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Title: The Devil

Adapter: Oliver Herford

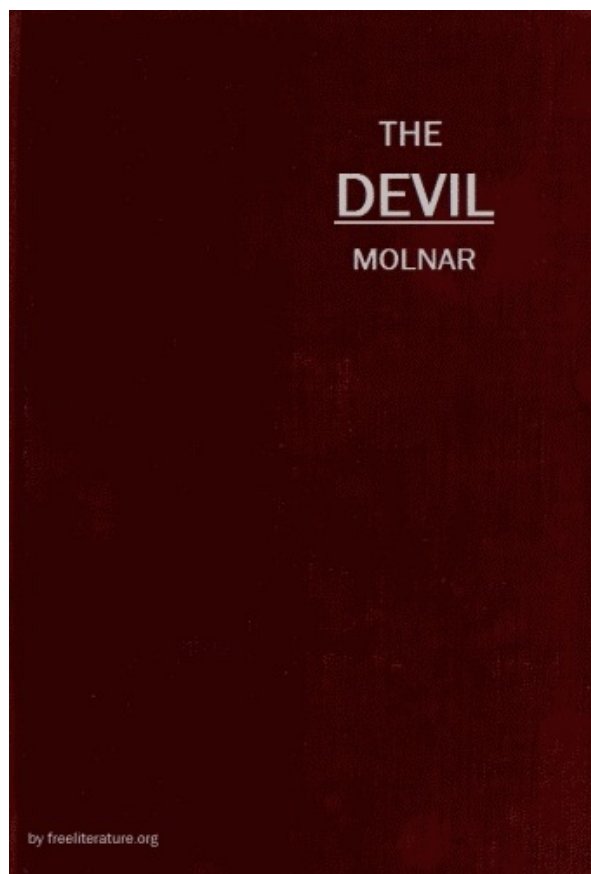
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DEVIL ***



THE DEVIL

by

FERENC MOLNAR

adapted by

OLIVER HERFORD

by exclusive arrangement with

the author

NEW YORK



Olga and Dr. Miller (The Devil)

As originally produced by

HENRY W. SAVAGE

at Hartford, July 6th, 1908

Staged by Robert Milton, with the assistance
of Julius Herzka, Director-General of the
Volks-Theatre, Vienna

CAST OF CHARACTERS
IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Karl Mahler, an artist		Paul McAllister
Heinrich, his valet		W. Chrystie Miller
Mimi, his model		Marion Lorne
Olga Hofmann, the banker's wife		Dorothy Dorr
Herman Hofmann, a banker		Frank Monroe
The Devil (calling himself Dr. Miller)		Edwin Stevens
Elsa Berg, an heiress		Marguerite Snow
Madame Zanden		Nan Lewald
Madame Reineke		Jane Murray
Madame Schleswig	Guests at the Hofmanns' ball	Theodosia de Cappet
Madame Lassen		Tina Marshall
Herr Grosser		John McKee
Herr Besser		Arthur Hoyt
Man Servant		Franklin Bixby

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

[ACT I](#)—Karl Mahler's Studio, Vienna. (Afternoon.)

[ACT II.](#)—Conservatory Reception Room at the Hofmanns'. (Evening.)

[ACT III.](#)—At Karl's Studio. (The next morning.)

STAGE DIRECTIONS

Up. away from audience

Down. toward audience

Up C. centre of stage, away from audience

R. right of stage

L. left of stage

C. centre of stage

R. C. to right of centre

L. C. to left of centre

THE DEVIL

ACT I

SCENE.—*Room next to KARL'S studio. At the back of the stage to the L. is a glass door with portière towards the stage. When this door is opened one can see the studio. Back of the stage to the R. a fireplace with burning fire. Round the fireplace an elevation about half a yard high reaching into the middle of the room. This elevation is bordered by a wooden railing with an opening on each side—in the middle of the railing an ancient Gothic chair, with back towards the public; the back of the chair must be so high that a person sitting in it cannot be seen by the public. On the R. a door leading into the entrance hall of the apartment. There is a little invisible door covered as the rest of the room, with wall paper, on the L. near the footlights. About a yard from this door, a settee with the head end towards the glass door of the studio. Next to this settee a small, ancient table, about one yard high. On the L. a curio cabinet (small); next to it a hall stand with some shawls of different colors. On L. next the settee a large, gilded, stand-up candelabra, as used in churches.*

There are many sketches, framed and unframed, about the room—some statues, some heads, and a very elegant electric candelabra hanging in the middle of the room. The whole thing unharmonious but artistic. Down stage on the R. a medium-sized table littered with books, magazines and bric-à-brac; a large palette lies on the top of some books and scattered among the other things some tubes of paint and paint brushes.

(When the Curtain rises the stage is empty for a few minutes.)

KARL, *comes in with hat and overcoat which he takes off*

Heinrich! Heinrich!

[HEINRICH, *coming from studio.*

KARL

Where were you?

HEINRICH

Nowhere, sir.

KARL

The door is wide open; anybody could have walked in.

[HEINRICH *goes into the studio and comes out with a velvet house-jacket. Calling after him:*

Where's today's paper?

[*He finds the newspaper.*

Well, hurry up.

[HEINRICH *comes back and helps KARL put on his jacket.*

KARL, *lights a cigarette*

Did you take my dress suit to be pressed?

HEINRICH

Yes, sir: he will bring it back in an hour.

[*Starts R.*

KARL

Good! Here's a crown. Get me a white tie, same as the last one.

[HEINRICH *starts R.*

Hold on! Put out a dress shirt on the bed, then look for my pearl buttons—they are probably in the top drawer—in a match-box. Stop! Give me that crown. Take this.

[*Gives him a bill.*

Get me a pair of white gloves, seven and a half. Oh! and Heinrich, before you go, put the Venetian chair next to the window. At three o'clock Mrs. Zanden will be here to have her portrait painted, and I shall be at home to nobody.

[*Reclines on the settee.*

Give me an ash tray.

[HEINRICH *gives it to him.*

All right; go along.

HEINRICH

Beg your pardon, sir—

KARL, *seated on couch L.*

What is it?

HEINRICH

Mimi is here.

KARL

Where?

HEINRICH

Waiting in the studio.

KARL, *indifferent, reading newspaper*

Send her away.

HEINRICH, *goes to the glass door*

Fräulein, Herr Marler does not need you today.

[*Exit L.*

MIMI, *coming in*

Hallo.

[KARL *is silent, continues reading his paper.*

[MIMI *comes down L.*

Don't you want to work today?

KARL

No.

[*Continues reading paper.*

[HEINRICH *goes into the studio.*

MIMI, *in bad humor, crosses to C.*

Good-bye.

[*Turns around.*

And tomorrow?

KARL

No.

MIMI, *sad*

Good-bye. (*Wipes her eyes.*) You don't love me any more ... you don't love me any more.

KARL

Oh! It's going to start again!

MIMI

Ever since last fall you've been different. I knew it right away when you started to paint landscapes. When you are in love you paint Venuses. I know what it means when you start to paint trees.

KARL

You're silly, Mimi.

MIMI

I know it. With her hat and coat on every model is silly.

KARL

Go home, Mimi.

MIMI, *goes to head of couch*

Yes, yes. Go home! Be a good girl. For a week now you've sent me home without my even taking my gloves off. I'm no use any more.

[*Begins to cry but stops it at once.*]

Look here: I know everything.

KARL

Really?

MIMI

[*From behind him, raises his head.*]

Look at me! Look at me! You want to get married? Tell me No—you don't dare.

KARL

No.

MIMI, *comes to L. of him*

Oh, you tell me anything you want to my face; but I know you're going to marry a girl named Elsa—the wife of your friend Mr. Zanden has arranged everything—look at me and deny it, if you dare. After all, what's the use! you wouldn't tell me the truth anyway.

KARL

You little mind-reader.

MIMI

She's a nice one, Mrs. Zanden! Instead of taking you on herself, she marries you to a friend of hers. But I don't care; you don't love me any more—doing landscapes all the time.

KARL

Well, what do you want?

MIMI, *crosses to R. of him and kneels*

Tell me you do love me. (*Pouting.*)

KARL, *bored*

Yes, yes—of course.

MIMI, *imitating him*

Yes, yes, of course. Is that the best you can do?

KARL

Well, what shall I say?

MIMI

Oh! You painters! It's always the same. First you say: "What an angel! What a Madonna! What a Venus! What color! What hair! What lines!" Then all of a sudden, it's: "Oh, my dear! Why, you've gone yellow." The next day you're green, and then it's: "I have no time today." And, first thing you know, you're—pooh! Landscapes. (*Scornfully.*)

[*She goes to him above table at head of couch,*

takes his head in her hands.

Don't you *like* me?

KARL, smiling

Why, yes.

MIMI

If you were really nice, you would at least promise to marry me. All the other artists promised. They weren't so mean as you are! Oh yes, I know I am annoying you. I'm absolutely boring you.

KARL

If you were not such a dear little nuisance— [*Reaches up and draws her down to him.* —I would have done with you a long time ago.

[Kisses her.

And now, run away, little girl: go home.

MIMI

Don't you want me tomorrow? or the day after tomorrow?

KARL

No.

MIMI, *crossing to him at couch*

You will never have me pose any more for you at all?

KARL, *rises; crosses with her to door R.*

I'll look in on you this evening on my way to the Zandens'.

MIMI

But you can't work in my house. I've only a lamp!

KARL

Ha! Ha! Ha! Well, we'll put that out!

[Has taken her to the door.

MIMI

Oh, will we!

[Laughing.

Maybe *you'll* get put out.

KARL

Bye, bye!

[MIMI exits.

[Lights another cigarette—the bell rings sharply. Calls, somewhat excited.

Heinrich! Heinrich!

HEINRICH, *comes in from studio*

Yes, sir.

[Runs through the door on the R., which he leaves open, and goes off to open the hall door.

KARL

[Fixes his tie nervously, puts away newspaper, puts out his cigarette in ash tray, and arranges his hair. He goes towards the door through which HERMAN and OLGA enter, HEINRICH closes the door from the outside, KARL bows.

Madame!

[Bows silently to HERMAN.

HERMAN, *in a hurry*

I only came to bring Olga, my boy: I must go back at once.

[OLGA *has been looking around.*

OLGA, *going to C. and over to L.*

So this is the famous studio.

KARL, *looking around*

Funny, isn't it? More like a junk shop.

HERMAN

We might have chosen another day to begin Olga's portrait—we have waited six years, so we could just as well have waited until tomorrow; but the preparations for tonight's ball made Olga so nervous that I thought it best to bring her here. You know this ball is a kind of house-warming.

