



THE DEVIL



ADAPTED FROM THE SENSATIONAL PLAY OF FERENC MOLNAR— COPYRIGHT, 1908, BY HENRY W. SAVAGE

THE DEVIL

By FERENC MOLNAR

Dramatized by OLIVER HERFORD

Adapted by JOSEPH O'BRIEN

COPYRIGHT, 1908, BY HENRY W. SAVAGE



"I COME FROM NOWHERE; I GO EVERYWHERE; I AM HERE."

CHAPTER VI.

OLGA shrank from this strange being, sensible of his serpentine fascination, even while he repelled her. It flashed across her consciousness that he was something more than human, something worse—the embodiment of malevolent purpose—a man devoid of good—the devil himself.

He came from behind the chair, and as he moved toward her his every action heightened the impression she had received. In a situation where any man might have been confused he was perfectly self-possessed. His attitude was neither offensive nor insulting. He became at once a part of her surroundings, of her thoughts—yes, of her soul. It was this influence that she felt herself combating with growing weakness.

"I hope you will forgive me," his smooth, suave voice went on, breaking the stillness almost melodiously, and he bowed again. "I permitted myself to fall asleep."

Still Olga could not find tongue, and she drew yet farther away. The man, or the devil, watched her as she gazed for the shawl, found it and quickly wound its flimsy length around her beautiful shoulders and arms. An expression of cynical amusement crossed his face.

"Excuse me, but I awoke just as you were about to unbutton your blouse," he said. "Propriety should have made me close my eyes, but—"

"Oh!" Olga cried, shocked into speech.

"Oh, I know, madame," he said, with a deprecating gesture and another profound bow, "you think I am suspicious, and you only came here—"

"To have my portrait painted," Olga said quickly.

"Precisely," he acquiesced, with the same cynical expression. "Only yesterday I met a lady at the dentist's, and I observed that she permitted him to extract a perfectly good and very pretty tooth."

"But I"—Olga began, accepting the defensive position into which he placed her when he interrupted her.

"Yes, you, I know, speak the truth. I am even at liberty to believe you, but I cannot."

For an instant Olga recovered her self-possessed, and her indignation sprang into a flame that she should be addressed in this manner by a man whom she had never seen before—an intruder.

"I don't know why I permit a stranger to talk to me in this fashion," she exclaimed. "It amazes me."

The man stepped toward her. Terrified, she turned and fled toward the door of the studio.

"Karl! Karl!" she called.

The stranger smiled as the doors were flung open and Karl burst into the room. The young artist paused, astonished at the presence of the stranger. He was more amazed when the man cried out in the voice of genial comradeship:

"Hello, Karl! How do you do?"

"Why, how do you do?" Karl faltered, looking blankly from Olga to the mysterious visitor. "I don't—"

"You don't remember me," the other said. "Don't you recall me at Monte Carlo?"

"Oh, yes, at Monte Carlo," Karl said, with dawning recollection.

"It was an eventful day," the stranger said.

"Yes, yes, of course I remember. It was last fall, when I had lost all my money playing roulette. Some one stood behind me, and it was you. I was afraid when I turned and saw you, because I fancied I had seen you a moment before beside the croupier grinning at me as my gold pieces were swept away. But when I had lost everything you offered me a handful of gold."

"Which you refused, but I saw the longing to accept in your eyes."

"I did not know you."

"But I offered it again and you accepted."

"Yes, and in ten minutes I had recouped my losses and won \$20,000 besides," Karl cried, with growing enthusiasm. "I remember indeed. Your money seemed to possess mystic luck. When you put it in my hands it glowed, and I thought it was hot. It seemed to burn me."

"You were excited, my boy," said the other genially. "But you repaid me and invited me to dine. I could not accept because I was forced to leave for Spain that same evening. I promised, however, to call on you when you needed me, and here I am."

He bowed to Karl and Olga, who stood in speechless astonishment at this strange dialogue. She could understand nothing of this uncanny stranger, this specter in black and white, who seemed to emit a lurid radiance, as if his red waistcoat were alive.

"It was kind of you to come," Karl said. "I am glad."

"You were not here when I entered," the visitor said, "and I took a seat in that comfortable armchair. The warmth of the fire affected me, and I permitted myself to fall asleep."

He indicated with a sweeping gesture the big pulpit backed armchair. Olga started and cried out:

"That chair was empty. I remember quite well when my husband was here. There was no one in it. I am absolutely certain."

Karl was so strangely affected by the stranger's presence that he did not notice Olga's agitation. The other regarded her with his expression of cynical amusement, bowed gravely and said:

"Then I was mistaken, madame."

