THE DEVIL

By FERENC MOLNAR

Dramatized by OLIVER HERFORD Adapted by JOSEPH O'BRIEN

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CHAPTER I.

THE slender jeweled hands of Olga Hoffmann trembled so that she fumbled at the hooks and buttons that held together the waist she was trying to remove. Her heart beat with a violence it had not known before during the six placid years of her married life. Her face was a mask of fear—fear of the unseen, the unfathomable—of the turbulent emotions that seemed crowding, surging up from unsuspected depths in her very soul.

Mme. Hoffmann was in the studio of Karl Mahler, where she had been brought by her portly banker husband, Herman Hoffmann, that the irony of the sweetheart of her happy girlhood, painting her portrait for the pleasure of the man whose name she had taken, might be consummated. But it was with no thought of this that Hoffmann had taken her there or that she had consented to go or that Karl had received them. Hoffmann welcomed the artist daily to his own home and knew no jealousy. Karl, forgetful of the idyl of his youth, dwelt in thought on his approaching marriage to a beautiful young heiress. Olga, loyal to her husband, believed that the old romance was laid away among those faded dreams faintly remembered, but which come no more.

And yet when her husband had gone out, leaving her there, the faded lavender of the sweet old days turned lurid, and for the first time in six years her soul confessed itself and lay bare and unshriven. But she fought down the memory and clung to those six years of silence, and all the while there was in the very air of the room an unseen presence that seemed dragging her backward through time, bridging those years clear to the day when Karl, the boy, had taken her in his arms and kissed her lips and told her that he loved her.

Now, with all of that in her heart, she yet tried to put it out of her thoughts. She forced herself to a light tone and airy words.

"Come, M. Mahler; I have come to get my portrait painted as my husband wishes it," she cried. "We must go to work."

Karl, torn by emotion as herself, acquiesced.

"Here are shawls from which you may select one for your shoulders," he said. "I will go and prepare the studio while you remove your blouse."

He left her so filled with fear that she could hardly bring herself to tug at the buttons that held her waist.

"Ah!" she exclaimed impatiently at last, flinging the waist from her.

As it dropped to the floor her perfectly rounded shoulders and white throat were bare. She arose from her seat and reached for the filmy silken shawl she had chosen. But the shawl fell from her nerveless hands, and she drew back, with a shriek, gazing in horror at what seemed an apparition.

A melodious voice, suave, gentle, deliberate, said:

"Madame, I beg your pardon. I fear I permitted myself to fall asleep."

From the depths of a great armchair, drawn up before an open fire whose red light gave it sinister illumination, a man arose, stood before Olga and bowed profoundly. He was in the conventional afternoon garb of a gentleman. His frock coat was black; his hair was black; his eyebrows, eyelashes and eyes were black. His face was white, as colorless as his immaculate linen, as expressionless as the monocle he wore. One touch of color, red, came from the scarf.

He looked with undisguised admiration at the beautiful woman before him. But it was the cold, critical admiration of the cynic, emotionless and without life. Olga drew back from him, catching up the shawl and hiding her gleaming shoulders. As she looked at him his eyes seemed to hold hers. She was fascinated, yet repelled.

"I thought I was alone," she faltered when her voice came to her.

"When I came in some time ago M. Mahler was out, and I must have fallen asleep in his comfortable chair. Again I apologize."

Fear and suspicion dilated Olga's eyes, and she drew yet farther from this suave, polished stranger.

"There was no one in that chair a few minutes ago when my husband was here!" she cried.

Without a flicker of expression or a trace of emotion in his even, steady voice, the stranger glanced casually at the chair from which he had emerged like a specter and replied:

"I beg your pardon. I must be mistaken."

He seemed like one who would jest with infinity.

There was nothing ironical in his tone, and he bowed with grave politeness. As he advanced Olga retreated toward the door through which Karl had entered the studio.

"Where did you come from?" she cried.

"Ah," he exclaimed quickly, "I come from nowhere; I go everywhere! I am here."

He tapped his forehead with long, eloquent fingers significantly.

Those hands were as striking as his voice, his face, his manner. They were restless, animated, the only part of him that seemed alive. His voice was cold, his face expressionless, his eyes unchanging in their steady blackness, but his hands were vibrant. Their gestures were literal speech. All impulse which he had banished from his speech, from his walk, seemed centered in his hands.

It flashed across Olga as she gazed at him that he was the incarnation of the arch fiend, the very spirit of evil purpose against which all good contends, against which she had fought unconsciously for six years. It was this terrible presence that was dragging her back over those years, painting with fresh color the faded dream, filling her heart with the wild, sweet desire of a child. She pressed her hands over her eyes to shut out the specter and cried aloud:

"Karl!"