[*Crosses over to C.*

OLGA

We were obliged to invite such a *lot* of people, to clear off our social obligations.

HERMAN

I wish it was over. I hate these functions. Old Freebody, in whose business I started, was worth ninety millions, and he never gave a party in his life—or anything else, for that matter. When do you want me to call for Olga?

KARL, *R. C.*

Well, it gets dark very early now: in three quarters of an hour we won't be able to see any more.

HERMAN

Well, then—

KARL, *looking at his watch*

Let's say four o'clock.

OLGA, *after looking at a picture L. very closely*

Who is that?

KARL

Oh, some model.

OLGA

Wasn't that the girl we just met on the stairs?

HERMAN *crosses quickly to L.*

I must have a look at her.

[*Looks at picture.*

[OLGA *stands so as to hide picture.*

Oh, better not.

[*Makes a gesture as if he had seen something indecent.*

Well, every minute counts—I must be off.

[*Shakes his finger at KARL.*

You'll have to stop that sort of thing, now, Karl. You know you are one of the reasons of tonight's ball. Isn't he, Olga?

OLGA

Yes—tonight Karl is to fall in love with his future wife.

KARL, *goes L. C.*

I shall do my best.

[*To HERMAN.*

Sentenced to marry! Well, I'm prepared to meet my doom.

OLGA, *seated on couch, with a little sigh*

At last! I shall be glad.

HERMAN

So shall I. So will the girl. So will Karl.

KARL

I hope so. She's a charming girl.

OLGA

Wait till you—

KARL

I know—I know. I shall adore her. But I have till this evening, you know.

HERMAN, *crossing to* OLGA

Well, I'm off. My agent may telephone any minute.

[*He kisses OLGA'S hand.*]

I shall call for you at four o'clock, my dear. And don't worry about tonight: the caterer has his instructions.

[*Crossing to R., shaking hands with KARL, who holds him back.*]

KARL, *shaking HERMAN'S hand*

Aren't you afraid to leave your wife?

HERMAN

Shall I tell you the truth? I'm hurrying because I'm afraid of changing my mind and taking Olga away with me.

OLGA

You're not jealous?

HERMAN, *at door*

If I wasn't afraid of appearing ridiculous, I would say: Be good! And now, good-bye.

[*He goes off, KARL bringing him to the door of entrance hall.*]

KARL

[*Coming back, closes the door, stands still for a minute—when he comes back, OLGA shivers slightly and touches her forehead with her hand.*]

[*Crosses to L. C. by* OLGA.

What is it?

OLGA, *with a nervous, soft laugh*

Nothing—nothing at all.

KARL, *tenderly*

Are you frightened?

[OLGA *does not answer.*]

Tell me.

OLGA, *nervous, confused, as if she was afraid of him*

I don't know, but—I feel as if—as if—

KARL

What do you mean?

OLGA, *trying to laugh, but very nervously*

I had the same feeling once in Dresden, when my mother took me to a boarding-school and left me there. I felt as if I were quite alone in this wide, strange world—and now—you know yourself. I have fought against coming here for six years.

[*Looks around.*]

What a queer place. I don't think I like it. [KARL *crosses C. and up laughing.* Strange monsters, cut off heads, and you in the middle of all this like a wizard. While my husband was here I did not feel it, but now these heads seem to stare at me.

[*She shivers.*]

KARL

Don't be nervous—every woman I paint comes here.

OLGA, *seated on couch, quietly*

And do you paint every woman that comes here?

KARL

No.

[*Silence.*]

OLGA

Did you understand my husband just now?

KARL

I think I did.

OLGA

He has often pretended to be jealous, but this time there was a ring in his voice that made me feel that there was something behind it.

KARL

You don't really think he's jealous?

OLGA, *crosses to chair*

No. But this is the first time I've been alone with you.

KARL

Now we can talk things over. I've wanted to for a long time.

OLGA, *leans against R. back of chair*

We've done well to avoid it all these years. A good conscience is like a warm bath—one feels so comfortable in it.

KARL

Last Thursday, when we spoke about my painting your portrait, you seemed embarrassed.

OLGA, *looks at him; their eyes meet*

Don't let us talk about it. I don't want to.

KARL

Don't be afraid of me. If I were not I, your fear might be justified; but as it is, surely we can trust ourselves to talk things over quietly. To think that seven years ago I was a teacher in Herman's family—and I was there the day your engagement was announced—it was the evening of the day we—

OLGA, *puts her hand on his, softly reproaching him*

Karl.

KARL

—We kissed each other for the first time. Oh, I know. I was only a drawing teacher—but you—what were you? Just a poor little friend of Herman's sisters. Sometimes you were asked to tea in their grand house. And there we met—a beggar boy and a beggar girl at the rich man's table. Do you wonder? And then, just as we realized what we were to each other, one fine day Herman up and proposed to you. Such a dazzling offer—who could blame you?

OLGA, *hurt*

Please—please, Karl.

KARL

We were two poor little souls who found one another in the wilderness of wealth—only to lose each other. Even the memory of that one little kiss....

OLGA

Dear Karl, don't. We have grown up to be sensible people—we have put it out of our thoughts.

KARL

Oh, I know it's all over. To-day I'm—(*humorously*) the famous painter, your husband is my friend, and though we see one another every day, we have never spoken of it again. I wouldn't even have the courage to ask you to sit for your portrait. I was afraid, and I think you were afraid. And so was your husband. And that is why until this day—

OLGA, *steps down one pace from chair, gives him her hand*

You *are* a real friend.

KARL, *goes to her, gently*

There's nothing to be afraid of.

OLGA

Oh, it was only my husband's voice—something in his manner that frightened me. He must know what we were to one another, though he has never made the slightest allusion to it, not one single word in all these years. But when he left us here alone, he seemed to feel—

[*Breaks off.*

But there is no reason for it, is there? We are not in love with one another, are we? And it's just lovely to think that we have not entirely forgotten old times. Don't you think so, Karl?

KARL, *goes to chair*

Of course I do.

OLGA

Because if we still loved one another, you would not marry, would you?

[*Taking off gloves.*

KARL

Of course not.

OLGA

So you will be married and you will be very, very happy—and I shall be happy, too, because it is my own idea, and I have picked out a nice girl for you—pretty and clever—

[KARL *bows silent acquiescence.*

And now—

[*Goes up and knocks on back of chair—business of entering imaginary door, etc. She speaks in an everyday voice, in marked contrast to former tone.*

How do you do, Professor? I have come to have my portrait painted.

KARL, *quite enthusiastic, R. C.*

Last night I made a sketch of you from memory.... Oh, I've made lots of sketches of you; but now, now I see you in another light.

OLGA, *R.*

How do you mean?

KARL

Yesterday I looked upon you as a model. To-day you are a motif—you are a revelation....? there is something in your eyes....

OLGA

Please, please, Karl, we agreed that—that—

KARL

Pardon me, I'll try to remember.

[*Goes up on platform.*

OLGA

Let's go to work now—it's getting late.

KARL

Whenever you are ready—

OLGA

What am I to do?

KARL, *steps behind her to take hat pins out of her hat*

Take off your hat and your coat, please.

OLGA

Thanks, I can do that myself.

[*She takes her hat and coat off. KARL takes her coat up on platform.*

KARL, *passing her chair as he goes up*

Do you use perfume in your hair?

OLGA

I? Never!

[*At chair up in alcove.*

KARL

Oh, then it is the natural perfume of your hair.

[*She looks at him reproachfully.*

Pardon me: I stood too near.

[*Looks at her in silence. She crosses back of large chair to couch L., and sits facing audience.*

OLGA, *nervously, turns her head to him*

What is it?

KARL, *leaning against big chair, looking at her dress*

I was just thinking—didn't your husband say an evening frock?

OLGA

Yes. Herman wants me painted décolletée—in an evening gown; just a head and shoulders, you know. I would have preferred a street dress.

KARL

I'm afraid I agree with Herman on that point. But have you?... Didn't you?... Where is the dress?

OLGA

Oh, I thought you would only be painting my face the first sitting.

KARL, *comes C., laughs*

So you thought I began at the top of a portrait and painted down?

OLGA, *hesitating*

Yes.

KARL

Why, the drawing of the shoulders is almost more important than the head in the first sketch.

OLGA

Oh, dear. How stupid of me.

KARL, *crossing L.*

I'll tell you what—

[*He selects some draperies from those hanging in the corner.*

I have some draperies here—

OLGA

Well—

KARL

You can arrange one of these around your shoulders like—like an evening gown.

OLGA, *mechanically*

Yes.

KARL, *hanging drapery on cabinet L.*

You will have to be quick because it will soon be dark. Here are the draperies—you'll find some pins over here, and I'll go into the studio while you—until you—

[*Goes to door of studio.*

OLGA, *seated*

Until when? Why?

KARL

Why, if I'm to paint your shoulders—well—

[Turns away towards studio.]

—your blouse?

OLGA, *terribly embarrassed*

Of course—

KARL

Do just as if you were at home. I'll close this door.

[Goes to door R. to entrance hall and locks it.]

And now I'll go into the studio ... and you can lock this door yourself.

[He has opened the door of the studio and has made one step into studio, and now says in a low tone:]

Oh! It's snowing.

[He looks at Olga.]

OLGA

Snowing?

KARL

Snowing hard.

[Silence.]

OLGA

Hadn't we better?—perhaps—perhaps—tomorrow—or—or—

[She has been saying this very slowly, as if afraid, but now suddenly regains confidence, as if she had had a saving idea.]

Tomorrow I could bring my maid.

KARL

Oh, no, no. Your husband would certainly want to know the reason, and really—if this door is closed—

[He goes back to his studio.]

It's too bad! This snow takes all the light away. But never mind—never mind; the snow shovellers will be glad of it.

[He has spoken the last few sentences in a very low voice, as if the situation was painful to him. He goes backwards into the studio and now closes the door. [OLGA is standing with her back towards the studio, staring in front of her. She now shrinks together, shivers, turns around. Sudden resolution, she turns the key, locking the door to the studio. Slowly unbuttons her blouse, looks at the shawls, of which she chooses one, afterwards takes her blouse off quietly, putting the shawl around her shoulders. She has put the blouse on the settee before she arranges the shawl. She now picks up the blouse and wants to put it on the chair in front of the fireplace; her arm is already stretched out when she suddenly drops the blouse, utters a suppressed shriek, dropping blouse by chair, and crosses quickly to foot of couch.]