"Won't you sit down?" Karl said. "Allow me to present you to—but I can't remember your name."

"It does not matter," the other said, with an expansive outward gesture of his restless, eloquent hands. "I am a philanthropist traveling incognito. You may call me anything you like; call

me Dr. Millar."

"Dr. Millar," Karl repeated, seeming for the first time to have some doubt as to the character of his guest.

"Oh, you may rest assured my social position is beyond question," the stranger said, as if divining his thought.

Karl did not heed the irony of his speech, but presented him to Olga, who distantly acknowledged his bow. As Karl appeared to succumb to this strange influence she felt herself growing indignant. Millar seemed bent on provoking an outburst, and his astonishing remarks in another would have seemed vulgar insolence, but in him they possessed a singular meaning that made both Karl and Olga shiver.

"Under different circumstances I should now take my hat and say good-bye," Millar said after the introduction. "But my infinite tact compels me to force my presence upon you in this most unpleasant situation."

The innuendo stung Olga, and she turned to the artist.

"Karl, I can hardly believe it," she exclaimed indignantly. "Think of it—this man dared to—"

"How long has your husband been dead?" Millar interrupted, with exasperating coolness.

"I am not a widow," Olga said, surprised that she should reply.

"Oh, you are divorced?"

"I am not."

"Then if you feel that I have affronted you I should think your husband would be the proper man to appeal to," he said, with the utmost coolness.

He seemed like a trainer prodding tame animals with sharp prongs out of the lethargy of their caged lives to stir them to viciousness. Turning to Karl, he went on:

"However, if you wish it I am also at your disposal. But do you not see, madame, that it would be an admission on your part?"

He spoke as one who had read every secret thought of each. Bewildered, Karl cried out:

"What does all this talk mean? I don't understand anything. You come in here unannounced; I don't know how nor from where. You make me feel quite uncomfortable, just as if you had trapped us in some compromising situation."

"Yes, yes, that is it," Olga cried, relieved at Karl's outburst.

The stranger looked at him amusedly.

"You may be as impolite to me as you wish; I cannot go," he said.

"Why?" Olga demanded.

"My derriere now would mean that I leave you because I have interrupted you. On the other hand, by remaining I prove that I suspect nothing."

"There is nothing to suspect," Karl declared angrily. "I do not want you here."

"Then that is settled. Let us talk of something else," the visitor remarked with the most casual inattention to Karl's rage. "The weather— isn't it snowing beautifully? Art— are you preparing anything for the spring exhibition at the Royal Academy?"

"Perhaps I may send something," Karl answered sullenly.

Olga's bewilderment gave place to panic. In her mind was formed the purpose of snatching up her wallet and rushing from the room. Before she could do it the stranger was there, holding the wallet out and bowing profoundly.

"Permit me, madame," he said.

With a cry of astonishment Olga snatched at the garment.

"Who are you? Where do you come from?" she cried.

With his restless, vibrant hands in the air the stranger said:

"I come from nowhere; I go everywhere; I am here."

He touched his forehead with his long white fingers, and his black eyes were fixed upon her. Clutching the silken garment she had worn, Olga rushed into the studio. Millar, man or devil, looked after her and chuckled.

CHAPTER VII.

KARL threw himself into a chair as Olga fled into the outer studio and sat there, not looking at his unwelcome visitor. Dr. Millar seemed to find his dejection amusing. He allowed the silence to remain undisturbed while he puffed a cigarette. Then he said half to himself, half to Karl:

"Full of temperament, that woman, and pretty, too, extremely pretty."

"Yes, she is pretty," Karl acquiesced without looking at him.

"It's a pity she doesn't love her husband," was the next cynical remark that fell on Karl's ears.

He wheeled in his seat and looked at the visitor, who went on with perfect coolness:

"How do I know? It was apparent when she fancied I had insulted her and turned to you for protection."

Karl angrily slammed down an ash tray he had picked up in his nervous fingers and began to pace the floor.

Millar went on in a light tone:

"She does not love her husband. He must be a genius or a very commonplace man. Marriage always is a failure with such men. Common men live so low that women are afraid some one may steal into their lives at night through a cellar window. Genius—well, genius lives on the top floor, up toward the clouds, and with so many gloomy stairs to climb, and no elevator, it's very uncomfortable for a prettier woman. Her ideal is one easy flight of stairs to comfortable living rooms on the first floor."

Karl maintained silence and continued to walk the floor. He looked at his watch and started toward the door of the reception room leading into the hall, which was locked.

"This is the second time I have seen madame's shoulders," Millar remarked casually, blowing cigarette rings in the air.

"What do you mean?" Karl demanded, stung to speech by jealousy.

