

HELEN KELLER

By Carole L. Cooney

Helen Keller was an American author and lecturer. She was born in a small farm town in Alabama of well-to-do parents. At the age of one and a half, she became deaf and blind mysteriously. Through many struggles, her determination and courage proved her to become an inspiration for other people with disabilities.

Setting: the Keller house; the kitchen and wood shed

Characters:

Narrator

Helen: When Helen “speaks” we are hearing her thoughts

Mother

Father

Martha

Narrator: Helen Keller was an American author and lecturer. She was born in a small farm town in Alabama to well-to-do parents. She was a normal little girl until one February day, at age one and a half, she became very ill. Her ears and eyes would not function properly and the doctors even thought she would not live. Then suddenly one morning, the illness left. Her family was overcome with joy.

Mother: Father! Father! The fever has broken. Little Helen will recover and be well.

Father: It’s a miracle! But why does she just lie there? Call to her.

Mother: Helen! Little Helen! It’s Mama, dear. Let me hold you close and rock you.

Father: She seems so frightened! Why is she squirming about so? She’s makes no sound and yet she seems so angry.

Helen: Mother and Father did not know that I could not see nor hear them. I was so frustrated because I tried and tried and no sound would come into my ears or out of my mouth.

Mother: Perhaps she’s just in some kind of shock. You’ll see – she’ll be her normal self in a few days.

Narrator: But the days passed and there was no change. Finally her parents realized little Helen could not see nor hear anything.

Helen: Mother was so kind and patient. I sat on her lap and clung to her dress. She began to carry me around the house doing her household duties. Soon I began to touch every object and began to learn many things.

Mother: Father, look at Helen go about the room as if she can see. Yesterday, she started shaking her head and moving her hands as if she was trying to tell me something.

Helen: *Finally*, Mother began to understand what I was trying to tell her. When I shook my head, that meant “NO” and when I nodded, that meant YES.” When I pulled my hands toward me, that meant “COME” and when I pushed them away from me that meant “GO.”

Father: Mother, what does Helen want working her hand up and down in circles and then shaking and shivering?

Mother: Father, that's an easy one. (laughing) Helen wants some ice cream.

Narrator: In those days, the cook's daughter, Martha, played with Helen every day. One day, Helen and Martha were in the kitchen where there were turkeys swarming around on the floor.

Martha: (signaling with her hands into Helen's hands) Helen, that's a big tomato you've got there. Oh, oh...here comes Master Gobbler. Why look at that! He just snatched that tomato from your hand, Helen!

Helen: Well, let's do something – quick! Let's *take* something too!

Narrator: Martha grabbed a delicious cake dripping with frosting and ran to the wood shed.

Martha: Come on, Helen. You get the first piece. Here, give me your hand.

Helen: (eating) This cake is my favorite. (smiling) The chocolate frosting is still warm and gooey.

Martha: My, I think my piece is bigger than yours. Sorry. Here, Helen, take another piece.

Narrator: The girls ate and ate until the entire cake was gone. That night, Helen tried to tell her mother something.

Helen: Mother, I don't know all the words but I have to tell you I don't feel well.

Mother: Helen, what are you trying to tell me?

Narrator: Just then, Martha appeared at Helen's bedroom door.

Martha: Excuse me, Ma'am, but my mother sent me here to tell you what happened this afternoon. Helen and I took the dinner cake to the woodpile and ate it all up.

Mother: Did you eat ALL of it?

Martha: Yes, Ma'am. I'm very sorry. I know it will never happen again.

Mother: Thank you, Martha. You may go. *Now* I understand what you've been trying to tell me. No wonder you're not feeling very well. Helen dear, you won't do that again, will you?

Narrator: Helen nodded her head furiously and fell asleep.