[The DEVIL, in fashionable frock coat, a crimson carnation in buttonhole, a man of from thirty-five to thirty-eight years old, resembling in face classical Mephisto, very elegant, picks up the blouse and offers to OLGA in a most polite manner.]

DEVIL

Pardon, Madame.

[*Comes C. a little.*

I think you dropped something.

[OLGA takes the blouse mechanically and looks at him frightened.

I must beg your pardon, Madame. I came from lunch. Karl was not at home. I waited and I fell asleep in this very comfortable chair.

[*He rubs his eyes.*

Forgive me, Madame, for opening my eyes at a moment when, for propriety's sake, I should have at least kept one eye shut.

OLGA, *puts blouse on couch and goes L., horrified and disgusted*

Oh!

DEVIL, *Right of couch L.*

I am aware this is a base insinuation—of course you only come here—

[*Ironical.*

OLGA

To have my portrait painted.

DEVIL

I once had a similar encounter at a dentist's; and the lady, to prove that my insinuations were false, did not hesitate to sacrifice a perfectly good tooth.

OLGA

I tell you, I—

DEVIL, *very polite*

Oh, I know—you speak the truth. I am even at liberty to believe it, though *your* truth is only partly in style. *Truth* should have nothing on at all, you know.

OLGA

The insolence! What right have you to speak to me? Who are you? What are you doing here? Karl!

[KARL *tries door outside.*

Karl!

[*She opens the door of the studio, KARL appears on the threshold and looks surprised at the DEVIL.*

DEVIL, *crosses up R. C. very quickly*

How do you do?

KARL, *taken aback*

How do you do?—er—how are you?

DEVIL, *quickly*

You don't seem to remember me—we met at Monte Carlo—

KARL, *up L. C.*

Oh, yes.

DEVIL

Quite an eventful day it was.

KARL, *comes down a little*

Yes, yes, I remember. It was last fall, and I had just lost all my money at roulette. As I turned from the table, I caught sight of a stranger frowning at me.

[*Pointing to DEVIL.*

It was you. I was startled, because only a moment before I had seen you next to the croupier, and I thought I heard you laugh when I lost. But now I remember—you stood behind me, and when I had lost everything, you offered me, a total stranger, a handful of louis d'or.

DEVIL

You refused—beggingly.

KARL

Yes, but—

DEVIL, *continuing*

You took them—protestingly.

KARL

In five minutes I had won everything back, and 20,000 francs besides. Your gold seemed to have magic power, I remember. When you gave it to me it seemed to burn.

DEVIL

But you paid me back and invited me to supper. I had to refuse, because I was obliged to leave for Spain the same evening, but I promised to look you up the next time you needed me—

[*Crosses to R.*

and here I am.

KARL

Well, I'll be—

DEVIL, *interrupting quickly*

Don't mention it. I took a little nap in your chair.

[*Goes up to back of big chair.*

OLGA, *goes C., pointing to big chair. Frightened*

It's very strange—this chair was empty; there was nobody there.

DEVIL, *stepping towards her, bowing; in a tone allowing no contradiction*

Then I was mistaken, Madame.

[*OLGA goes over behind couch L. Silence.*

[*OLGA and KARL look at the DEVIL suspiciously.*

KARL, *L. C., embarrassed*

Won't you please sit down? Allow me to introduce you. I quite forget your name....

DEVIL, *R. C.*

Call me anything you like: we only call names when the party is absent; but I am here now—call me Miller, or Brown, or Black.

[*Start from KARL. DEVIL stops him.*

If you think Doctor sounds better, why not call me Doctor Miller?

KARL, *very much embarrassed*

Doctor Miller—

[*Crosses to R. C. The DEVIL kisses OLGA'S hand devoutly at foot of couch.*

Under ordinary circumstances, I should now take my hat and leave;

[*Goes up C.; turns.*

but my infinite tact compels me to force my presence upon you in this disagreeable situation.

[*Sits down in chair C.*

OLGA, *crossing to KARL; to the DEVIL*

How dare you! Karl! This man has the insolence to—

DEVIL, *seated C. Very quickly*

Your husband has been dead some time?

OLGA, *R.*

I'm not a widow.

DEVIL, *very quick*

Oh, divorced?

OLGA

No.

DEVIL

Well, if you think that I have insulted you, I should say the proper person to refer me to would be your husband.

[*Rises; to KARL:*

Of course, if you wish, I am at your disposal also.

[*To OLGA:*

But, Madame, this would be admitting—

KARL

What's it all about? I don't understand you. You come in here, I don't know how or where from, and you—you act as if you had trapped us—

OLGA, *goes to KARL R. C.*

The idea!

DEVIL

Say what you like: I cannot go.

OLGA

Why not?

DEVIL

If I were to go now, it would be as much as to say: "Pardon me, I fear I intrude." But if I remain, I show that I suspect nothing.

KARL

We don't need your assurance.

[*OLGA crosses to L. below couch.*

DEVIL, *bows politely; embarrassing silence*

Suppose we talk about something else. I think we are in for a snowstorm.

[*Standing R. of studio door. Silence.*

[*OLGA stands near the door leading to the studio, quite astonished.*

Are you sending anything to this year's exhibition?

KARL, *uncomfortable*

Perhaps—I may send something.

[*Silence. The DEVIL lights a cigarette at table L. C.*

DEVIL, *puffs cigarette. On second puff*

Permit me, Madame.

[*OLGA, picking up blouse, as if suddenly awakened and realizing her position, goes into the studio, closing the door behind her.*

Full of temperament—full of temperament. And pretty, too.

[*KARL starts to light cigarette at table L. C.*

KARL, *dropping cigarette, crosses to chair up C., sits and looks at the DEVIL without speaking*

DEVIL

Too bad she doesn't love her husband.

[*KARL turns quickly towards the DEVIL. Quick:*

How do I know? The way she turned to you just now when she fancied herself insulted—it didn't escape me.

[*KARL takes up the ash tray and throws it angrily on table.*

No; she doesn't love her husband. He must be either a genius or a very common man. Marriage with them is always unlucky. Believe me, common men live so low that women are afraid somebody will steal in at night through the window which they forgot to lock. And Genius, well! That lives on the top floor—so many stairs, no elevator. Her ideal is—

[A motion of the hand, wanting to express an even, middle position.]

—the second floor.

[KARL looks impatiently at his watch and goes towards the door of the studio. The DEVIL leans back blowing the smoke of his cigarette, indifferently.]

This is the second time I have seen her shoulders.

KARL, *coming down left of couch*

What do you mean?

DEVIL

The first time I saw them was in Paris—

[Start from KARL.]

at the Louvre—only they were on the *Aphrodite*. Am I right?

KARL, *crossing to large chair R. C. In bad humor*

How should I know?

DEVIL, *lifting himself upright, cynically*

Which shoulders have you not seen?

KARL, *angry*

I've seen the *Aphrodite*.

DEVIL, *seated on couch*

Well, you may take my word. I have seen them both. And, believe me, since *Alcamenes*, I have only known one sculptor who could model such shoulders.

KARL

Who's that?

DEVIL

Good living. Such tender, soft lines are only possible for a woman who lives exquisitely well. I take it she is the wife of a millionaire?

[KARL goes again towards door of studio impatiently.]

Is she dressing?

KARL, *nervously*

I suppose so.

DEVIL

Is there a looking-glass in your studio?

KARL, *comes down L. of couch*

Yes.

DEVIL

She must be very respectable.

[KARL looks at him astonished.]

If a lady takes as long as that to dress before a looking-glass, she's not a—model—anyway.

KARL, *crosses around foot of couch to table L. C.*

Look here! I think your remarks are, to say the least, in very bad taste.

DEVIL, *standing erect*

Do you mean that?

KARL, *aggressively*

I do.

DEVIL, *patting* KARL'S *cheek*

Then *you* must be respectable, too.

[*Crosses to big chair, KARL stares at him astonished.*

In a situation like this, only a very respectable man can be so infernally stupid.

[*KARL crosses to R. OLGA opens door of studio, goes towards KARL without looking at the DEVIL, who is hidden in chair.*

OLGA, *dropping shawl on couch*

What's the time?

[*Crosses to KARL, R.*

DEVIL, *looking up over back of chair*

He'll be here in ten minutes.

OLGA, *angry*

Who?

DEVIL

Your husband.

OLGA

Oh! So you weren't asleep after all.

DEVIL

Oh, yes, I was.

[*Rises.*

But "What's the time?" always means the husband. A woman's intuition invariably anticipates her husband's coming by ten minutes. If it wasn't for that ten minutes, there would be more divorced women—

[*He goes and unlocks the door of the hall.*

—and less locked doors.

[*KARL crosses to L. C.*

OLGA, *taking her hat*

Will this never stop!

DEVIL

I tried to change the subject. I started to speak about the weather—the Exhibition—but Karl wouldn't have it.

OLGA

Karl!

KARL

I? I haven't said a single word.

DEVIL, *crosses to big chair*

But your actions fairly shouted. The way you jumped up, looked at your watch, went to the door—

[*To OLGA:*

He was afraid, the poor fellow.

KARL

Afraid of what?

[*L. C.*

DEVIL, *to OLGA*

That your husband would come before you had finished dressing. I don't blame him.

OLGA, *R.*

What, again!

[*Goes up to hat.*]

KARL, *L. C.*

Can't you—

DEVIL

Come now! Let us be logical—let us look the situation in the face. Enter your husband—

[*OLGA comes down R.*]

"Well, here I am: where is the picture?" "The picture?"

[*Shrugs his shoulders.*]

"There is no picture. Karl hasn't even touched a brush." Your husband is astonished—he tries to speak—the words stick in his throat—he gasps: "Well, if you didn't paint, why is she dressing?" Imagine the situation! You look at one another horribly embarrassed; Karl stammers something, but that only makes it worse. Nothing has happened—and yet the mischief is done. What mischief? Appearances—appearances. They're like fly-paper. There's no getting away from them.

[*Speaking to OLGA:*]

You go home with your husband, and he doesn't speak—and if you ask him: "Why don't you say something?" his blood seems to boil. If you ask him to take a cab, he suspects that you want to avoid meeting somebody—every word that you utter tortures him. And if—

KARL, *C.*

And if it *were* so, we are not alone, you are here.

DEVIL, *icy and cynical*

Just so, I am here—one word from me would save the situation—but—I know myself—I'm a strange, whimsical, almost cruel man—and I'm afraid I won't say the word. Tableau! Embarrassing silence! Then I say: "I regret that I should have come at such an inopportune moment." I take my hat and walk out discreetly. If necessary, I can even stammer my excuses.

