL. Wait until it happens, Aunt Stella. I will call Becky.

GWENDOLYN. Just a minute, Averil, before you call her. Why did you bring this girl with you? I had spoken to Miss Huntley, and she is such a sweet girl.

AVERIL. She didn't interest me. You didn't, any of you.

GWENDOLYN. Averil!

ESTELLE. Well, I must say! If ever any one tried to do their duty——

AVERIL (*quickly*). You all tried, and you did your best for me. It was not your fault. Don't think for a minute that I didn't appreciate all you were doing. You did too much. I didn't deserve such devotion. It just happened this way. Becky was in trouble. I heard her say she wanted to live a straight life, and didn't have a chance. I suddenly saw something I could do. Something that would be of some help to a little sister.

ESTELLE (*with a gasp*). Sister?

AVERIL. For months I was dependent on those around me. I hardly dared to take a step without a

guiding hand. I was afraid my whole life was to be that way. I grasped the first opportunity to do something for another. In trying to help this little girl I have learned to do many things, not only for myself, but others. (*She makes her way to door L.; calls.*)
Becky, come here, dear!

ESTELLE. Well, my word! (*Pause. BECKY steps into room, L.; stops and looks at them all uncertainly.*)
Well, it is she! Big as life! And will you look how she is dressed.

AVERIL. Becky, Miss Blake wishes to see you.

MARY (*to BECKY*). You are Julia Heckler?

BECKY. Yes, Miss Blake.

MARY (*turns to GWENDOLYN*). This is the girl who worked for you, Mrs. Washburn?

GWENDOLYN. Yes, it is, but I should hardly have known her. I could easily have passed her by.

MARY (*to BECKY*). You know what I want of you?

BECKY. I heard you tell Miss Huntley in Mrs. Washburn's house four months ago.

MARY. That is why you ran away with Miss Sanderson?

BECKY. Not exactly.

MARY. You intended to go. You made Miss Huntley think you had sprained your ankle and got excused for the night.

BECKY. Yes, I did intend to go, but I expected to go alone. When Miss Sanderson asked me I was glad to go with her.

GWENDOLYN. Knowing you were wanted by the police, don't you think you took a disgraceful advantage of a young lady who was kind to you?

BECKY (*with a little catch in her voice*). I didn't think of that.

AVERIL. She didn't take advantage of me. I knew all about everything.

BECKY	} (<i>together</i>).	{	Miss Sanderson!
ESTELLE			Averil!
GWENDOLYN			You knew?

MARY. Miss Sanderson, do you realize what kind

of an admission you are making? You knew this girl was wanted by the police, and yet you helped her to get away and even passed her under an assumed name?

AVERIL. I did.

ALL (*but BECKY*). Why?

AVERIL. Because I believe she is innocent.

MARY. That has to be proved.

AVERIL. We will make an effort to prove it.

ESTELLE. Averil, are you crazy? I hope I always see my duty and do it, but if you call what you are doing a duty —

GWENDOLYN (*interrupting, impatiently*). Averil, surely you won't go on with this. What you have already done is bad enough, but to drag your name into the courts in a case of this kind.

BECKY. No, no, Miss Sanderson! You can't! You mustn't!

AVERIL. Hush, dear! It is *my* name.

ESTELLE (*indignantly*). And mine!

GWENDOLYN. I think it pretty generally belongs to the family, Averil. I think we should have a voice in the matter.

MARY (*hopefully*). Perhaps Miss Sanderson has some proof to offer us.

AVERIL. Not yet. Becky, I overheard your conversation with Annie that night at my sister's. There was some one you said you knew to be guilty. I don't recall the name. Who was it?

BECKY. I—I—can't tell you.

ESTELLE. H'm! I guess you can't.

AVERIL. Why not?

BECKY. I thought she was guilty then; but now I don't know.

MARY. You can't crawl out that way, Julia. You tried before to throw suspicion on the Billings girl.

AVERIL (*quickly*). That was the name! Billings!

MARY. That's an old one, Miss Sanderson, blaming her. The Billings girl is working in this hotel. Julia was talking with her not a half hour ago.

AVERIL. Is that true, Becky?

BECKY. Yes'm.

MARY. Do you know, Miss Sanderson, that Becky has been in the reformatory for stealing?

AVERIL. Yes.

GWENDOLYN (*aghast*). Averil!

ESTELLE. Heaven be kind!

AVERIL. I know all the circumstances of it. She was only fourteen, and destitute. I believe it to be the first and only time that Becky was ever tempted to take what didn't belong to her.