Then she fled to meet the young artist, hurrying to answer her call.

CHAPTER II.

OLGA was a ward in the family of Herman Hoffmann when she met Karl first. A precocious boy artist, talented, but untaught, he attracted the attention of the wealthy family, and they gave him employment to further his ambition. Soon he came and went among them like one of the family, patronized by Herman, who was his senior, and adored by Olga, whose playfellow he was. He was a handsome, sturdy youth, with hair that fell in rich, black clusters over his white forehead and eyes that sparkled with buoyant life and purpose.

There was never a word of love between this boy and girl. It was the true spirit of comradeship. But they loved each other without knowing that it was love, because life was fresh and sweet to them and the days were long for playtime and dreaming. Their happiness was unclouded until the time came when it was determined that Karl should go away to Paris to study and that Olga should be given the finishing touches of her education that she might take her place in society.

Then the comrades became sweethearts. When they were to be sent away from each other they knew that it was love.

"Ah, Karl, I shall be so unhappy without you!" Olga said.

"But I will come back, Olga, a great artist perhaps, and you will be prouder of me than ever."

"You will forget me away in Paris."

"And will you not forget me, Olga?"

"Ah, never, my Karl!"

Karl took her in his arms then and kissed her.

"I love you, Olga. I will not forget."

The years went swiftly for Karl in his studies, and the love of a youth goes readily to sleep. As for Olga, she mourned her sweetheart sincerely for many months, but there was much in the world that she was learning about, and the few relatives she had were busy with her future. Young Herman Hoffmann, grown stout and serious and taking part in the business affairs of the family, loved her for her rare beauty, and they were married. Karl came back, famous, painted portraits, and lived the life of a young artist.

Hoffmann had become a banker and a man of importance. He was slow and somewhat pompous in speech, but he was loyal in his friendship for Karl and devoted to his beautiful young wife. Karl came and went in their house almost as he had in the old days. Never once did he or Olga speak of their old love to each other. Each believed it dead. For Olga this was not strange, as she had her husband, whom she believed she loved, her home and her social life. Her time was taken up, and Karl was only a daily incident.

The young artist came back to a consciousness of Olga's beauty and sweetness. She had adopted a maternal air toward him which he found vastly diverting. Sometimes there throbbed in his pulses a beat of the old fervor, but he had himself well in control. His emotions were not wayward. He told himself daily almost that he thought of Olga as a sister. But it was significant, although he never admitted that, that he had to tell himself this same thing very often.

Thus sped the six years of Olga's contented, unruffled life. Karl lived in his studio, where notables came to be painted and models posed and flirted, and an old manservant looked after his clothes and his comfort. It was a spacious apartment, richly furnished in the trappings which artists love. There he lounged and worked, but in all the six years Olga and her husband had never been there. Karl desired most of all things in the world to paint her portrait, but he did not dare to ask. Olga never spoke of it, and it was not until Herman himself brought up the subject that it was ever discussed.

One evening at Herman's house, when Karl had been making some sketches, Herman said:

"Karl, why have you never painted a portrait of Olga? She is more beautiful than any of your models or your patrons."

Olga was startled and glanced quickly at Karl. The young artist could not keep the blood from rushing to his cheeks, but he replied carelessly:

"Olga would do my poor art great honor. I never knew that either of you thought so well of my skill."

"Come, come," Herman cried, "I want a portrait of Olga, and you shall paint it. Let us discuss it. What sort of a pose would you suggest, Olga?"

"Really, I would have to think about it, Herman." Olga answered. "This is rather sudden, and one can't make up one's mind about a portrait so quickly."

"Why not? Now, I think a half length portrait, in evening dress, with a shawl thrown over your shoulders, would be very attractive."

Herman had grown quite stout and wore a neatly trimmed beard. He was generous, good natured and kindly, and Karl was very fond of him as well as grateful to him and his family for the opportunities they had given him. He did not wish to oppose this whim of his friend, and he left the discussion to Olga.

"I should prefer full length in a street costume," she said.

"Not at all," Herman asserted. "The picture will be painted indoors and hung indoors, and you wear indoor clothes. Now that is settled. Karl, when shall we begin this portrait?"

"I can be ready at any time," Karl said. "Come when you will. I am quite at your disposal."

"Then let us have a sitting tomorrow. What do you say? I will take Olga to your studio, which we shall be very glad to inspect, and leave her there. I shall be very busy in the afternoon, but I can call for her when the sitting is over."

"Delighted!" Karl cried, with enthusiasm. "Olga, you will make a splendid model, and I shall be happy to paint you."

