

HELEN: You wanna stay the night? You look so tired.  
 CRISSY: No. I don't wanna be here, even. I don't wanna see you anymore. You go away.  
 HELEN: All right. *And Chrissy is kneeling, Helen moving backward.*  
 CRISSY: You go away.  
 HELEN: I'm going. *Still backing away: See you later.*  
 CRISSY: No. Noooo. *Helen is gone.* Don't wanna see you ever again. Not either one a you. No more. I gotta stop. *And she sits, shaking her head as the lights are fading.* No more.

## HELLO FROM BERTHA

by Tennessee Williams

This one-act play takes place in a bedroom of an East St. Louis brothel. Bertha, a prostitute, is very sick and has been lying in bed for two weeks. Goldie, the madam, needs the room for business. She wants Bertha to leave, and tells her to go back home or to a hospital. Many terms are applicable to Bertha: she is in pain, she is delirious, she is drunk, she is frightened, she is belligerent—but most of all, Bertha is very much alone. The following excerpt is from the beginning of the play. Bertha is in bed. Goldie enters.

GOLDIE: Well, Bertha, what are you going to do? *For a moment there is no answer.*  
 BERTHA, *with faint groan*: I dunno.  
 GOLDIE: You've got to decide, Bertha.  
 BERTHA: I can't decide nothing.  
 GOLDIE: Why can't you?  
 BERTHA: I'm too tired.  
 GOLDIE: That's no answer.  
 BERTHA, *tossing fretfully*: Well, it's the only answer I know. I just want to lay here and think things over.

GOLDIE: You been layin' here thinkin' or somethin' for the past two weeks. *Bertha makes an indistinguishable reply.* You got to come to some decision. The girls need this room.  
 BERTHA, *with hoarse laugh*: Let 'em have it!  
 GOLDIE: They can't with you layin' here.  
 BERTHA, *slapping her hand on bed*: Oh, God!  
 GOLDIE: Pull yourself together, now, Bertha. *Bertha tosses again and groans.*  
 BERTHA: What's the matter with me?  
 GOLDIE: You're sick.  
 BERTHA: I got a sick headache. Who slipped me that Mickey Finn last night?  
 GOLDIE: Nobody give you no Mickey Finn. You been layin' here two solid weeks talkin' out of your head. Now, the sensible thing for you to do, Bertha, is to go back home or—  
 BERTHA: Go back nowhere!—I'm stayin' right here till I get on my feet. *She stubbornly averts her face.*  
 GOLDIE: The valley's no place for a girl in your condition. Besides we need this room.  
 BERTHA: Leave me be, Goldie. I wanna get in some rest before I start workin'.  
 GOLDIE: Bertha, you've got to decide! *The command hangs heavily upon the room's florid atmosphere for several long moments. Bertha slowly turns her head to Goldie.*  
 BERTHA, *faintly*: What is it I got to decide?  
 GOLDIE: Where you're going from here? *Bertha looks at her silently for a few seconds.*  
 BERTHA: Nowhere. Now leave me be, Goldie. I've got to get in my rest.  
 GOLDIE: If I let you be, you'd just lay here doin' nothin' from now till the crack of doom! *Bertha's reply is indistinguishable.* Lissen here! If you don't make up your mind right away, I'm gonna call the ambulance squad to come get you! So you better decide right this minute.  
 BERTHA, *her body has stiffened slightly at this threat*: I can't decide nothing. I'm too tired—worn out.  
 GOLDIE: All right! *She snaps her purse open.* I'll take this nickel and I'll make the call right now. I'll tell 'em we got a sick girl over here who can't talk sense.  
 BERTHA, *thickly*: Go ahead. I don't care what happens to me now.

**GOLDIE**, *changing her tactics*: Why don't you write another letter, Bertha, to that man who sells . . . hardware or something in Memphis?

**BERTHA**, *with sudden alertness*: Charlie? You leave his name off your dirty tongue!

**GOLDIE**: That's a fine way for you to be talking, me keeping you here just out of kindness and you not bringing in a red, white or blue cent for the last two weeks! Where do you—

**BERTHA**: Charlie's a real . . . sweet. Charlie's a . . . *(her voice trails into a sobbing mumble)*

**GOLDIE**: What if he is? All the better reason for you to write him to get you out of this here tight spot you're in, Bertha.

**BERTHA**, *aroused*: I'll never ask him for another dime! Get that? He's forgotten all about me, my name and everything else. *She runs her hand slowly down her body. Somebody's cut me up with a knife while I been sleeping.*

**GOLDIE**: Pull yourself together, Bertha. If this man's got money, maybe he'll send you some to help you git back on your feet.

**BERTHA**: Sure he's got money. He owns a hardware store. I reckon I ought to know, I used to work there! He used to say to me, Girlie, any time you need something just let Charlie know. . . . We had good times together in that back room!

**GOLDIE**: I bet he ain't forgotten it neither.

**BERTHA**: He's found out about all the bad things I done since I quit him and . . . come to St. Louie. *She slaps the bed twice with her palm.*

**GOLDIE**: Naw, he ain't, Bertha. I bet he don't know a thing. *Bertha laughs weakly.*

**BERTHA**: It's you that's been writing him things. All the dirt you could think of about me! Your filthy tongue's been clacking so fast that—

**GOLDIE**: Bertha! *Bertha mutters an indistinguishable vulgarity.* I been a good friend to you, Bertha.

**BERTHA**: Anyhow he's married now.

**GOLDIE**: Just write him a little note on a postcard and tell him you've had some tough breaks. Remind him of how he said he would help you if you ever needed it, huh?