OLGA

If this is a jest, it's a cruel one.

DEVIL, *bowing low*

Possible, Madame—but I can do better still. Of course, if you prefer it, I can make conversation—when your husband comes in, I can tell him that the portrait has not been touched and ask his pardon—

OLGA

Pardon? Pardon for what?

DEVIL, *bowing* For having—quite accidentally—seen your shoulders.

OLGA, *horrified*

Who are you?

DEVIL

I am one who always comes at the right moment—I come from Nowhere.

[*Very bitingly.*]

I am here—

[*Touching OLGA'S forehead.*]

OLGA

What do you want with me? You turn everything to evil. I have scarcely known you five minutes, and I seem to feel your fingers at my throat.

DEVIL

That's because I like you. With most pretty women I take longer.

KARL, *furiously, starts towards him*

Look here: this has gone far enough!

[*Makes a few steps towards the DEVIL, who stands erect without moving. At the same time, HEINRICH comes to the door, which he opens, and starts*

speaking at once.

HEINRICH

The tailor has sent an evening suit, but it is not yours, sir.

DEVIL

Put it on the chair in the bedroom.

KARL

But it's not mine.

DEVIL, *gives a sign to HEINRICH to go out and do as he was told. Speaking to KARL*

It's mine.

KARL

Yours?

DEVIL, *makes motion to HEINRICH, who goes out*

*[During speech OLGA goes up and gets her hat.
KARL walks back and forth L. C.]*

I had to have it pressed. I told the tailor to send it here. I must dress for tonight. I'm going to a ball the prettiest woman in Vienna is giving at the house of the Duke of Maranse.

OLGA, *coming down R., frightened*

But the Duke does not live there now—he's Ambassador in Madrid; he has sold his house—to us.

DEVIL

I know. I met him in Paris. He told me—

OLGA

We are living there now—we are giving the ball.

DEVIL

Am I mistaken? Am I not invited?

OLGA, *in a very low voice, dropping her head*

Yes—yes, you are.

DEVIL, *very polite*

Madame, you asked me a little while ago what I wanted. That's what I wanted. Thank you.

[Bows and turns towards C. Silence.]

OLGA

But my husband—

DEVIL, *turning to her*

Will be delighted. I've just come from Odessa. I have good news. Wheat is rising—this year's crop turned out worse than they thought it would.

OLGA, *greatly pleased*

Yes? The crop is bad?

[The DEVIL goes to big chair and kneels on it L.]

DEVIL

So you do love your husband? You're glad the crop is a failure?

OLGA

Of course I am.

[As if she was somewhat ashamed about her husband's speculations.]

We want the wheat to be bad because that will drive the price up.

KARL

What of that?

OLGA

My husband will make lots of money.

DEVIL, *to* OLGA

And you will get that new gown.

OLGA

How do you know I want a new dress?

DEVIL

You have a new hat—a very pretty one—and you will certainly want a new dress to wear with it.

OLGA

You must be married.

DEVIL

Married? Not the least—but I have an eye for feminine vanities. Oh, no! A wife is like a single eyeglass—it looks very nice, but one is better off without it.

OLGA, *R.*

You seem to have strong views against marriage. May I ask why?

DEVIL, *shaking his finger*

Because you are plotting matrimony against Karl, and I want to save him.

KARL, *starts toward him; stops C.*

I beg your pardon—

DEVIL

An artist ought never to marry—his wife will swear on the wedding day to stand by his side all through life. The day after the wedding she will stand in his way.

OLGA

Not the real wife.

DEVIL

The real wife is always the other man's wife.

OLGA

You're a cynic.

DEVIL

Oh, no, not cynical, only careful. A tigress who has married—I mean eaten—a man, is no longer dangerous—you can ride on her back through the jungle. But, you must wait till she has married—I mean eaten—somebody; then she is quite safe.

KARL

Better to keep away from the tigress—and stay at home.

DEVIL

Then why didn't *you* stay at home? Why did you refuse a legitimate position—good, everyday morals—a decent occupation at so much a week? You wanted to go into the jungle—and there you are. Now fight your battle—hunt tigers—but don't get married!

[He now changes his tone, goes into the church chair, on whose back he leans his two arms, speaking as if from a pulpit. It is almost dark, and during this scene it becomes darker yet.]

And yet—what a splendid couple you two would make.

[OLGA, standing quite near the DEVIL but not looking at him, buries her face in her hands.]

Wake up!

[To KARL:]

You, with your talent, your splendid youth!

[To OLGA:]

You, with your temperament, and beauty and longing!

KARL *crosses to R.*

Stop! Stop! I beg you—

[OLGA *backs to R. of back of chair, as though to protect* DEVIL.

—for years we have been just good friends.

DEVIL

[*He now begins to speak in almost a whisper, but getting warmer and warmer, the more embarrassed* KARL and OLGA *become.*

You may say what you like, but I can read your eyes; they say to me: "Don't believe him, he lies."

[*Goes to fire and warms his hands, KARL stands below* OLGA.

KARL

Don't interrupt me. For six years we have been —good friends, nothing else. Olga cares nothing for me—and I—and I—

DEVIL, *quickly*

What will you give me to interrupt you now?

OLGA

I don't know what you, who profess to know everything, know about us, but anyone who thinks Karl capable of one base thought must be very low and contemptible himself.

DEVIL

[*Goes behind* OLGA *and whispers into her ear. At the end of the speech he is a little to the L. of them by the big chair.*

It's not a base thought: it's a great thought—a thought that brings joy and warmth and light into your wretched little lives. But joy has its price—and you must pay it, you misers! The drunkard dies of drink, but while he is drunk angels in heaven sing to him. The poet dies in the ecstasy of his sweetest song. It is a coward's bravery that turns away from the wine, the song—and the lips of woman. The smallest candle-end shows you it is worth while to burn up for the sake of a little warmth—a little light. The only end of life is to burn—to burn yourself up. You must flame and blaze like a torch and toss the fire about you. I know: your moralists tell you to love one another—don't believe them—your grubby little earth with its paltry million years is not ripe for such a love as that. It can only breed monks, madmen, Methodists. Don't be a fool, be a rogue—but be a jolly rogue—and the world is yours! Look at me! I own the earth. Here is the key of life—Love yourself—only yourself. Dress yourself in the softest garments—kiss the sweetest lips—drink of the wine of Life—Drink! Drink! Drink!

[*Bell rings sharply—nobody moves.*

OLGA, *after a pause, in a low voice*

My husband—

DEVIL

[*Steps down from the chair, crossing C., snaps his fingers angrily, and says afterwards, in a cold, cynical tone:*

Mr. Wheat.

[HEINRICH *opens the door, and HERMAN comes in. HEINRICH follows him, but stops short at the door.*

HERMAN

I'm afraid I'm late. My agent hasn't telephoned me yet, but I didn't want to make you wait too long. Rather dark in here!

[HEINRICH *touches a button, lighting the lights, and exits.*

HERMAN, *sees the* DEVIL, *presenting himself*

I'm Herman Zanden, of Zanden Brothers & Wilde.

[DEVIL *mutters something and shakes hands with him C.*

OLGA, *coming down R.* KARL *goes behind big chair*

Strange man.

HERMAN

Pleased to meet you.

[*Converses with KARL a few moments; then to OLGA:*

Well, my dear, where's the picture? Mayn't I see it?

KARL, *in the big chair, leaning over back*

There's nothing to see—there is no picture.

HERMAN, *looking at his watch*

What have you been doing?

KARL

Nothing. (*Silence.*) It's been dark for the last hour.

HERMAN

Yes, but I've been gone two hours.

DEVIL, *steps to the front L. C. very politely*

It was all my fault. We have been chatting. We've had a very interesting discussion. And Madame was kind enough to invite me for this evening.

HERMAN

Oh! I'm very pleased.

DEVIL, *crosses to couch L. and sits*

Thank you. I have just come from Odessa. I had a talk with the Russian Wheat King. He tells me—

HERMAN

Yes, I've heard; wheat's going up.

OLGA, *frightened*

Isn't that good for us?

HERMAN

No, dear. I did not tell you this is the first year I am short on wheat.

KARL

What does it mean to be short on wheat?

DEVIL, *seated on couch L.*

It means digging a ditch for others and falling into it yourself.

[*To HERMAN:*

I don't think you've any cause for uneasiness. I have inside information that the American crop will be excellent.

HERMAN, C.

If that is the case, I shall be safe.

DEVIL

You will be quite safe.

HERMAN

Do you also deal in wheat?

DEVIL

Yes and no. I dabble in everything. And always at improper moments. (*Rises.*)

KARL, *has been talking to OLGA, but now goes over to HERMAN*

I'm afraid I can't come before eleven o'clock this evening.

[*Continues talking to HERMAN, and both go to fire.*

OLGA, *crosses and meets DEVIL, C.*

I must speak to you at once—alone.

[*Looks around as if she wanted to say that her husband and KARL were in the way.*

DEVIL

Alone? Delighted!

[Crosses by her and goes up C. OLGA goes behind couch and DEVIL addresses HERMAN.

By the way, if you want to see something delightfully bad, you ought to take a look at the sketch Karl made yesterday of your wife.

HERMAN, *coming down*

Where is the sketch?

DEVIL

In the studio.

[HERMAN takes KARL'S arm and walks to door of the studio; in going into the studio speaks to KARL.

HERMAN

I'm sorry you didn't start Olga's portrait today. What were you talking about all the time?

[Goes into studio.

DEVIL, *to OLGA*

I'll wait for you here.

[He steps back into the room just in time to see MIMI enter from the hall.

MIMI, *comes right in, crossing to C.* Excuse me—

DEVIL

You want to see the painter?

MIMI, *excited*

Yes, please.

DEVIL, *very gently, pushing MIMI out of the door into the hall and speaking through the door*

One minute, my dear. There are some visitors here. Sit down there. I'll call you.

OLGA, *comes quickly from the studio*

I wanted to tell you—to tell you—

DEVIL, *R. C.*

It is not true.

OLGA

What is not true?

DEVIL

Whatever you are going to tell me.

OLGA

But believe me.

DEVIL

Surely no woman can expect that.

OLGA

But I am telling you the truth.

DEVIL

Ah! I might believe you if you said you were not speaking the truth.

OLGA

Must I think and speak only as you wish me to?

DEVIL

Not yet. Now what can I do for you?

