

# WHO'S GUILTY

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NOVELIZED FROM THE SERIES OF PHOTOPLAYS OF THE SAME NAME RELEASED BY PATHE EXCHANGE.

## FOURTH STORY The Silent Shame.

When Eunice Mayne eloped from the convent to marry Duncan Hilliard, she was fifteen and he was twenty-five. It was the old, dreary tale of "Marry in haste and repent at leisure."

For Eunice, the repentance set in almost at once; for Hilliard it began when he first grew tired of his child-wife's sweet innocence and longed for more mature-minded companionship.

They had but one child—a daughter, Ardath—and on this little girl Eunice centered all her slighted affection and her hopes. But, even here, Duncan did his best to thwart her. For, when Ardath was scarcely more than a baby, he announced that her noisy presence in the house annoyed him and he packed the child off to a distant boarding school.

Left alone in the big house with the husband who daily neglected her more and more, Eunice tried to find amusement in society. And thus it was that she met Bruce Kingston.

Bruce was a rising young playwright—a good-looking, manly fellow and a social favorite.

They saw much of each other, these two lonely young people. And each turned instinctively to the other for companionship. Yet, in their acquaintance there was only the fragrance of innocent attraction.

Then came the invitation to Adelaide Hooper's house-party at a rambling country place twenty miles from town. Eunice was fond of Mrs. Hooper and she begged her husband to accept.

"There's enough boredom in everyday life without my motoring twenty miles to look for it," he grunted. "Go out there yourself, if you like. I'll keep bachelor's hall till you get back."

And so it was settled. Eunice accepted the invitation, for herself. And Duncan planned to improve the shining hours of her absence by giving a little part on his own account to half a dozen boon companions of both sexes.

Among the score or so of guests at the Hooper's, the first to greet Eunice, after her arrival, was Bruce Kingston. His dark young face lightened with genuine pleasure at sight of her and he welcomed her eagerly.

As she passed on into the house, a fellow-guest, Reggie Cadleigh, strolled up to Bruce, who stood on the veranda looking after her. Cadleigh was a youth with much money and with a soul that would have been invisible on the head of a pin. Bruce detested him—partly on his own account and



Evelyn Discovered She Was Tremendously in Love With Him.

partly because Cadleigh had made various attempts to flirt with Eunice. Cadleigh, now catching the look in Bruce's eyes, as Eunice vanished indoors, laughed nastily and said:

"From the way you and she looked at each other, you must be luckier than I was, Mr. Kingston."

Bruce reddened with anger. But, outwardly, he was calm, as he made answer:

"You are quite right, Mr. Cadleigh. I am luckier than you. My parents endowed me with clean brains, instead of tainted money."

He walked away, leaving Cadleigh glowering vindictively after him. Bruce thought no more of the episode. Cadleigh thought of nothing else, and he itched to repay the slight.

His chance came late that evening. In the drawing room, there were several bridge tables. Bruce and Eunice were partners at one of them. At

an adjoining table, his back close to Bruce's, Cadleigh was playing. During a lull in the game, he glanced back over his shoulder at Eunice and Bruce, and said rather loudly to his partner:

"It looks as if Hilliard will be able to get rid of his unwelcome wife, after all—with Kingston's kind help."

Bruce, his eyes ablaze, glanced covertly across the table to see if Eunice had heard the beastly speech. Her face was scarlet.

This was too much for Bruce Kingston. Impetuously, he pushed back his chair, leaped to his feet and wheeled about on Cadleigh. The latter, frightened by the fierce menace in Bruce's look and action, also rose. The two men faced each other. In a hot whisper, audible to Cadleigh alone, Bruce said:

"You have your choice. You will leave this house within five minutes, or you will take a public thrashing."

To put on a bold front, Cadleigh grinned, as though in absolute indifference. Then, as Kingston took a quick step forward, the other turned on heel and walked over to his hostess.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Hooper," he said, "but I've just had a 'phone message that calls me back to town. Forgive me for hurrying away like this."

On his way to the train, writhing over his humiliation, Cadleigh stopped at the local telegraph office and scribbled a dispatch. Smirking with satisfaction, he read what he had written:

Duncan Hilliard, 1177 Blank Avenue, New York City:  
Your wife eloped tonight with Kingston. Congratulations.

A FRIEND.  
"Rush this, please," he said to the operator.

The telegram reached Duncan Hilliard at midnight. Hilliard was spending the evening at home—a thing he rarely did, nowadays. And, to keep him from utter loneliness, a decidedly gay party had assembled about him—a party consisting of several disolute men-about-town and as many pseudo-chorus girls.

Into this bedlam came a footman with the telegram. Hilliard tore open the envelope and read.