"Ah, I saw them first in Paris, at the Louvre, fashioned of snow white marble. They were the shoulders of Venus. Am I right, Karl?"

"I don't know," the artist snapped.

"Well, you must take my word for it then," Millar said lightly. "I have seen both. And since Alcemenes I have known but one sculptor who could form such wonderful shoulders."

"Who?" Karl asked, turning to him.

"Prosperity," Millar replied sententiously. "Such tender, soft, exquisite curves are possible only to women who live perfectly. Madame must be the wife of a millionaire."

He seemed to find keen pleasure in the possibility of forcing the two into a position which would cause them suffering and weaken the barriers of self control they had built up around that boy and girl love that had come back so vividly to both. Had they regarded him as merely human it is certain that Karl would have kicked this



"I WAS THINKING WHAT A SPLENDID COUPLE YOU TWO WOULD MAKE."

Millar said in an insinuating tone:

"She takes so long to dress."

"Your remarks are in very bad taste," Karl cried angrily, walking up threateningly to his visitor.

Millar stood erect, without changing his expression of ironical amusement, and said:

"Do you wish to offend me?"

"Yes," Karl snarled.

"Then you, too, must be respectable," the visitor said coolly, adding, as Karl looked at him with wonder, "In a situation like this only a very respectable man could behave with such infernal stupidity."

Karl was about to retort when the studio door opened and Olga entered. He turned quickly toward her, and she went to him without noticing Millar.

"What time is it?" she asked.

"Your husband will be here in ten minutes," Millar interposed.

Olga turned toward him and cried accusingly:

"Then you were not asleep in that chair when my husband was here. You heard him say when he would return."

"Madame is mistaken. Feminine presentiment always feels the approach of the husband ten minutes ahead of time. Were it not for those ten minutes there would be fewer locked doors."

As he spoke he walked over and unlocked the door leading into the hall, then turned and looked at them calmly.

"Is this never to finish?" Olga asked.

"I tried to change the subject, but Karl would not let me," Millar answered.

"I have not spoken a word," Karl protested.

"By your actions, Karl; by the way you jumped up, impatiently consulted your watch, rushed to the door. Poor chap, he was afraid," he added to

Olga.

"Afraid?" Karl exclaimed.

"Yes, afraid that your husband would come before you finished dressing. And you were right, Karl."

"Why, my dear Olga"—Karl began impatiently, when the other interrupted him.

"Please, please, let us be logical," he urged. "Look at the situation. The husband enters suddenly. Well, here I am, back again, my darling," he announced. "Where is the picture? I must see the picture. There is none. Karl did not work on the picture. Your husband is worried. He does not speak, but he is irritated. He wants to speak, and the words stick in his throat. You look at each other, unhappy. Nothing has happened, but the mischief is done. What mischief? Appearances. Whatever you say makes matters worse, and a compromising situation like this is never forgotten by the husband. You go home together in silence."

"Ah, if we were like that!" Karl broke in. "But we are not alone. You are here."

Millar shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah, that is it! I am here, and with one word I could dispel the illusion," he acquiesced. "But I know myself. I am cursed with a peculiar, sinister sense of humor, and I am afraid I would not say the word; hence when the husband enters we are all silent. Then I say, 'I regret to have arrived at such an inopportune moment.' I take my hat and walk out, leaving you, madame, your husband and Karl."

He seemed to find keen pleasure in the possibility of forcing the two into a position which would cause them suffering and weaken the barriers of self control they had built up around that boy and girl love that had come back so vividly to both. Had they regarded him as merely human it is certain that Karl would have kicked this

in Paris."

"He has sold his house to us. We are living there now, and the ball is given by me," she went on.

The man looked at her, his black eyes seeming to burn through her own. Shriveling, fearful, fascinated, Olga was held in the spell of those eyes.

"Was I mistaken? Am I not invited?" he asked.

"Yes, you are invited," she faltered.

She could not resist the subtle influence of the man, even while every instinct of good made her recoil from him. With a triumphant smile he bowed and said softly:

"Madame, a little while ago you asked me what I wanted. It was your invitation that I wanted. I thank you."

"But my husband," Olga said, already repeating of the advantage she had given him.

"Oh, he will be delighted to see me," the stranger assured her confidently.

"He speculates in wheat. I have information that will be of value to him. The crop has turned out worse than was expected. You love your husband. You should be happy that the wheat crop is bad."

"I am," Olga assented. "We want wheat to be bad because the price will go up."

"Your husband will make another fortune, and you will have the new gown you want."

"How do you know I want a new gown?" Olga asked, falling in once more with the devil's humor of the man.