**BERTHA**: Leave me alone a while, Goldie. I got an awful feeling inside of me now.

**GOLDIE**, *advancing a few steps and regarding Bertha more critically*: You want to see a doctor?

**BERTHA**: No. *There is a pause.*

**GOLDIE**: A priest? *Bertha's fingers claw the sheet forward.*

**BERTHA**: No!

**GOLDIE**: What religion are you, Bertha?

**BERTHA**: None.

**GOLDIE**: I thought you said you was a Catholic once.

**BERTHA**: Maybe I did. What of it?

**GOLDIE**: If you could remember, maybe we could get some sisters or something to give you a room like they did for Rose Kramer for you to rest in, and get your strength back—huh, Bertha?

**BERTHA**: I don't want no sisters to give me nothing! Just leave me be in here till I get through resting.

**GOLDIE**: Bertha, you're . . . bad sick, Bertha!

**BERTHA**, *after a slight pause*: Bad?

**GOLDIE**: Yes, Bertha. I don't want to scare you but . . .

**BERTHA**, *hoarsely*: You mean I'm dying?

**GOLDIE**, *after a moment's consideration*: I didn't say that. *There is another pause.*

**BERTHA**: No, but you meant it.

**GOLDIE**: We got to provide for the future, Bertha. We can't just let things slide.

**BERTHA**, *attempting to sit up*: If I'm dying I want to write Charlie. I want to—tell him some things.

**GOLDIE**: If you mean a confession, honey, I think a priest would be—

**BERTHA**: No, no priest! I want Charlie!

**GOLDIE**: Father Callahan would—

**BERTHA**: No! No! I want Charlie!

**GOLDIE**: Charlie's in Memphis. He's running his hardware business.

**BERTHA**: Yeah. On Central Avenue. The address is 563.

**GOLDIE**: I'll write him and tell what condition you're in, huh, Bertha?

**BERTHA**, *after a reflective pause*: No. . . . Just tell him I said hello. *She turns her face to the wall.*

**GOLDIE**: I gotta say more than that, Bertha.

**BERTHA**: That's all I want you to say. Hello from—Bertha.

**GOLDIE:** That wouldn't make sense, you know that.

**BERTHA:** Sure it would. Hello from Bertha to Charlie with all her love. Don't that make sense?

**GOLDIE:** No!

**BERTHA:** Sure it does.

## THE MIRACLE WORKER

by William Gibson

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### ACT II

The play is based on the early life of Helen Keller. Helen was blind, deaf, and mute; she was wild and uncontrollable. As a last resort her parents hired Annie Sullivan, trained as a teacher of blind children, to work a miracle. The play focuses on Annie's efforts to break through the sensory barriers that have kept Helen isolated and uncivilized. Annie comes to believe that Helen can learn if she is properly disciplined. Helen is used to poking her hands in everyone's food at dinner time. When Annie prevents her from doing this Helen has a tantrum and begins to kick the floor. The family members ask Annie to let Helen do as she pleases so that they might have some peace and continue their conversations. Annie demands that they leave her alone with Helen. Just prior to the following scene the family has exited reluctantly. Annie locks the door behind them. She is resolved: Helen will learn to eat in a civilized manner and show respect for others.

*Annie meanwhile has begun by slapping both keys down on a shelf out of Helen's reach; she returns to the table upstage. Helen's kicking has subsided, and when from the floor her hand finds Annie's chair empty she pauses. Annie clears the table of Kate's, James's, and Keller's plates; she gets back to her own across the table just in time to slide it deftly away from Helen's*

*pouncing hand. She lifts the hand and moves it to Helen's plate, and after an instant's exploration, Helen sits again on the floor and drums her heels. Annie comes around the table and resumes her chair. When Helen feels her skirt again, she ceases kicking, waits for whatever is to come, renews some kicking, waits again. Annie retrieving her plate takes up a forkful of food, stops it half-way to her mouth, gazes at it devoid of appetite, and half-lowers it; but after a look at Helen she sighs, dips the forkful toward Helen in a for-your-sake toast, and puts it in her own mouth to chew, not without an effort.*

*Helen now gets hold of the chair leg, and half-succeeds in pulling the chair out from under her. Annie bangs it down with her rear, heavily, and sits with all her weight. Helen's next attempt to nuzzle it is unavailing, so her fingers dive in a pinch at Annie's flank. Annie in the middle of her mouthful almost loses it with startle, and she slaps down her fork to round on Helen. The child comes up with curiosity to feel what Annie is doing, so Annie resumes eating, letting Helen's hand follow the movement of her fork to her mouth; whereupon Helen at once reaches into Annie's plate. Annie firmly removes her hand to her own plate. Helen in reply pinches Annie's thigh, a good mean pinchful that makes Annie jump. Annie sets the fork down, and sits with her mouth tight. Helen digs another pinch into her thigh, and this time Annie slaps her hand smartly away; Helen retaliates with a roundhouse fist that catches Annie on the ear, and Annie's hand leaps at once in a forceful slap across Helen's cheek; Helen is the startled one now. Annie's hand in contrition falters to her own face, but when Helen hits at her again, Annie deliberately slaps her again. Helen lifts her fist irresolute for another roundhouse, Annie lifts her hand resolute for another slap, and they freeze in this posture, while Helen mulls it over. She thinks better of it, drops her fist, and giving Annie a wide berth, gropes around to her mother's chair, to find it empty; she blunders her way along the table upstage, and encountering the empty chairs and missing plates, she looks bewildered; she gropes back to her mother's chair, again touches her cheek and indicates the chair, and waits for the world to answer.*

*Annie now reaches over to spell into her hand, but Helen yanks it away; she gropes to the front door, tries the knob, and finds the*