MARY (*turning to BECKY*). Is that so, Julia? (*BECKY hesitates.*) You may as well answer.

BECKY. No, Miss Blake.

ESTELLE. There! Now I hope, Averil, you are satisfied!

MARY. I am glad you are willing to tell us the truth, Julia. If you will own up to the affair at Crawford's I will try to make things easy for you.

BECKY. I don't know anything about Crawford's. I didn't have anything to do with it, but I did take some money of Mrs. Washburn's.

ESTELLE. Doesn't that go to prove ——

GWENDOLYN. Why, I don't remember that ——

(*Hesitates.*)

BECKY. You didn't have time to miss it, Mrs. Washburn. I put it back. It was right after Miss Blake had been there and I knew I'd got to go away. She was trying to get me for something I didn't do and I hated you all. I did want to be straight, but I couldn't see any chance. I had to have money to go and I didn't care how I got it. After I knew I was going with Miss Sanderson I put it back. I didn't want to steal. I don't believe there's many girls steal because they want to. It's 'cause they're so down and out they don't see no other chance to live.

ESTELLE. Well, did you ever? A regular oration!

MARY. And I must admit that it sounds very well, but the court will ask for evidence, not talk, and we have evidence against Julia Heckler.

AVERIL. Real or circumstantial?

MARY. That remains to be seen. Have you thought, Miss Sanderson, that it looks somewhat suspicious that the very first night this girl is here all the rooms near your apartment are entered? All lead from this balcony. It would seem an exceptional chance.

AVERIL. Yes, I suppose it might seem so, but, my dear Miss Blake, would Becky be likely to break the lock of one of my trunks?

MARY. Yes. She is clever enough to do anything to turn suspicion away from herself. The very fact there is nothing missing from your rooms makes it look doubly suspicious.

GWENDOLYN. You see, Averil?

AVERIL. Yes, it is quite clear. I see what Miss Blake is going to do —

MARY. You speak as if it was a great pleasure on my part. I am merely doing my duty.

ESTELLE. Certainly! Of course! That's what we all have to do.

AVERIL. Well, I will tell you all what I intend to do. I intend to back this little girl with every cent I have, if necessary. She is mine. I love her and believe in her and I intend to educate her and care for her as if she was my little sister.

BECKY. Oh, Miss Sanderson, I can't let you do this for me!

AVERIL. You can't help yourself, my dear. Perhaps it won't come to publicity, but if it does I'll help you face its glaring light, just as you have helped me face the inky blackness. Miss Blake, do you wish to arrest this young lady now?

MARY. I'm sure I don't know. I never felt so upset over a case in my life. I can't bear the idea of dragging you through the courts. If we could just find some evidence in favor of Julia. (*Turns to BECKY.*) Will you come with me somewhere and let me ask you all the questions that occur to me?

AVERIL. Of course she will.

MARY. And I'm going to have that Billings girl in

for a hearing. I will see you later, Miss Sanderson, and I sincerely wish I might have some good news for you.

(*Exit, R., with BECKY.*)

GWENDOLYN. I don't seem to be entirely able to grasp this, Averil.

ESTELLE. I should say not. Turn away from your own folks to that—that——

AVERIL. Don't say it, Aunt Stella. I haven't turned from you. I love you just the same as ever, more if anything. Can't you see and understand? It was Becky who brought the first ray of light to my darkness.

GWENDOLYN. It seems strange and incomprehensible, but who are we to question the way? I am glad, dear, you are happier, and I am sure Aunt Stella is, too.

ESTELLE (*getting out her handkerchief*). Of course—of course I am. And, Gwendolyn, I have been thinking—let us move over to this hotel.

GWENDOLYN. Just what I was going to suggest. I want to be near Averil.

ESTELLE. Of course we want to be near the dear child. Let us go at once.

AVERIL. That will be splendid. I shall love to have you here.

GWENDOLYN. And when you are through here you will go home with me?

AVERIL. Yes, if it will please you.

ESTELLE. There! I just happened to think! Mr. Harrison is nearly out of his mind.

GWENDOLYN. Oh, yes, I forgot. He says you sent him a letter from Philadelphia that you were at work on a play, but when he tried to get in touch with you he couldn't find out a thing. Are you working, dear?

AVERIL. Yes. The play is nearly completed, and I believe from my world of darkness I have done my best work! I will write to Mr. Harrison to-morrow.

ESTELLE. Well, that is splendid, I must say. You

do take after me. When you really see your duty, you do it. What is the name of the play, dear child?