OLGA, *very earnestly L. C.*

Don't come tonight. Now my husband has come, I am myself again, and your manner grates upon me. I had begun to feel as if some strange force—some invisible hand—was clutching me —holding me in spite of myself. There is a

mystery about you. It frightens me. I thanked God when I heard that bell ring. He came just in time.

DEVIL

To point a moral and break up a charming party. We were just beginning to understand each other.

OLGA

Oh please stop!

DEVIL

Are you afraid?

OLGA

No, but I *ask* you not to come to our house this evening.

DEVIL, *with a very polite bow, then drawing himself up*

I shall come.

OLGA

And if my husband asks you not to come?

DEVIL

Your husband has already asked me to come.

OLGA

And if, in the presence of my husband, I ask you not to come?

DEVIL

Well, I'll make a compromise with you. If you repeat your invitation in your husband's presence, I shall accept; if you do not, I will not come.

OLGA, *breathing freely*

That's nice of you—the first really nice thing you've said. I like you much better.

[KARL and HERMAN come back from the studio, and HERMAN starts to talk at once to the DEVIL, KARL goes toward OLGA, who meets KARL up C.]

OLGA, *to HERMAN*

Shall we go?

HERMAN

Yes, dear; put your coat on.

[*Comes down L. DEVIL crosses to HERMAN.*]

KARL, *meets OLGA, they go up to recess. He helps OLGA to put her coat on.*

I see now how bad the sketch is.

[*Holds mirror for OLGA while she puts her hat on.*]

OLGA

Please don't look at me like that.

KARL

Even if I don't look at you, I see you just the same, Olga.

OLGA, *covering her face with her hand*

We must give up the portrait, Karl ... I'm going away ... away somewhere.

DEVIL, *L., with HERMAN.*

You don't say? You represent Holman & Co. in London? When I am in Odessa I am always old Mr. Holman's guest. A charming old gentleman. No doubt you have heard the rumors. It seems they've been mixed up with some unfortunate ventures which have seriously affected their standing.

HERMAN, *seated on couch*

Strange! Another friend of mine spoke to me about it only yesterday.

DEVIL

Yes, but that isn't all. He's the president of some trust company, and in order to boom the stocks he—but it's a long story, I won't bore you with it now.

[*Makes as if he wanted to go.*]

HERMAN

My dear sir, this concerns me more than I can tell you. The fact is—I—I am heavily interested.

[OLGA *has her hat on and turns, listening to HERMAN and the DEVIL.*

DEVIL

You don't say. But it's a long story.

HERMAN

Well, then—tonight.

DEVIL

Oh, I am so sorry. I have excused myself already to Madame, but I had forgotten all about a call I must pay at the Russian Embassy this evening.

HERMAN

Well, lunch with me tomorrow?

DEVIL, *with a gesture of regret*

I'm afraid it will be impossible. I leave tomorrow at nine o'clock for—Spain.

HERMAN, *to himself*

H'm! I must have this information.

[HERMAN *crosses to C., speaking to his wife*

My dear, won't you please ask the Doctor to try and arrange to come to our house this evening?

OLGA, *somewhat embarrassed*

Well, but if pressing business....

DEVIL, *L. C.*

It is not so very pressing. Of course, it would mean a little sacrifice.

HERMAN, *C., looking at OLGA*

Well—

OLGA, *R. C.*

Much as I would like to see you, Doctor, I cannot ask you to sacrifice anything for our sake.

DEVIL, *as if suddenly remembering something*

Come to think of it, the Russian Ambassador left town yesterday, so if Madame —

HERMAN, *goes up C. DEVIL crosses to her R. C.*

Well, my dear?

OLGA, *in a tone of resignation*

I hope we shall have the pleasure this evening—

DEVIL, *crosses to OLGA*

Pardon me. You said—

OLGA, *very slowly*

I hope we shall have the pleasure of your company this evening?

[*Goes to door R.*

DEVIL, *ironically*

Madame, I thank you for your invitation; I shall be most charmed.

HERMAN, *coming down to KARL*

And you don't come before eleven?

KARL, *by big chair*

No; I expect an art dealer.

HERMAN, *suggestively*

I know your art dealers. Fie! And you going to be married.

OLGA, *curiously, and a bit jealous*

What is it?

KARL

Oh, nothing.

DEVIL, *up C. as if listening*

I think somebody knocked at the door.

HERMAN

I didn't hear anything.

DEVIL

Yes, there it goes again.

[*Cynically.*

Probably the art dealer.

[*Goes to hall door, which he opens, steps out, speaking into the hall.*

Oh, it's you, my dear. Come in.

[*Swings MIMI into room past OLGA, landing her C.*

MIMI, *as she comes in embarrassed*

Good evening.

[HEINRICH *enters from studio.*

KARL, *up C. embarrassed*

Good evening.

[MIMI *goes up L.*

DEVIL, *R. C., in a low tone to HERMAN*

We'd better go.

[MIMI *and OLGA stare at one another.*

[*Cynically to HERMAN:*

The Art Dealer!

HERMAN, *laughing, going to door*

Well, au revoir.

[*Exit.*

DEVIL, *to OLGA*

Quite a little comedy.

OLGA, *at door R.*

You think so?

KARL, *to MIMI, pointing to the studio*

Please step in there, Fräulein; I'll be with you in a minute.

[KARL *turns to OLGA with hand out-stretched, as if to say good-bye. OLGA pretends not to see it and bows coldly.*

DEVIL, *whispers to OLGA*

You were good enough to invite me for this evening: I am now going to repay your kindness. In five minutes I shall be back here to interrupt this tête-à-tête. Watch me forget my overcoat.

[*He takes the overcoat which KARL had put on a chair at the beginning of the act when he came in. HEINRICH helps the DEVIL to put on the overcoat, but notices that it is his master's.*

HEINRICH

Pardon, sir; but this is not your overcoat. This—

DEVIL, *aside to HEINRICH*

Shut up!

[DEVIL *goes off*; HEINRICH *follows him out*.

KARL, *comes C. to* MIMI

Didn't I promise you I'd come? What do you want?

MIMI, *coming to him*

Were you ashamed to have those people see me?

KARL

I told you, I'd come. What more do you want?

MIMI

I was downstairs in the lunch room and thought it all over. Dear Karl, don't be mean—don't get married.

KARL

But—Mimi!

MIMI

I never used to care, but now that I've seen those people I—I can't bear it. Don't get married!

[*Cries.*

KARL

You mustn't cry—it spoils your beauty.

MIMI

Oh, I'm a fool.

KARL

Now, you're talking sense.

MIMI

I've been a silly girl—but it's all over now. I'm sensible again. You are going to settle down and marry Elsa and be the most famous portrait painter in all Europe.

KARL

Mimi, child—don't speak of portraits. I feel at this moment as if I never wanted to hear the word portrait again. I'd like to run away from everything, Mimi. What do you say?



Mimi and Karl

[*Goes to couch L. and sits.*

Suppose you and I get married and go away—far away into the country—or to the United States, where we'd never be heard of again.

MIMI, *kneels beside him*

Do you mean that?

KARL, *recklessly*

Yes—yes!

MIMI, gives him her hand

That's mighty nice of you, Karl.

[*Rises, goes L. C.*

But no! even if you really mean it—which you don't—

[*Makes an effort to control herself.*

KARL, *interrupting*

Mimi!

MIMI

No, Karl; I'd only keep you back—you must marry in your own set.

[*Changes tone.*

But don't run away—with—with anybody. Good-bye.——

KARL

No, don't go! Now you have come, you might as well stay a while—take your hat off.

[*Helps her off with her hat and jacket.*

I'm glad you came back. Now, let's be sensible—and talk it over. You know I really am fond of you—after all, I am your best friend and you are my—my—

[*The DEVIL has silently opened the door and comes in.*

DEVIL

My—my overcoat must be somewhere. Your stupid servant gave me yours.

[*Takes coat off.*

It's funny, but every time I come here, you are helping some lady to take off her things.

[*MIMI goes to couch.*

MIMI, horrified

Well, I never.

[*Exit.*

DEVIL

You have every qualification for a ladies' tailor.

KARL

You are very kind.

DEVIL

Don't mention it.

KARL, *impolitely*

I'll fetch your overcoat; I don't want to detain you.

[*Puts out lights and goes towards studio.*

DEVIL

The hanger was torn off. I asked your man to mend it and bring it here when it was done.

[*Sits up C. Silence.*

I just saw something very touching.

KARL
What?

[*Goes to C. and sits on arm of chair by DEVIL.*

DEVIL
The way that woman clung to her husband's arm as if for protection.
KARL

For protection? (*Sneeringly.*) From you?

DEVIL
Look here, my boy; do you think you are wise to be such a fool?

[*KARL rises, starts away, DEVIL catches him by hand.*

KARL
I don't want to talk about it. You don't seem to understand my position. I have seen this woman for years every day, and I never even thought—and if I had thought—I should have laughed at myself.

DEVIL, *rises, takes both KARL'S hands*

Look at her! She's yours. Think what it means —joy, unspeakable joy—the most supreme joy one can have. And to think that you are too lazy to stretch out your hand! Why, another one would toil day and night, would risk life and limb for such a prize—and it just drops at your feet—a windfall.

KARL
I suppose that's why—

[*In a tone as if he didn't think much of it.*

—just a windfall.

[*Sits on couch.*

DEVIL, *sits on table L. C.*

Last fall, on the sixth of September—I shall never forget the date—something strange happened to me. I put on an old suit I hadn't worn for a long time, and as I picked up the waistcoat, a sovereign fell out. God knows how long it had been there. As I turned this sovereign over to look at it, it suddenly slipped through my fingers and rolled away. I looked and looked, but my sovereign was gone. I become nervous: I can't find the sovereign. I search around for half an hour, three quarters of an hour, still I can't find it. I get angry, I get furious. I shift the furniture—no sovereign. I call my man—we both look everywhere until it's dark. I'm perspiring and trembling—I have but one idea: I must get that sovereign back. Suddenly a suspicion comes into my mind—I get up from my knees. I scream at the top of my voice to my servant: "You thief, you have found the sovereign and put it into your pocket." The man gets angry and answers me disrespectfully. I am about to strike him when I see the blade of a knife shining in his hands. I draw my revolver—

[*Takes a shining revolver out of his pocket and rises.*

—and with this revolver I nearly killed a man for a sovereign—

[*Look from KARL.*

—I didn't need and had never missed—just a found sovereign.

[*Puts revolver on table.*

KARL, *embarrassed*
I give found money away.

[*Turns on couch from him.*

DEVIL
I would have given it away, but—it slipped through my fingers, and whatever slips through our fingers, that is just the one thing we want.