"Very well. I am in your hands," Olga said. "We will have a sitting tomorrow, and in the evening you will come to my reception. You will meet Elsa there."

Elsa was a young heiress selected by Olga as the prospective bride of Karl. Olga had brought them together and in every way fostered their growing fondness for each other.

"You are determined to marry me off to Elsa, I see," Karl said, laughing.

"It's high time, my dear Karl, that you took a wife and settled down," Olga said, with maternal emphasis. "I don't like this studio life for a young man of your impulsive temperament."

"Well, I'm a willing victim," said Karl, laughing. "The moment you married people settle down to your own bondage you begin to try to put others in the same plight."

"Nonsense. We want you to be happy, just as we are, don't we, Herman?"

Hoffmann looked indulgently at his wife and Karl.

"Elsa will be a good match for you," he said. "And tomorrow evening should be your opportunity, my boy."

Karl felt himself strangely disturbed at the thought of Olga's coming visit. He roamed the rooms of his studio when he got home, looking at the miscellaneous assortment of pictures, arms, rugs and bric-a-brac. A few sketches in charcoal and oils he thrust incontinently out of sight. They were not for Olga to see. He did not awaken old Heinrich, his servant, but he busied himself rearranging the furniture and even hunted up a duster and dusted some vases and porcelains. He laughed at himself then and threw aside the brush.

"I suppose I could leave this to Heinrich," he said. "This will be Olga's first visit. And now I believe that I've wanted her to come here all the time—for six years. But it is just as well."

After Karl left them Olga and Hoffmann discussed the portrait.

"I don't suppose it will matter, my leaving you at the studio tomorrow afternoon," Hoffmann said. "I have some important business to look after. You see, Olga, I trust you."

"Of course you do, you old goose!" Olga said, laughing and pinching his ear. "Now, good night. I'm going to bed."

When she was alone her husband's words recurred to her.

"He trusts me!" she mused. "Of course he does. But why should he tell me about it tonight? Why isn't it a matter of course?"

CHAPTER III.

KARL'S fitful slumber was disturbed that night by vague half dreams which oppressed him when he arose. He was filled with misgiving, doubt, uncertainty. His thoughts, half formed, disturbing, were of Olga.

He tried to think of marriage with Elsa, but it was without enthusiasm. Warm, beautiful, affectionate, she made no impression on his heart, which seemed like ice.

He looked around the studio with aversion.

The pictures on the walls seemed no longer to represent the aspiration of the artist. They were mementos of the models who had posed and flirted and talked scandal within his walls.

He paced the floor restlessly, nervously twisting his unlighted cigarette in his fingers until it crumbled, his mouth tight, his eyebrows drawn together. Then he seized his hat and overcoat and flung himself out of the door into the gathering winter storm.

For an hour he plunged through the snow, the chaos of the storm matching his mood. Almost exhausted, he turned back toward his home and entered. The room glowed warmly. In front of the inviting fire was the big armchair with its wide seat, comfortable cushions and high pulpit back. As he laid aside his greatcoat he stepped toward the chair, intending to bury himself in its depth and surrender to his mood. A shudder ran over him, and he drew back, staring at the seat.

It was empty, his eyes assured him, but he could not rid himself of a feeling that it was occupied. He pressed his hands to his eyes and then flung them outward with the gesture of one distraught.

"I am going mad," he thought.

He called loudly, harshly:

"Heinrich! Heinrich!"

The old man, alarmed at his master's unwonted violence, hastened into the room. Karl flung aside his coat, and Heinrich held for him his velvet dressing jacket. He slipped into it, shook himself and lighted a cigarette. His hands shook with nervousness, and he held them out from him that he might look at them.

"Oh, what a terrible sight!" he groaned.

"Monsieur?" Heinrich said inquiringly.

"Has any one been here?" Karl asked.

"No, monsieur; only Ma'm'selle Mimi. She is waiting in the studio to pose."

With an impatient gesture Karl walked across the room, picked up a newspaper, flung himself on a couch and held the sheet before his eyes. He did not even see the print, but he persisted, trying to banish his restless thoughts.

Heinrich, solicitously brushing and folding Karl's coat, waited. The artist looked at him impatiently.

"Tell Ma'm'selle Mimi I shall not need her today. She may go."

"Yes, monsieur," Heinrich said.

The servant stepped to the door of the studio and threw it open. He called out:

"Ma'm'selle, M. Karl says he will not need you today. You may go home."

Heinrich withdrew. Karl lay at full length on the couch, holding the paper before him.

A young woman daintily featured, with rounded figure, whose lines showed through her close fitting costume, burst into the room.