AVERIL. "Golden Hope."

GWENDOLYN. That suggests so many things! What in the world is it about?

AVERIL (*laughing*). I will give you a box on the opening night.

GWENDOLYN. Don't forget. Come, Aunt Stella. We will be back soon.

(*Exit, R.*)

ESTELLE. Yes, indeed. There's lots to do, but when we see our duty it doesn't take long to do it.

(*Exit, R.*)

(AVERIL *makes her way to table; sits at table; draws a manuscript towards her; takes up a pencil and begins to write. SADIE comes to window; looks in; cautiously steps into room and towards door L.*)

AVERIL (*suddenly lifts her head and listens*). Is it you, Becky? Who is it? Who is there? (SADIE *exits, L. AVERIL starts to her feet; stands listening for a second; makes her way to a bell on the wall; presses button; feels her way along the wall to window and then steps forward so that she stands between door and window. SADIE comes to door.*) Who is it? What are you doing? (SADIE *takes a cautious step forward.*) No! You can't leave this room! (SADIE *starts to cross to door R. AVERIL springs forward, grabs SADIE by the arm; suddenly gives a little cry and looks into the girl's face in astonishment; then she pulls herself together and speaks calmly.*) What were you doing in my room? Who are you?

SADIE (*frightened, looking into AVERIL'S eyes*). I—I—why—I thought——

AVERIL. You thought I couldn't see you, but I can—quite clearly.

SADIE (*trying to pull away*). Let me go!

AVERIL. No. Not until you tell me why you are here.

(MISS LEROY enters, R., followed by MARY and BECKY; all are very much excited.)

MISS LEROY. Did you ring the emergency bell, Miss Siberly?

AVERIL. Yes. This girl—she was in my room. Go, Becky.

(BECKY quickly exits, L.)

MARY. What were you doing in that room, Sadie?

SADIE (*sullenly*). Nothing.

MARY. That won't do, girl. We are after truth, and we're going to have it.

(BECKY enters, L., with a jewel box in her hand.)

AVERIL (*eagerly*). What is it, Becky? What is that in your hand?

BECKY. It is ——— (*Suddenly stops and looks at AVERIL.*) Miss Sanderson, can you see that I have something in my hand?

AVERIL. Yes.

BECKY. } You can?

MARY. } Why, what?

MISS LEROY. } How ———

AVERIL (*impatently, interrupting them*). Never mind that! What did you find, Becky?

BECKY. I don't believe she touched anything, but she must have left this jewel case. (*Turns to SADIE.*) Trying again to throw suspicion on me?

SADIE. No, I wasn't. I was trying to return Miss Siberly's things.

AVERIL. But that isn't mine.

SADIE (*defiantly*). It says Siberly on it.

MARY (*examining case*). Yes, it does.

MISS LEROY. Must belong in seventeen. (*To SADIE.*) So you couldn't remember where you took the things?

SADIE. I didn't take it.

MARY. That's about enough, Sadie.

BECKY (*suddenly*). I don't believe she did, Miss Blake. I think she's trying to shield her husband.

MARY. } Her husband?
 AVERIL. }

MISS LEROY (*starting for door*). He works in the hotel, and he's missing!

MARY. Give the alarm quick. (MISS LEROY *exits*, R. MARY *turns to SADIE*.) So that's it?

SADIE. He'll kill me, but I'm glad it's out. (*Breaks down*.) If you knew the life he's led me!

MARY. Go down-stairs and wait for me. (SADIE *exits*, R. MARY *turns to BECKY*.) How did you guess?

BECKY. I knew him at Crawford's, and when she said to-day he was her husband, I thought probably he was more to blame than her.

MARY (*shakes hands with BECKY*). Now that I can drop my profession, I'm glad, Julia. I am glad for you both, and, Miss Sanderson, I never heard anything so wonderful —

AVERIL. Not so wonderful when you understand. A Philadelphia specialist told me that if I ever had a desire to see that was strong enough, a certain nerve would respond. When I heard that girl I knew that for Becky's sake I must see who it was.

MARY. I don't need to tell you how glad I am.

AVERIL. No. I am sure all my friends will rejoice with me. (MARY *exits*, R. AVERIL *holds out her arms to BECKY*.) Becky, you look just as I thought you did.

BECKY (*going to her*). Oh, Miss Sanderson, we really have found it. I knew we should.

AVERIL. Yes, Becky, we had to find it, you and I. It was my love for you that opened my eyes. Don't you see, dear? The magic touch is love.

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