[*Goes to KARL.*

We break our necks for it: that's human nature. And if it once slips through your fingers, you will run after your found sovereign. And then, when it is too late, you will discover it was worth having.

KARL

To draw a revolver for a found sovereign?

DEVIL, *sitting by him*

And that little woman will become dearer and more precious to you every day—you will realize that she could have given you wings—that her temperament, her beauty, her passion, would have been the inspiration of your work—all this you'll realize when she has slipped away. You could have become a master—a giant! Not by loving your art, but by loving her—but you won't know it till it is too late—too late.

[He now takes the shawl with which OLGA had draped her shoulders.]

This shawl has touched her bosom—

[Throws one end over KARL'S shoulder, forcing him to see it. KARL clasps the shawl and touches his lips to it.]

Think what you might have been to one another! What divine happiness, not because she is beautiful—no, but because you—

KARL, *throws shawl L. of couch*

Be quiet! Be quiet! Do you want to drive me mad?

DEVIL, *rises and goes to head of couch*

A life that has not been squandered—has not been lived—

KARL

Why do you tell me all this? Why? What do you want?

[Throws himself face down on couch.]

What do you want?

[Horried, turns to him.]

Who sent you?

DEVIL, *darkly*

Nobody! No one! I am here.

[Touches KARL'S forehead.]

KARL

No! And a thousand times no.

[Throws himself face down again on couch. Screams very loud.]

No! Do you hear me? No! I have known her all these years, and we've been good friends only—and we'll remain good friends, nothing else. I don't want the found sovereign!

[Moving to end of couch.]

DEVIL, *coming down L. of couch; very emphatically*

And if it slips away?

[Silence. Then quickly:]

If another man runs away with it—?

KARL, *suddenly jumping at a conclusion*

Who?

[Looks at the DEVIL.]

DEVIL, *triumphant*

I. (*Silence.*)

KARL

You?

[Laughs and turns from him.]

DEVIL

Tonight! This very night she'll be mine!

[Laughs.]

Oh, what joy! What exquisite joy. For ten thousand years I have had no prettier mistress!

KARL, *turning to him*

What do you say?

DEVIL, *sitting L. head of couch*

Mistress, I said. Come tonight—to her house—when the lights are burning—when the air seems to be filled with music and perfume. You'll see—before day dawns.

KARL

Enough! Enough!

DEVIL

How you will run after your lost sovereign! Every hour when you wonder where she is, she spends with me. A carriage passes: your heart stands still. Who's in that carriage? Shall I tell you? We! You see a couple vanish around a corner, clinging lovingly to one another. Who were they? We! Always we. A light goes out in some window. Who put that light out? We! We sit in every carriage, we vanish around every corner—clinging lovingly together; we stand behind every window curtain in close embrace, looking into your tortured face, your maddened eyes—and we cling closer—closer—and we laugh—we laugh!

[Laughs long.]

KARL

[Throws himself face down, back to audience, on couch, in terrible state of excitement, screaming at top of his voice:]

You fiend!

[Reaches for revolver with R. hand. DEVIL grabs his hand and holds revolver. KARL draws away and sits staring straight ahead, DEVIL rises, leaves revolver on table, lights cigarette, then comes below table.]

[HEINRICH enters the room noiselessly, carrying a lighted candle, goes behind the DEVIL and helps him to put his fur coat on.]

[DEVIL puts his silk hat on, gives a tip to HEINRICH, takes up the revolver, puts it into his pocket, and says to KARL with a sad smile, in a warm tone like a father speaking to his son:]

DEVIL

You see, my boy, one may draw a revolver for a lost sovereign.

[Goes to the door. As he opens the door, a look of devilish satisfaction comes into his eyes.]

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*A conservatory in Zanden's house. The L. side of the stage as well as the whole back of the stage is taken up by large bay windows, through which one sees into the garden. In the distance the wall surrounding the house, and some trees in the garden. It is winter. Bright weather, but it has been snowing. In the garden as well as in the street, electric lamps. On the R. side of the stage there are two doors, one quite near to the footlights, leading into the apartment—one in the rear, leading to the hall. There is a platform about two*

yards long and two yards wide, between these two doors. Five steps lead from this platform towards the footlights, and five steps on the side of the platform to the middle of the stage. On the top of the platform a door leading to the ball-room. When this door is opened, one generally hears the ball music. At the foot of the stairs, about three yards from the footlights, two square columns having a brass ornament with eight electric lamps attached. There are heaps of plants and flowers about the room. Two chairs and a table stand on the R. side of the stage, about three yards from the footlights, two chairs and a table on the L. side of the stage, about five yards from the footlights. There are two settees, L. and R. On the table L. writing material. It is about one o'clock at night.

[*Guests in fancy costumes are moving about as the Curtain goes up.*]

FIRST LADY GUEST, *sitting L. of table R.*

Who is the dark man you left so suddenly in the ball room?

SECOND LADY GUEST, *enters and comes down stairs to back of table L.*

I don't know his name.

FIRST LADY GUEST

A most disagreeable man.

SECOND LADY GUEST, *crosses to group L. C.*

Oh, dreadful! He behaved shockingly to my husband. He told him that it will be so cold tonight that his teeth will shiver in their box.

FIRST LADY GUEST

Olga tells me he is a friend of Herr Karl's, and she only invited him as a compliment to him.

SECOND LADY GUEST (*stout*)

He insisted on telling me of a remedy for obesity. I don't consider myself stout—do you?

ELSA, *C., laughingly*

No! I think I'm just right. He sounds interesting—I'd like to meet him.

FIRST LADY GUEST

You'll be sorry if you do.

ELSA

Oh, indeed.

SECOND LADY GUEST

He'll be very disagreeable, I assure you.

ELSA

I'm not afraid of him.

[*Wants to go up steps.*]

FIRST GENTLEMAN GUEST, *L. C.*

Miss Elsa, I really think you had better not.

SECOND LADY GUEST

If Miss Elsa wants to speak to him let her do so. I think she is the only one really capable of putting him in his place.

THIRD LADY GUEST, *seated L. of table R.*

Oh, she'll make him sit up.

ELSA

Thanks, awfully. Oh, I know what you call me—the blue-stocking—sassy Elsa—

SECOND LADY GUEST

Elsa, I never said you were a blue-stocking.

FIRST LADY GUEST

I never called you Sassy Elsa.

ELSA

But I am—you know I am—

[*Pointing at herself.*]

That's why nobody dares to tell me how to get thin.

SECOND LADY GUEST

The impertinence!

ELSA

Well—you asked for it.

SECOND LADY GUEST, to FIRST LADY GUEST

It will serve her right if—

ELSA, on the stairs

I'd just like to see him—

[*The DEVIL is standing in front of her. Everybody is silent.*]

DEVIL, *in evening dress, red carnation in buttonhole; after some silence*

I never dreamed how quiet it could be when seven ladies are not talking.

[*Protesting movement on the part of the GUESTS.*]

Oh, I know—you have been very merciful to me in my absence.

ELSA, *on stairs*

You needn't think I am afraid to say what I think to your face. I was just about to—

[*She makes a movement showing that she wanted to look for him.*]

DEVIL

You did well to stay. They would have said much worse things about you—they would have spoken about your approaching engagement to Karl.

ELSA

What!

[*Astonished.*]

You know?

DEVIL

To my friend Karl—they want to throw you into his arms.

[*The OTHERS laugh.*]

[*In a low voice to ELSA:*]

I'd like to speak to you—alone.

ELSA

Here?

[*Gesture that she thinks this impossible in a crowded room.*]

DEVIL

We'll be alone in no time.

[*ELSA goes to sofa and sits L. of table L.*]

FOURTH LADY GUEST, *crosses to him; to DEVIL*

I'm very glad you spoke that way to Elsa. You have quite won me over, and I don't mind telling you I came very near having to pick a bone with you.

DEVIL, *R. C., to FOURTH LADY GUEST, who is very thin—looking at her from head to foot*

By the way, speaking of bones—

FOURTH LADY GUEST

What! Again!—oh!

[*Walks off highly offended.*]

FIRST GENTLEMAN GUEST, *very effeminate, smiling to the DEVIL*

Bravo! I couldn't do that—not that I lack courage. I am famous for my courage—I just love a fight—I once slapped the face of an athlete who dared to insult a

lady.

DEVIL

You coward!

FIRST GENTLEMAN GUEST

What—coward?

DEVIL

Yes, coward. If you dared to slap the face of a cripple I might admire your courage.

[FIRST GENTLEMAN GUEST *starts to answer, but afterwards makes a gesture seeming to say nothing can be done with the DEVIL—going off slowly up the stairs.*

SECOND GENTLEMAN GUEST, *after a few seconds talking quietly to the DEVIL*

Oh-h-h! You are a free-thinker. So am I!

DEVIL, *as if astonished*

You think?

SECOND GENTLEMAN GUEST

I do.

DEVIL

What with?

[*Exit* SECOND GENTLEMAN GUEST, *angrily.*

[*To* SECOND LADY GUEST, *the stout one, seated R. of table L.*

A pity you *don't* dance—there's nothing like it for reducing the figure.

[SECOND LADY GUEST *rushes of.*

DEVIL, *L. to the* THIRD LADY GUEST, *pointing at* FOURTH

Her husband must be in the furniture business.

THIRD LADY GUEST

Yes, who told you?

DEVIL

Her dress—it is the very latest pattern for arm-chairs and settees—but please don't say I said so.

THIRD LADY GUEST, *smiling*

Certainly not.

[*Goes to chair of* FIRST LADY GUEST.

Jane—

DEVIL, *joins* ELSA. *To* ELSA

Look—she's telling her.

THIRD LADY GUEST, *to* FIRST LADY GUEST

But promise me not to be angry.

DEVIL

She promises.

FIRST LADY GUEST

I promise.

THIRD LADY GUEST

He said that—

DEVIL

Look out for the explosion.

FIRST LADY GUEST, *rises*

Oh, I never—

DEVIL

Now—watch her go.

FIRST LADY GUEST

I never!

[*Goes off over the staircase.*]

THIRD LADY GUEST, *going after her*

But, Jane, you promised me—

[*Exit.*]

DEVIL

Voilà! I am now at your disposal.

ELSA, *on settee L.*

Aren't you surprised I haven't gone? You insulted me, too. I only stay because I want to speak to you.

DEVIL, *L. C., ironically*

Charmed, I'm sure.

ELSA

Oh, don't try to be polite—just be yourself. I'm not afraid of you.