Although conscious of her presence and irritated, Karl did not look. He pretended to be absorbed in his newspaper. Mimi looked at him and waited, but as he did not speak she ventured timidly:

"Aren't you going to paint me today?"

"Er—no, not today."

"Do you not love me any more, Karl?"

The newspaper rattled with the artist's impatience and irritation, but he did not answer. Mimi approached him.

"You do not love me. You have ceased to care for me. Ah, Karl, when you loved me you painted me every day! Now you paint nothing but landscapes."

Karl forced a laugh.

"Nonsense," he said. "You talk like a silly child, Mimi."

"You say that now, but you did not say such things when you loved me, Karl. It is always the way with us poor models. At first it is, 'Ah, what shoulders, what beautiful coloring, what perfect ankles!' Then you paint us every day. And then it is: 'What in the world have you done with your figure? It is all angles.' 'What on earth have you put on your face? It is as yellow as old parchment.' And then you paint landscapes."

Mimi burst into tears and vigorously daubed her eyes with her handkerchief. She was an extremely pretty girl of the bourgeois type, with heavy coils of straw colored hair piled high on her head and big blue eyes that were quick to weep.

Karl arose, threw aside his paper and essayed to comfort her.

"There, there," he said, patting her shoulder, "don't cry, Mimi. You are full of folly today."

As quick to smile as she had been to cry, Mimi unveiled her eyes and looked at him eagerly, her lips parting over her white teeth.

"Then you do love me, Karl? Ah, tell me that you love me!"

"Yes."

"And you will paint me again? If not today, perhaps tomorrow?"

"Perhaps, but I am very busy."

He turned from her and sat on the couch again. Mimi's mood suddenly turned to anger, and she cried out at him furiously:

"I know that you do not love me, and I know why. You are going to be married. Yes, yes," as Karl made an impatient gesture; "I know it is true."

"You are very silly, Mimi," he said.

"Ah, no; I am not! It is true what I have said. I have heard all about it, but I did not believe it because I was a fool. You are going to marry Mlle. Elsa Berg, who is said to be very beautiful and who will be a great heiress, and then you will forget me, as you would be glad to do now."

"Where in the devil have you heard all of this?" Karl demanded, springing angrily to his feet.

"It does not matter. You cannot deny that it's true."

Then her mood changed swiftly to contrition, and she went close to Karl.

"But forgive me. I know it must be. I have always known, and I must have annoyed you. We models are always annoying—in our street clothes. Forgive me, Karl."

She looked appealingly at Karl, and he was moved.

"Never mind, Mimi. Run along home now, and I promise to paint you again, perhaps tomorrow, perhaps the next day."

She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. Then she fled from the room. Karl flung himself down on the couch again and hid his face with his hands.

CHAPTER IV.

OLGA'S dream journey had been through the flowering orchard of girlhood hand in hand with Karl, and she awoke with a sense of regret that the realities of everyday life should take the place of such joyous vision. She felt strangely elated during the day and eagerly waited for the hour when Herman was to call for her and take her to Karl's studio.

"I wonder what it will be like there?" she asked herself a dozen times. "I think I have always been jealous of that studio and its possibilities, and I have always wanted to go there—but I did not dare."

Then she chided herself for the thought she had not uttered.

"Why, I'm a goose! What am I confessing here to myself? That I am in love with Karl? What silly nonsense! Come, Olga, you are getting romantic."

Herman came after luncheon, and they drove together to the studio building. Old Heinrich admitted them, his eyes growing big and round at the imposing splendor of Herman's greatcoat and the bewildering beauty of the grand lady.

Karl, in his artist's velvet jacket, hurried forward to greet them.

"Welcome to my workshop!" he cried.

"How do you do?" Olga said, barely giving him her hand and turning at once to let her eyes rove curiously around the walls of the room.

"How do you do, Karl?" Herman said. "You see we are prompt. And now I am curious to see your place."

Karl watched Olga as she surveyed the room. He felt piqued at her seeming lack of interest in him.

"So this is your wonderful studio," she said absently.

"It is much like a junkshop," Karl said deprecatingly.

"It is very interesting," Olga said. "Whose picture is that?" she asked, pointing to a painting of a half nude figure on the wall.

"That? Oh, that is a model who has posed for me."

"Oh, yes; I recognize it. We met the girl on the stairs, Herman."

"Oh, yes; that is she."

Herman busied himself looking at the picture, chuckling over those that caught his unpoetic fancy and nudging Karl in the ribs at some of them.

"I must come again and inspect them more at my leisure," he said. "This afternoon I have to go away."

"I am sorry you are not to remain," Karl said politely.

