

MRS. POTTER enters the Potter home, followed by BEATRIX.)

MRS. POTTER. No, Beatrix. You may not.

BEATRIX. Please, Mother.

MRS. POTTER. No arguing now.

BEATRIX. But I'm tired of being taught by governesses. You let Bertram go to school. Why can't I?

MRS. POTTER. We sent your brother to a fine private academy where wealthy young boys go.

BEATRIX. What about wealthy young girls?

MRS. POTTER. They stay at home to be tutored.

(YVETTE, a maid, enters.)

YVETTE. Beg pardon, ma'am, but the new governess is here.

MRS. POTTER. Thank you, Yvette. Tell her I shall be right out.

BEATRIX. Why are governesses always old and look like dried-up prunes?

MRS. POTTER. Shush! Mind your manners. She might hear you.

BEATRIX. I hope she does.

MRS. POTTER. Incidentally, I have instructed her that your sketch pad is to be used strictly for your lessons. You have been forbidden to draw until you have shown more progress in your studies. Do you understand?

BEATRIX (resigned). Yes, ma'am.

MRS. POTTER. I will send in the governess. (She exits.)

(BEATRIX quickly picks up a sketch pad, looks at the top sheet and starts to tear it out as ANNIE enters.)

ANNIE. Hello. (BEATRIX hurriedly puts the sketch pad behind her back.)

BEATRIX. Oh...Hello. Who are you?

ANNIE. My name is Annie. Annie Carter.

BEATRIX. But—I was expecting my new governess.

ANNIE. I am your new governess.

BEATRIX. But—you're not much older than I. And you don't look like a—a—

ANNIE. A dried-up prune? (She laughs as does BEATRIX.)

BEATRIX. Not at all. But you do look like—like I might like you.

ANNIE. Let's hope so. What are you holding behind your back?

BEATRIX (holding out an empty hand). Nothing—really.

ANNIE. The other hand, please. (Reluctantly, BEATRIX hands her the sketch pad.) It's a drawing.

BEATRIX. It's nothing really. Just a sketch of a rabbit.

ANNIE. Who taught you to draw?

BEATRIX. No one really. We just picked it up on our own.

ANNIE. We?

BEATRIX. My brother Bertram and I—on our summer vacations in Scotland...the only place where I've ever been truly happy.

ANNIE. I was told you are not allowed to draw until your studies improve.

BEATRIX. Are you going to tell my parents?

ANNIE. I'm afraid so.

BEATRIX. Oh, no.

ANNIE. I'm going to tell them their daughter is a fine artist who should be encouraged to continue her work.

BEATRIX (beaming). Oh, I am going to like you, Miss... Annie.

ANNIE. You may change your mind when you find out what I have to teach you first—German. (She takes out a book.)

BEATRIX. German?...I'll never learn German...Oh well, I still predict we'll be best friends.

ANNIE. Die freundin.

BEATRIX. Die freundin?

ANNIE. It's German—for the friend.

BEATRIX. Oh, hello, *die freundin*, Annie. (*They shake hands.*)

ANNIE. Hello, *die freundin*, Beatrix. And you said you'd never learn German. You're speaking it already. (*They laugh.*)

BEATRIX. Come, let's have tea before we begin. (*She exits as ANNIE remains on stage.*)

ANNIE. Beatrix's prediction came true. She and I became best friends. After our lessons we would take walks, have talks and share secrets with one another. I felt more like her sister than her governess. And as the months went by, I learned things from her as well. On our nature walks she would tell me the names of wild mushrooms and mosses on the trees. And she would draw pictures of them at every opportunity. (*She exits.*)

(*A moment later, MR. POTTER enters carrying some artwork.*)

MR. POTTER. Beatrix!

BEATRIX'S VOICE (*from offstage*). Yes, Father?

(*BEATRIX enters.*)

MR. POTTER. I bought these for you today. Some original paintings by a Mr. Caldecott. I think they're perfect for a child's room, don't you?

BEATRIX (*taking the artwork*). I think they're perfect for my room. Thank you, Father.

MR. POTTER (*starting to leave*). Oh—and Beatrix. I've decided—to allow you to take art lessons.

BEATRIX. Papa!

MR. POTTER. Your governess has convinced me that you may have a bit of talent.

BEATRIX (*embracing him*). Thank you, Papa. (*MR. POTTER exits.*) Art lessons. At last.

(*ANNIE enters.*)

BEATRIX. Oh, Annie—thank you.

ANNIE. It took me almost two years to convince him.

BEATRIX. Well, he *is* a bit stubborn, you know. But he's a good heart—and so is Mum. Though I do wish they would stop thinking of me as a child.

ANNIE. Beatrix, there's something else I spoke to your father about.

BEATRIX. Oh?

ANNIE. I told him...I shall be leaving soon.

BEATRIX. Annie—no!

ANNIE. I've met a wonderful man. His name is Edwin Moore. He has asked me to marry him.

BEATRIX. But—but what about me? Who'll go on walks with me? Who will I tell my secrets to?

ANNIE. Your friends.

BEATRIX. I have no friends—just you...I want to get married, too.

ANNIE. You will—someday.

BEATRIX. How can I? My parents keep me cooped up in this house all the time. Oh, I'm so miserable I could die. (*She exits in tears.*)

ANNIE. Beatrix...(*To the audience.*) She didn't die, of course. But she did become quite ill for a time. The doctors didn't know what was wrong with her, but she recovered in a month or two. In the meantime, I was settling into my