"Listen here!" he roared to his guests, waving the yellow slip of paper above his head. "Just listen to this: A dear old friend of mine sends me the good news that my wife's eloped with a beggarly writing chap named Kingston! Hurroo!"

After the unpleasant interruption to the party at Mrs. Hooper's, Eunice started for home in her motor car. As Bruce was also returning to the city, she offered him a lift which he gladly accepted.

"I wish I could have thrashed Cadleigh, as he deserved," Kingston was saying, as the car drew up at the Hilliard townhouse. "My fists clench every time I think of him."

"I'm so glad you didn't strike him!" answered Eunice. "You behaved splendidly. There is no way I can thank you for defending me as you did. Why, look!" she broke off, pointing at the house. "I wonder what is the matter. All the first-floor shades are drawn. And the lights are burning in every room!"

"I'll go in there with you, if you don't mind," he volunteered. "If anything is amiss, perhaps I can be of use."

She thanked him, eagerly, for the offer, and together they entered the house.

Several of the night's revelers lay sleeping on the floor or in chairs.

One or two men were awake; yawning and grunting. On the edge of a sofa, sprawled Duncan Hilliard.

"Duncan!" cried Eunice.

Hilliard, at sound of his name, looked up and saw her standing before him.

"Get the blazes out of here!" he croaked, forcing the words with difficulty through his dry throat. "What are you doing here, anyhow? You eloped with Kingston, didn't you? Stay eloped."

"Eloped?" echoed his wife, dumfounded.

"Oh, I'm on, all right," he growled. "Don't try any of your 'holier-than-thou' ways on me. It's too late for that. I know what you are. And I'm going to tell you. You're—"

"One moment, Mr. Hilliard," quietly interposed Bruce, stepping forward to Eunice's side. "you say you are going to tell Mrs. Hilliard what she is. If you tell her she is anything but the best and truest wife a drunken cur of a husband ever had—why, I'm going to tell you you lie. And then I'm going to smash the words down your fat throat, along with your teeth."

"You're young Kingston, aren't you?" he growled. "I remember now, I met you once. You're the man that's stolen my wife from me, eh? Well, take her. Good riddance! She'll be leaving you, next, for—"

"I've warned you once," cut in

Bruce with a deadly quiet. "that'll—"

He got no further. As the two grappled, Eunice's sharp cry of terror aroused the half-crazed revelers to a sense of what was going on.

Duncan Hilliard was a big man and powerful. And he was fighting in a drink-fueled rage.

But presently, youth and clean living began to tell against bulk and drunken fury. Kingston evaded an awkward swing, ran in and grappled. He slipped his hip behind his foe's, and with one hand at the latter's throat, exerted all his wiry strength in a single tremendous heave.

Hilliard flew backward and landed in a panting heap across the end of the sofa, his head striking a table edge.

"Listen!" commanded Bruce, glaring down at the inert body. "listen to me, you worthless hulk! Mrs. Hilliard is going away with me. She is going to my mother's home. She will live with my mother until she can get a divorce from you. Then, please God, I am going to marry her. If you try to prevent us, the consequences are on your own head."

"Come, Eunice," he said gently, turning to the sobbing woman and leading her from the room and out of the house.

On the same day, Eunice Hilliard was installed as a member of the pleasant little household presided over by Bruce Kingston's sweet-faced mother. Her life there was ideally happy.

Then, one day, came a brief letter from Hilliard. Eunice read and re-read it, with a great rapture in her

stead," he answered, jocosely, "you wouldn't have come here. And I had to see you."

"There is nothing either of us can have to say to the other," replied Eunice, turning to go. "you got me here by a trick. And—"

"And I'll keep you here by force, if I have to," he snapped, "until you've heard what I want to say."

"I'm broke," he said, before she could speak. "I'm cleaned out. I'll have to skip the country inside of a week, to dodge jail—unless I can raise the money that will square me. You have about fifty thousand dollars—the money you inherited from your mother. That will tide me over, nice—"

"I want it!"

"I think," she said, wondering, "I think you must have lost your mind."

"You're married to Bruce Kingston, I suppose."

"Yes," she answered, a note of pride in her voice.

"I supposed you would be," he smiled. "I figured you and he would marry the very minute you found you were divorced from me."

"But we didn't. We—"

"Well, well, a day or two later, then," he said, irritably. "The exact date isn't important. I know you two unworlly youngsters would take it for granted the divorce was O. K., and wouldn't bother to investigate. My dear, I don't like to call you names. But you're a very charming—bigamist! We're no more divorced than Adam and Eve! You're my wife, by law of God and man. And you can be sent to prison for bigamy. You and your precious near-husband, Kingston. And, by the eternal, you shall be sent

there, the two of you, unless I get that cash."

With a strangled, wordless cry, she slipped past him, before he could stop her, and fled from the house.