"I observe that you have a new hat and a pretty one. Surely you want a new gown."

"You must be married."

"Married? Not I," he exclaimed. "A wife is like a monocle. It looks well, but one sees more clearly without it."

"Your views seem against marriage. Why?" Olga asked.

The tone of Millar became suddenly serious as he said:

"You want Karl to marry. I want to prevent him from marrying."

"Please let's not discuss that," Karl protested.

"Pardon me, Karl, but an artist should not marry," he went on. "Your future wife will swear to stand by your side for life—until the wedding day—and the day after she will be in your way."

"Not the true wife," Olga declared.

"Ah, but the true wife is always the other fellow's wife," he answered.

Millar had talked so absorbingly that Karl and Olga unconsciously drew near to each other. They stood in front of the high pulpit back of the armchair, each one resting a hand on the chair back. Although they were quite unaware of it, their position suggested that of a young couple before the altar about to be joined in wedlock. The cynical humor of the situation struck Millar, who walked around them, stood in the chair and leaned over the back, like a preacher in his pulpit.

"You are a pessimist," Olga declared, looking up at him.

"No, not a pessimist; only practical."

"I agree with you," Karl said. "A man should stay at home."

Millar leaned down, placing his hands over Karl's and Olga's as they rested on the back of the chair. Looking at Karl, he said:

"Why didn't you stay at home? You ran away to become an artist. You refused a professional position and ordinary morals, a decent occupation at so much a week. You wanted to go out and seek the golden fleece of fame. Now fight your battle; fight it alone; don't get married."

As he spoke he lifted the hands of Karl and Olga and placed them together, holding them clasped in his own. They thrilled at each other's touch; they looked into each other's eyes, and they hardly heard the cynical devil's voice as Millar leaned yet farther toward them and said:

"I was thinking what a splendid couple you two would make."

CHAPTER VIII.

OLGA felt herself yielding to the devilish insinuation of Millar. She made no effort to withdraw her hand from Karl's. She was completely under this sinister, dominating influence. Karl's will seemed equally impotent. He could not shake off the mysterious obsession. This man was more than a mere physical presence; he was a part of their very selves—the weaker, sensual impulses against which they had fought, but which now seemed gaining the mastery. The struggle went on in the soul of each as Millar's voice fell melodiously on their ears:

"The most important thing to you in life is to find your proper mate. Generations of conventional treatment will try to prevent you from doing so by pretending it is impossible. Put down in your hearts, in their depths, where truth is not perverted by the veneer of convention, I know and you know that it is the simplest thing on earth. Here you are full of talent and longing; here is a woman, beautiful, passionate"—

Karl made a last struggle against the inevitable consequence of this demon's urging, drawing Olga away from him.

"I beg of you, don't!" he cried.

"When I look at you I fear. Please don't speak of it. For six years we have lived peacefully."

"Say what you will," the soft, even voice persisted. "I can read your eyes, and they are telling me. Don't believe him. He lies," he went on to Olga. "He dreams of her—you—every night and you of him, and he knows

it, and you know it. Ah! I understand the language of your eyes. No matter what you say, that little light in your eyes discloses you, reveals your inmost thoughts, and I read them through."

"Let me speak," Karl pleaded. "For six years we have lived quietly, in peace, good friends, nothing else. Olga has not the least interest in me, and I—I am quite, quite indifferent."

"Any one who thinks Karl capable of a base thought must be base and contemptible himself!" Olga cried.

The two were almost hysterical as they stood beside each other, warding off the evil that seemed to emanate from the mysterious person who towered over them from the pulpit backed chair. Karl held Olga's right hand in his. His left hand was on her shoulder protectingly. Millar spoke quickly, leaning far down toward them:

"It is not a base thought; it is a beautiful thought, a thought shedding happiness, warmth and joy upon your otherwise miserable lives. But happiness, warmth and joy have a price that must be paid. He who loves wine too well will go to a drunkard's grave, but while he is drunk with wine angels sing to him.

"Whatever the price, his happiness is cheaply bought. The poet sings his greatest song when he is about to die and is a poor, weak human mortal to live without wine and song and women's lips. A little stump of a candle shines its brightest ere it goes out forever. It should teach you that one glow of warmth is worth all this life can give. Life has no object but to be thrown away. It must end. Let us end it well. Let our raging passions set fire to everything about us, burning, burning, burning, until we ourselves are reduced to ashes. Those who pretend otherwise are hypocrites and liars."

The two listened spellbound to this amazing sermon of sin. Karl's arm slipped down to Olga's waist. He felt himself drawing her closer.