DEVIL

I know it.

ELSA, *crosses up to C.*

Perhaps you know my nickname—Saucy Elsa?

[DEVIL *nods his head.*]

DEVIL

Yes.

ELSA

Politeness would only embarrass me—and I have chosen you to deliver a message to that crowd —only because you can be so delightfully rude.

DEVIL

I am at your entire disposal.

ELSA

Now, how can I be saucy when you talk like that?

DEVIL

I am your devoted servant.

ELSA

You're impossible.

DEVIL

Shall we end this conference?

[DEVIL *starts up C.*]

ELSA, *goes to table R. C. and leans against it*

Not yet, please. You informed me just now that I am the girl they want to throw into the arms of your friend Karl.

DEVIL

Yes.

ELSA

You forget to say I am the girl who *allows* herself to be thrown in your friend's arms. Is that right?

DEVIL

Yes.

ELSA, *stands and pushes forward chair* Please sit down.

[DEVIL *bows, but remains standing.*]

ELSA, *in a very loud voice. Crosses and sits*

Please sit down. I don't ask you out of politeness, but because I want to set you right in this matter—and it is much easier for me to set you right when you sit

down and I stand up. I don't want people to make fun of me—I know what they say—do you understand me?

DEVIL, *gets up*

I do.

ELSA

Sit down, please. (*He does so.*) I don't want people to smile and congratulate me to my face, and laugh behind my back. I won't have it—and as you started this subject I shall entrust you with the mission of enlightening our friends out there.

DEVIL

Your confidence honors me.

ELSA

Don't think for a moment that I have taken these people seriously—I have no more interest in them than I have for yesterday's newspaper. But I don't choose to have them think that they have fooled me into marrying Karl. And—

DEVIL, *starts to rise. She stops him*

Pardon me.

ELSA

I see through their scheme. But I shall marry him just the same, if he will have me. Do you understand me? I shall marry him—

DEVIL

Pardon me. I don't think you will.

ELSA

You will see.

DEVIL

You have been kind enough to honor me with your confidence, and now I will be quite frank with you. This marriage cannot come off.

[*Stands up.*

ELSA, *points to chair*

Please sit down.

DEVIL, *takes her hands and swings her into chair*

No! You will sit down now because I am going to set you right. I know the reason of this marriage—but you—

[A MAN SERVANT *crosses stage*; DEVIL *calls him.*

You will find in my overcoat a small leather satchel—bring it here.

[MAN SERVANT *goes off.*

[*Continuing to* ELSA:

But you don't know the reason—or you don't want to know it. And you are about to consent to—

ELSA, *interrupting*

To what? To marry a man who is not madly in love with me—any more than I am with him. What of it? We are two perfectly sane people about to make a serious contract with our eyes wide open, instead of blinded by infatuation like crazy lovers in magazine stories. What other contract made by crazy people would be valid for one minute—and this is for a life-time—

[Enter SERVANT *and hands bag to* DEVIL *and exits.*

DEVIL, *smiling*

True—for a lifetime.

ELSA

You are a man of the world?

DEVIL, *gravely*

Of many worlds.

ELSA

[*Looks up quickly as if about to ask the* DEVIL *what*

he means, but checks herself and continues:

Well, in this world—is it the man chooses the woman, or the woman who chooses the man?

DEVIL, *smiling*

We are the weaker sex.

ELSA

Answer me! Which chooses?

DEVIL

The man *sometimes* chooses the engagement ring—

ELSA, *holding up her head proudly, and looking her very prettiest, straight into his eyes*

Look at me, please.

[The DEVIL looks into her eyes.]

ELSA, *proudly*

Now tell me, can I or can I not choose the man I will marry?

DEVIL, *leaning on table R., in a courtly manner*

It is written in your eyes—but—I never thought this subject would excite you so.

ELSA, *seated L. of him, with animation*

I won't be laughed at—I don't care what those people think (*becoming excited*). I know what I am doing, and in spite of everything I *choose* to become his wife.

DEVIL, *takes out little red satchel and opens it*

Why?

ELSA, *beginning to lose control of herself*

Because—because—

[Breaks down.]

—because I love him.

[Begins to sob bitterly.]

DEVIL

Allow me—

[Takes a little handkerchief out of the satchel and gives it to her.]

I always carry this with me—it's my weeping satchel—everything a woman needs for weeping.

ELSA, *weeps a little harder; sobbing, wiping her eyes with the handkerchief*

I love him.

[During the following dialogue the DEVIL takes out of the weeping satchel a little looking-glass, small comb, powder and puff, and gives her one after another.]

DEVIL

And *this* is Saucy Elsa!

ELSA

No. Until tonight I was a young girl afraid of nobody—now I feel like an old woman.

[Takes mirror.]

What am I to do?

[Looks, smiles quickly.]

DEVIL

Don't be discouraged. You will have to fight—you must attack the enemy. But first you must be pretty.

ELSA, *takes puff and powder from him*

I shall try to.

[Reaches out for it.

DEVIL

You must show a bold front—you will perhaps feel that it is hard for a young girl to fight a woman—your weapons are not quite so numerous as those of the married woman—who knows love already—who understands—may I say something shocking?

[During this speech ELSA hands back or the DEVIL takes all the articles except the handkerchief.

ELSA, *looks at him, opening her eyes widely*

Do you ever say anything that isn't?

[Gives him handkerchief, rises.

DEVIL

Well, I won't. But remember, you have one weapon which will deal the death blow to the most attractive woman—to the woman who knows every card in the game of love—that one weapon is purity.

ELSA

This sounds strange from *you!*

DEVIL

All the same—it may do you some good. And now—go dance with Karl—but don't try to be a woman, be a girl. Don't try to be saucy.

ELSA, *L. C.*

I'm not really saucy—I'm afraid it's only a pose—

DEVIL

Don't pose. Be yourself—be bashful—look at the young man as if you were only waiting for a pirate to steal you away from girl-land—and show you the way into Woman's Land. Head high, my little girl—that's it—and if anybody dares to call you saucy again, tell him that you once met a gentleman at a ball to whom you thought to give a piece of your mind, that would make him feel very, very small—and instead you left with a piece of his mind, that made you feel very, very small—and made him feel—as if he were the greatest Scoundrel in the world—

[Taking a few steps to the footlights.

which *perhaps* he is.

[ELSA goes up the stairs, when KARL appears on the top of the stairs, DEVIL is standing at this moment behind one of the columns unseen by KARL—but quite near ELSA. ELSA turns towards the DEVIL, showing her back to KARL.



Elsa and Karl

ELSA

So you don't want me to be saucy?

DEVIL, *whispering*

No.

[ELSA *goes up one step.*

KARL, on top step

Oh, Elsa, there you are!

ELSA, *dropping her eyelids*

Yes.

KARL

Why aren't you in the ball-room?

ELSA

I wanted to be alone. If anybody wants me he can find me.

[*To DEVIL, whispers:*

Is that better?

KARL

You look sad. Are you worried?

DEVIL, *whispering to ELSA*

Say no.

ELSA, *leaning against pillar R.*

No.

KARL, *coming down*

What has happened?

[*Sees the DEVIL, DEVIL comes from behind pillar between them, meets KARL on lower step.*

Oh, I understand—

DEVIL, *finishing KARL'S sentence*

—nothing.

[*Goes up stairs.*

KARL, *nearing ELSA*

You look lovely, Elsa. Do you know, this pensive air is very becoming to you—you've always been so cold and—haughty—it's like finding a little white flower under the deep snow; you want to pick it up and kiss it—

[Takes both of ELSA'S hands in his.

This is the Elsa for me!

ELSA, *ashamed*

Karl!

DEVIL

You will excuse me. I must pay my respects to our hostess.

[He goes off quickly. KARL and ELSA sit down on the L. side of the stage.

ELSA

I don't like that man. Who is he?

[Sits R. of table L.

KARL, *sits on sofa L.*

A casual acquaintance who insists upon posing as my friend. Don't let us talk about him. I'm glad I found you here—something natural in this stifling artificial atmosphere. Doesn't it seem close to you?

ELSA

Yes, as if some hot wind had passed through these rooms—it seems to take my breath away.

KARL

I've never heard you speak like that before. Why have you tried to hide—your real self from me?

[DEVIL appears on the platform, with OLGA. They come down the steps.

OLGA

Hadn't we better leave the young couple alone?

DEVIL

You are much too considerate.

ELSA, to KARL

Olga—I suppose you'd like to speak to her?

KARL

I much prefer to talk to you.

[They continue talking.

[DEVIL and OLGA come down. She sits on sofa R., DEVIL in chair R.

OLGA

They seem to have found each other.

DEVIL

Possibly. Are you sorry?

OLGA

Oh, no.

DEVIL

Shall we leave?

OLGA

No, I like to see my plan bearing fruit.

[They continue speaking slowly.

ELSA

They are speaking about us.

KARL

What do we care? Let's be happy—Elsa! I feel as if I had never known you

before tonight.

ELSA, *moves chair so she can hide* OLGA *from* KARL. DEVIL *repeats business*

Why do you keep looking over there?

KARL

Oh, that's only—I was quite unconscious—

[They continue speaking slowly.]

OLGA

Let's talk about something else. You are very naughty. You have come here in spite of my—

DEVIL, smiling

Invitation. I would have respected your wish but for one very good reason—I made a bold wager this afternoon.

OLGA

What?

DEVIL

I made a bet that you would fall in love with me this evening.

OLGA

Made a bet that *I* would fall in love with you? And with whom did you bet?

DEVIL

Karl.

OLGA

Karl? (*Quickly.*) And what did he say?

DEVIL

His answer was curious. I had better not tell you—I am afraid it would hurt you.

OLGA

No, it won't. Please tell me.

[Turns and looks at KARL.]

DEVIL, *following her glance*

Well, perhaps later. Your little plan bids fair to succeed.

OLGA, *looking away quickly*

I had forgotten their existence.

[Changing quickly the conversation.]

[DEVIL pats OLGA'S hands.]

You have fascinating eyes

[During the following few words between ELSA and KARL, the DEVIL whispers into the ear of OLGA, stroking her hand gently in order to arouse KARL'S jealousy.]

KARL

I never saw you look so charming.

ELSA

I feel as if I had changed, perhaps you have something to do with it.

DEVIL

You seem like a different woman this evening—there is something about you—

OLGA

It is because I am with somebody I don't quite understand—but who seems to me a man in every sense of the word.

[This last a little louder, for KARL'S benefit.]

DEVIL

Your confession is charming. But I should be more ready to believe it, if you hadn't made it.