An hour later, Bruce Kingston, nervously wondering whether his bride had gone, received this note, from the hand of a messenger boy:

Bruce, Dearest: I find I have not been legally divorced from my husband. I am not your wife. Duncan holds us both in his power. He will send us to prison if we are together. But if I vanish, he can't prove anything, and you will be safe. So good-by, my own darling. Forgive me for the grief this must cause you. But there is no other way. I love you.

EUNICE.

Nor could money or skill or months of tireless search bring Bruce any further trace of the woman he adored.

It was eight years since Eunice had gone out of Bruce Kingston's life. The years for all their glittering success, had been drearily lonely and miserable for him.

And, with the passing of years, Eunice became at last a sweet-sad memory to Kingston, rather than a reality. He began to go about more. And, at last, at the end of the eighth year, he once again met a woman whose look and voice could make his long-empty heart stir with love.

He met her, first, when a company was called together for a reading of Bruce's new play, "Ropes of Sand," a masterpiece, which the manager and all his friends predicted would be the crowning hit of Kingston's brilliant career.

The manager had "discovered" in the person of a young girl hitherto unheard of an actress of marvelous promise and beauty.

Her name was Evelyn Eden. He had little trouble in cultivating Evelyn's acquaintance. At first she was flattered that she should be singled out for attention by the foremost playwright of the day. But soon she began to feel a much warmer personal interest in the man on his own account.

In short, Evelyn Eden presently discovered that she was tremendously in love with Bruce.

Before they had known each other a month, they were engaged.

They kept the engagement a secret. They resolved on an early marriage and decided to keep that a secret, too. Rehearsals were drawn to an end. Bruce and Evelyn planned to marry on the morning of the day scheduled for the play's first performance. Together, the afternoon before, they went to select the wedding ring. Eve-

lyn had an errand of her own which she was explaining to Kingston as they walked thither, side by side.

In the play's last act, the heroine, cast off by the man she loved, was supposed to kill herself by sucking poison from an antique ring she wore. It was a gruesome, but effective bit of stagecraft. And it had to do with Evelyn's visit to the jewelry shop.

"You see," she was saying to Bruce, "the property man has dug up a ring for me that would be an insult to the intelligence of a blind kindergarten child. It looks no more like an antique poison-ring than I look like Julia Marlowe. I hate it."

"The audience won't know the difference," Bruce assured her.

"No," she assented, "but I will. How can I throw myself into the spirit of the thing when I'm wearing that tinseel hoop? Now here is my great idea: When I stopped at Ebling & Son's, yesterday, to have my brooch mended, I saw the most wonderful collection of antiques. And what do you suppose was among them? A genuine poison-ring, dating from the Sixteenth century! Think of that! By pressing a bit of the gold tracery around the base of the stone—it's a topaz—the stone lifts on a hinge. Inside the hollow under the topaz is a place for the poison. And—here is the queerest part of the whole story—the hollow is still full of poison."

"But—Good Lord, sweetheart!" he objected, "suppose you should touch poison itself to your lips, by mistake? Don't buy the gruesome thing. Please don't!"

"But I want it so!" she pleaded.

And the upshot of their brief argument was that Bruce not only bought a wedding ring, but purchased for her, also, the poison-ring she coveted.

As they came out of the shop a man in the passing crowd halted in amazement at sight of them. He was florid of face, gray of hair.

Long and bewildered he stared after the happy couple. Then a strange expression crept into his heavy features, and slowly he moved on.

"I've a surprise for you," Evelyn was saying, as she and Bruce turned homeward. "I had a letter from my father yesterday. He is coming to New York. He may get here today or tomorrow."

"How long did you say it is since you've seen him?" asked Bruce, to whom his sweetheart had told little about her family.

"Not for nearly nine years," she replied. "He came to the boarding school for me just after my mother died. He said he had lost all his money in Wall street and that he'd have to go West and start life all over again."

They were married, with but two witnesses, early the following day, at the Little Church Around the Corner. After which they started in a taxi to Bruce's bachelor rooms for the little tete-a-tete wedding breakfast that Bruce's man was to have ready for them on their arrival.

While Kingston's servant was setting the table for Bruce and the bride, there was a ring at the apartment's front door. A slender, sad-faced woman stood on the threshold as the servant answered the summons.

"Is Mr. Kingston at home?" she asked.

"No, madam," replied the man. "I expect him back any minute, but—"

"I will come in and wait," she decided.

As soon as she was alone, the woman rose quickly from her seat and crossed the room to the mantel where stood a large photograph in a silver frame—a photograph of Evelyn Eden.

And thus Eunice Hilliard for the first time in eight years looked at the pictured face of her little daughter, Ardath.