"Don't be a liar," Millar urged, his eyes still burning into them; "don't be a hypocrite. Be a rascal, but be a pleasant rascal, and the world is yours. Look at me. All the world is mine, and what I have told you is the honest confession of all the world. We are baptized not with water, but with fire. Love yourself, only yourself. Wear the softest garments, sip the sweetest wine, kiss the prettiest lips."

No subtler tempter ever spoke to the hearts of a man and a woman. Karl was leaning over Olga now. He saw her eyes, her lips, soft, warm, rose colored; he felt her arms as she clung to him, while over them both glared the sinister figure of Millar, the devil, triumphant, confident that his work was done.

There was a crashing ring at the doorbell that acted like an electric shock on the group. Karl and Olga came to their senses, dazed, trembling, thankful, Millar stepped down from the chair, baffled, and turned his back upon them.

"My husband!" Olga gasped.

"Mr. Moneybags," Millar sneered contemptuously.

CHAPTER IX.

OLGA and Karl quickly drew apart. Both were relieved. Olga felt as if she had stepped back from the brink of a terrible precipice over which she had almost fallen. Her face was colorless, and there were lines of agony across her brow. The two unhappy people stood staring at each other for a full minute before Heinrich entered and announced Herman.

It had been growing dark in the studio during the remarkable discourse by Millar, but so absorbed had both his listeners been in their own tremendous emotions that they had paid no heed. Now, as Herman entered his first exclamation was:

"How dark it is in here! I am sorry I am late."

Heinrich turned on the lights, and the apartment was suddenly illuminated. Karl and Olga had not yet recovered their self-possessed, but Karl managed to indicate with a wave of his hand his strange visitor.

"Dr. Millar," he said.

Millar nodded absently and barely replied to Herman's cordial greeting. He was still enraged at the interruption which had prevented the success of his infamous plan. Herman turned quickly to Karl and Olga.

"Well, children, where is the picture? I am anxious to see it," he exclaimed.

"There is no picture," was all Karl could say. Olga, filled with apprehension at she knew not what, was silent.

"No picture?" Herman exclaimed. "What have you been doing all this time?"

"It has been dark for an hour," Karl explained.

"Yes, but Olga has been here two hours," Herman said, looking at his watch.

There was an instant of silence that threatened to become painfully embarrassing. Olga was about to speak when Millar unexpectedly stepped forward briskly and politely:

"My dear M. Hoffman, it was my fault," he explained. "I came a moment after you left. I had not seen Karl in two years. We chatted, and the time flew past. It was an extremely interesting conversation, and madame was so kind as to invite me to the ball this evening."

"You will accept, I trust," Herman said, with ready hospitality.

"Yes, thank you," Millar said. "I have come direct from Odessa, where I have had a talk with the Russian wheat magnate."

"Ah, I know. I shall lose money. The wheat crop is bad," Herman said impatiently.

"Oh, isn't that good for us?" Olga asked.

"No, dear, it is not. I am short on wheat."

"What does short on wheat mean?" Olga asked.

"It means digging a pit for others and falling into it yourself," Millar remarked cynically. "However," he went on, "things are not so bad. I have reliable information that the later crop will be abundant."

"Good! I am delighted to learn this," Herman said, very much pleased with

Millar went on in a light tone:

"She does not love her husband. He must be a genius or a very commonplace man. Marriage always is a failure with such men. Common men live so low that women are afraid some one may steal into their lives at night through a cellar window. Genius—well, genius lives on the top floor, up toward the clouds, and with so many gloomy stairs to climb, and no elevator, it's very uncomfortable for a prettier woman. Her ideal is one easy flight of stairs to comfortable living rooms on the first floor."

Karl maintained silence and continued to walk the floor. He looked at his watch and started toward the door of the reception room leading into the hall, which was locked.

"This is the second time I have seen madame's shoulders," Millar remarked casually, blowing cigarette rings in the air.

"What do you mean?" Karl demanded, stung to speech by jealousy.

"Ah, I saw them first in Paris, at the Louvre, fashioned of snow white marble. They were the shoulders of Venus. Am I right, Karl?"

"I don't know," the artist snapped.

"Well, you must take my word for it then," Millar said lightly. "I have seen both. And since Alcemenes I have known but one sculptor who could form such wonderful shoulders."

"Who?" Karl asked, turning to him.

"Prosperity," Millar replied sententiously. "Such tender, soft, exquisite curves are possible only to women who live perfectly. Madame must be the wife of a millionaire."

He seemed to find keen pleasure in the possibility of forcing the two into a position which would cause them suffering and weaken the barriers of self control they had built up around that boy and girl love that had come back so vividly to both. Had they regarded him as merely human it is certain that Karl would have kicked this