"Oh, I suppose we might put off the sitting in view of the fact that the picture might have been painted any time these last six years," Herman said. "But Olga has been nervous about the ball we are going to tonight, and I thought it best to bring her today to distract her. You know this is really a house warming tonight."

"And we were obliged to invite so many people," Olga said, still looking at the pictures.

"I hate these social affairs," Herman rattled on, "but I suppose in our position they are inevitable. What time shall I return for Olga?"

"It grows dark quickly," Karl said, looking at his watch. "In another hour we shall not be able to see. Suppose you return about 4 o'clock."

"Very well. And now I must be going. You are coming to the ball tonight, Karl? You know you really are the guest of honor. Isn't he, Olga?"

"Yes, indeed. Karl is to fall in love with his future wife tonight."

Karl looked at her, but she spoke with perfect self possession and lightly.

"I shall do my best," he said, and he tried to speak with enthusiasm.

"Ah, you are not half grateful enough for this treasure, Karl. You should be happy," Olga said.

"Of course he should, and he will," Herman interposed, moving toward the door. "We will all be happy, you and Elsa and Karl and I—everybody, I hope."

Olga went nearer to Karl and spoke seriously.

"She is a very charming girl, Karl."

"If you say one word more about that girl, I shall fall in love with her immediately, which would be ahead of my matrimonial schedule," Karl replied jestingly. "You know I am not obliged to fall in love until tonight."

"Well, well, I must be off," Herman said as he went up to kiss Olga. "Good by, dear. I shall call for you at 4 o'clock."

Almost against his will, Karl asked a question which he had never before in all his life thought of.

"Aren't you afraid to leave your wife alone?"

"Alone?"

"With me, I mean."

Herman looked at him and then spoke jestingly, but with an effort. "I am hurrying away because I am afraid I shall change my mind and take Olga with me," he said.

(Continued next week.)

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GILLETTE ABLE TO SIGN DEATH WARRANT

San Francisc, Dec. 9.—Though very weak, Governor Gillette was much better this morning. He passed a restless night in the hospital at Redding Cal., but his pulse and temperature are nearly normal. For the first time since Sunday he ate light food this morning and with relish. He is able today to attend to public business of pressing importance, and his physicians permitted him to sign the death warrants of the convcts condemned to die on Friday at San Quentin. Only very important business, however, was allowed to reach the Governor. The Governor was one of those poisoned at the luncheon given in honor of the launching of the collier Promotheus Saturday.

The first death to be reported in connection with the many cases of ptomaine poisoning among the persons who partook of the sandwiches served at the luncheon given at the Mare Island Navy Yard on Saturday last, after the launching of the Prometheus, is that of James C. Reynolds, a waiter, residing at 1341 Ellis street, in this city. He expired early today after suffering severe agony. Reynolds was one of the waiters engaged by the caterer to serve the luncheon, and, with a number of his associates, ate of the food provided. All were more or less affected and several of them are still.

OREGON GETS $25,854.30 FROM SALES OF LANDS

Washington, Dec. 9.—The general land office has made public its account with Oregon for the year ending June 30, 1908. Gross proceeds from the sale of public lands were $540,881,58, from which amount is deducted the pro rata share of expenses chargeable to the state of $10,849.26, making the net proceeds $517,086.09 of which amount the state is entitled to 5 per cent or $25,854.30.

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TREASURY DEFICIT UNUSUALLY LARGE

Washington, D. C., Dec. 9.—Secretary of the Treasury, George B. Cortelyou, submitted his annual report to congress today, showing the total receipts of the government for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1908, to be $1,702,068,187.11, which sum added to the balance in the treasury at the beginning of the year total $3,312,734,164.90. The aggregate of disbursements during the last fiscal year was $1,589,786,889.59, leaving in the treasury a balance of $1,722,947,275.21. The public debt at the end of the year was $2,626,806,000, against which there was cash in the treasury amounting to $1,814,626,000.

Upon the basis of existing laws, Secretary Cortelyou estimates the revenues for the ensuing fiscal year at $788,796,000. The expenditures for the same period are placed at $902,796,000, leaving a deficit of $114,000,000.

LOUIS PRATT, RELIGIOUS FANATIC, DIES IN HOSPITAL

Kansas City, Mo., Dec. 10.—Louis Pratt, wounded during a battle with the police, died at noon. Policeman Mullane suffered a relapse during the night and his life is hanging by a mere thread. Sergeant Patrick Clark and A. B. Selchrist are slightly improved today. James S. Sharp, leader of the onslaught against the police, has not been captured.

Pratt's wife now says she knows Sharp was a false prophet.

Policeman Mullane died at 1 o'clock today, making four deaths up to this hour.

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