Eunice was still gazing at the picture, when she heard a key turn in the outer door. She looked around, breathless with eagerness, for a sight of Bruce. She saw him enter the apartment with a woman clinging to his arm. The woman of the photograph—her own little girl of other days.

"Welcome home, dearest!" she heard him say as he stooped to kiss his bride.

Eunice in panic looked about for a way of escape. There was none she would have time to reach unseen. She slipped into a clothes closet that stood directly behind her and softly closed its door to a crack.

"There!" she heard Evelyn say in mock anger. "Just see, sir, what you did to my hair, when you kissed me! It's a wreck. Where can I fix it?"

"If you simply must waste perfectly good time in hair dressing," he told her, in the same vein, "you can go into my dressing room, where there's a glass. It's right there."

She fled to repair the damage. And Bruce, coming back into the living room, confronted Eunice who had stepped from the closet.

"Eunice!" he babbled in stark unbelief, staring as at a ghost.

"Yes, dear," she answered gently, as if to a frightened child. "It is I. And—I am too late. But how could I know? And how could I know it would be my little girl, Ardath, of all the women in the world?"

"Ardath?" he repeated dully; then, "That is Evelyn Eden, the actress. I—I married her. This morning."

"Married?" she echoed, aghast, one hand clutching her heart. "Married Ardath?"

"No, no," he explained, miserably. "Evelyn Eden. Oh, Eunice, why did you never let me know where you were? I hunted so long! I was so heartbroken! I—"

"Your heart is healed; as men's hearts have a happy way of healing, dear," she said, sadly.

Then the dressing room door opened. Evelyn came in, singing happily, under her breath. At sight of the strange woman she halted surprised. But only for a moment. After one searching, incredulous look, she ran forward; and with a rapturous cry of "Mother!" flung herself into Eunice's outstretched arms. Bruce Kingston looked on; dumb, starkly bewildered, helpless.

"Oh, mother, my own beautiful mother!" Evelyn was exclaiming hysterically. "Father said you had died! He said—"

"I know, baby, I know," whispered Eunice, lovingly caressing the head that lay so blissfully on her breast.

"I'll Keep You Here by Force, if I Have To!"

"He was mistaken. There is much to tell you. But it must wait. And you are married? To this gentleman, too? Mr.—Kingston, I think he said his name was. I was told I might find you here, little daughter. So I came. I told Mr. Kingston who I was. And he was just telling me about your marriage when you broke in on us."

She shot a meaning glance at Bruce, over her daughter's head. He understood. Evelyn was not to know. She must never know what Eunice had been to him. In silence he bowed assent to her unspoken dictum.

"Ropes of Sand" was nearing the end of its first performance. There could be no doubt as to its success; or that Broadway would most enthusiastically welcome the new leading woman, Evelyn Eden, to its fellowship.

The brief last act had begun. In this act Evelyn did not come on until five minutes before the fall of the curtain. Bruce and she had been sitting in her dressing room. He had just stepped out in response to a message from the manager, when Duncan Hilliard's card was brought to Evelyn.

A moment later Hilliard strode into the room. She ran to greet him and he caught her joyfully in his big arms. His breath reeked of cheap liquor.

"Daddy!" she cried. "Oh, it's so good to see you! I was afraid you wouldn't get to New York on time."

"I got here yesterday," he said. "I was on my way to your rooms when I saw you walking with—"

"You saw me—and you didn't speak to me?" she asked, hurt to the quick.

"Why?"

"Because you were with—"

"Daddy!" broke in Evelyn, in joyous excitement, as Bruce entered. "This is my husband!"

The two men stood face to face. It was Hilliard who spoke first.

"I know him," he said curtly.

"What?" she asked, amazed. "You've met—?"

"I met him when he stole my wife from me, nine years ago."

"Dad!" she gasped.

"When he stole her from me and then cast her off like a—"

"You lie!" raged Bruce, his eyes ablaze, his fists hard clenched.

"Dad! Bruce!" wailed the girl, dumfounded with horror.

Then in a flash she recalled Eunice's lame excuse for her presence in Kingston's rooms that day. And her heart died within her.

She opened her lips, as though to speak. But before the words could take form, the call-boy hurried in to summon her to the stage.

Bruce ran at top speed to intercept his bride. But he was too late. Already she was on the stage beginning her great final scene.

When, at last, she pressed the poison ring to her lips and sank slowly to the floor a wave of unchecked emotion swept the audience.

Down came the curtain. Before it could rise again to the thunder of applause, Bruce Kingston had dashed out on the stage and was kneeling at Evelyn's side. Something in her attitude had filled him with a sudden hideous suspicion.

Frankly he bent above her, calling her name. Then his eyes rested upon the poison ring on the white little hand that rested too close to her useless face. The stone was swinging back on its hinge. The poison hollow was empty.

(END OF FOURTH STORY.)