[DEVIL *kisses* OLGA'S *hand*.

KARL

Our first love is generally our last, but our last love always our first—don't you think so?

ELSA

I don't know. I've never been really in love before—but have twice been disillusionized.

DEVIL

Love at first sight—

[*The following eight sentences are spoken very rapidly, almost at the same time.*

OLGA, *distraite*

You are right—for the first sight—that is to say—

KARL

[*Now always looking at* OLGA—*OLGA always looking at* KARL; *the* DEVIL *looking pleased*, ELSA *looking furious*.

Disillusions—well—yes, disillusions are—disillusions.

DEVIL

I should hate to have to give an account of myself.

OLGA

Yes, indeed—but, of course—it's all a matter of taste.

ELSA

The way girls are brought up nowadays—

KARL

Exactly! Our bringing up—that is—I mean to say—of course—of course.

OLGA

We mustn't forget—

KARL

I quite agree with you—if—if you know what I mean.

ELSA, *getting up quickly and slapping her hand on the table*

No, I don't know what you mean.

[*Crosses to stairs.*

Take me to the ball-room—I'm engaged for the next dance.

KARL, *also rising*

Well,—

ELSA, *almost crying, insisting*

Let us go—I wish to go—

[*She goes towards the stairs; KARL follows her, goes up side stairs, meeting her at the top as she passes* OLGA.

OLGA

Oh! you are not in the ball-room.

ELSA, *saucily*

Can't you see?

OLGA

You'd better hurry, dear.

ELSA

I hate dancing, but I shan't miss one single dance tonight, just to spite some people. I shall dance to the last step.

[*ELSA looks at* OLGA *in a very impertinent way. OLGA steps forward as if to give a reply, when* KARL

comes between them; offers his arm to ELSA.

[Exit ELSA and KARL up the staircase.]

OLGA, *angry*

Did you hear that?

DEVIL

I did.

OLGA, *rises, goes C.*

What language! How dare she—she must think he loves her!

DEVIL, *rises, goes to her C.*

Wait! I'll tell you now what Karl said to me this afternoon.

OLGA

When you wanted to bet?

DEVIL

When I bet you would fall in love with me.

[After a short silence.]

He wanted to shoot me.

OLGA, *trying to hide her joy*

Karl!

DEVIL

Karl, with his own hands—with this pistol—

[Takes revolver out of his pocket.]

I took it away from him.

OLGA

Karl wanted to kill you—why, Doctor Miller—

DEVIL, *patting revolver*

Yes, with this simple prescription—six pills.

[Puts revolver back in pocket.]

OLGA

This afternoon, when you only spoke about me—he wanted to kill you—and now when he saw us here—saw you whisper in my ear—saw you take my hand—

[Goes L. to where KARL and ELSA had sat.]

he *must* be in love with her.

DEVIL, *crossing to L. C.*

Don't you think a man's a fool to try to shoot his friend on account of a woman?

OLGA

Oh! Karl's not a fool—he thinks the world of me. And you must have said things—but there is no doubt—that he and Elsa—like—perhaps love each other.

DEVIL, *very cold, leaning over chair at table L.*

Strange! Your being so annoyed at the apparent success of your pet scheme.

OLGA

You think it will succeed?

DEVIL

I don't know. But it's easy enough to find out.

OLGA

How?

DEVIL

This afternoon, when I told him I'd make you fall in love with me, he wanted to shoot—that's love—don't talk to me about respect— and thinking the world of you—they may fire cannons out of respect, but pistols—no—that's love every time.

[OLGA *protesting silently as if the matter was not quite important enough.*

Of course, I know—this only interests you because it was you who planned the marriage, and after all you take a pride in the success of your scheme. Am I right?

OLGA, *C. near him*

Yes, yes.

DEVIL, *behind pillar C.*

Karl shall tell us himself which was the real thing —the attempted murder of this afternoon, or this little—flirtation with Elsa.

OLGA

You don't mean to ask him—

[DEVIL *shakes his head slowly, smiling.*

you don't mean to *listen*?

DEVIL

Certainly not.

OLGA

What then?

DEVIL

Very simple. But you must take my advice unconditionally—ask for no reasons—do exactly what I tell you.

OLGA, *after careful reflection, slowly*

Y-e-s.

DEVIL

I think I remember having seen you once at the Opera in a very beautiful cloak—fur—was it not?—and cloth—

OLGA

Yes.

DEVIL

With a long train? You must put that cloak on—close it as high as you can—and wrap yourself in it as if you were feeling cold. Only show the tips of your shoes—then come back here—

[*She starts towards him. OLGA looks at the DEVIL, as if she wanted to ask the reason.*

no questions.

OLGA, *L. of pillar C.*

It's all very, very mysterious, but when you look at me that way, I—I—can't refuse ... your eyes seem to have all the world's wisdom behind them.

DEVIL, *R. of pillar C.*

You have a poor opinion of me.

OLGA, *turns from him*

Shall I go at once?

DEVIL

At once. And if anyone remarks on it, say you felt cold in the conservatory.

OLGA, *doubtfully*

But suppose he says....

DEVIL, *interrupting*

Quick! He's coming.

[KARL *is coming down the stairs towards the footlights.*

[OLGA *has gone to the side stairs so that KARL cannot see her. She rushes off when he is down the stairs.*

KARL

[Who has not seen her—hears the rustling of the silk and runs to the side stairs and looks off R.]

Who was that?

DEVIL

Who?

KARL, *coming down to C.*

Somebody just ran out—does she want to avoid me?

DEVIL, *goes R., lights cigarette*

Nobody ran away from me. A very pretty girl, Miss Elsa!

KARL, *goes to window L.*

Yes.

[Silence.]

DEVIL

What's the matter?

KARL

Oh, nothing—I am not in particularly good humor—but why should I be?

DEVIL, *lights a cigarette; offers one to KARL*

Will you have one?

KARL, *roughly*

No, thank you.

[Uncomfortable silence.]

DEVIL

You seem annoyed—

KARL, *comes back C., as if in a mood to quarrel*

Do you want to know why?

DEVIL

No.

KARL, *nervous*

Well, I'll tell you—

DEVIL

[As if he wanted to go away and evade the conversation.]

Better keep it to yourself.

KARL

But I will tell you. I'm astonished at the change that has come over you since this afternoon. I admit it upsets me, but don't imagine it is on Olga's account—if you don't mind, we'll leave her out of the discussion.

DEVIL

By all means.

KARL

I've made up my mind to propose to Elsa.

DEVIL, *holds out his hand in an approving tone, takes KARL'S hand and shakes it*

I am very, very glad.

KARL

You are glad?

DEVIL

I am indeed.

[KARL stares at him.]

What's the matter with you?

KARL, *approaching the DEVIL threateningly*

Look here, that was Olga who ran away just now.

DEVIL

Don't be absurd.

[*Looking at floor as if his secret was discovered.*]

Why should she run away from me—

KARL

You behave like a school boy.

DEVIL

What do you mean?

KARL

I mean, my dear Doctor—that you are not a gentleman.

DEVIL

I don't quite follow you.

KARL

When a gentleman would be discreet—he even conceals his discretion.

DEVIL

Very thoughtless of me—but since you have found me out—By the way, what you said about your marriage—is it settled?

KARL, C.

It is.

DEVIL

You will not change your mind?

KARL

I shall not.

[*Crosses to settee L. and sits.*]

DEVIL, *sits in chair L.*

Very good. Now I can tell you in confidence about—look here, you are quite sure you won't change your mind?

KARL

No fear. What is it you want to tell me—tell me everything. I'd like to learn some of the tricks of the trade. I may need them—

DEVIL

Tricks of the trade? This from a man about to marry? I'm shocked.

KARL, *ironically*

You look it. What did you want to tell me about her?

DEVIL

About her?

KARL

About Olga.

DEVIL, *looks to the ground as if he were ashamed*

Oh, nothing.

KARL

Look here, I don't mind telling you her husband is?

DEVIL

Deaf, blind, dumb.

[*Indicating ears, eyes, mouth and forehead.*]

KARL, *concealing his pain very badly*

And to think—and this afternoon—at my house—was the first time—

DEVIL, *goes back of settee*

She's a wonder! believe me, Karl, she's a wonder. It's just possible she's good—a dash of goodness won't hurt a pretty woman—but I hope not. I should then have to attribute my conquest to hypnotism—and that doesn't flatter my vanity. What do you think? We had agreed—just now when she ran away—ah—

[Checks himself

So it was Olga!

DEVIL

Well, yes, it was—I hardly know how to tell you—It was a mad impulse. I proposed, just for fun, without the least idea she would take it up; it means risking her reputation and social position—everything—not to mention the risk of catching cold—

DEVIL

KARL, *startled*

What do you mean?

DEVIL

Well, this evening—before all her guests—there are a hundred and thirty I believe—

KARL, *impatient*

Yes, go on.

DEVIL

—before the élite of Vienna I may say—she will walk through the ball-room on my arm—in (*suggestive pause*)—an opera cloak.

KARL, *not quite grasping it*

An opera cloak?

DEVIL, *suggestively*

That's all.

KARL

You mean to tell me—she—

DEVIL

She will be here in a moment—and then—before all Vienna—amid the bacchanalian ecstasy—of music, perfume, dancing—I will escort her through the ball-room like a classic goddess—like a modern *Mona Vanna*—in an opera cloak—

KARL

You liar!

DEVIL, *apparently frightened*

But, Karl—

KARL

It's a lie. It's a damnable lie.

DEVIL

You tried to catch me—and I have caught you. You love this woman.

KARL, *L. C., very loudly*

Yes, I love her. I have listened to all your lies—I have seen you as I've seen a hundred like you—steal a good woman's reputation and call it success, social success—and boast about it as you drag her in the mud. You have trapped me, it's true—but you will suffer for it. It is my turn now—and I'll put you out of this house, you blackguard—get out before I kick you out.

DEVIL, *C. backs up onto second step; stands*

Wait! She is coming now.

[Points to door down R.

KARL

Get out, I said.

[The DEVIL goes back slowly up the stairs. KARL is about to follow him up as DEVIL is on third step, OLGA comes on in her opera cloak and comes down stairs to R. The DEVIL goes behind her. KARL backs over L. Long silence, KARL stares at OLGA and the DEVIL, speechless.

OLGA

Karl, you have not spoken to me once tonight.

DEVIL, *stands very near to* OLGA, *cynically*

The opera cloak—

OLGA

Everybody is gay, the girls dance as if it were their first ball—the young men as if it were their last.

DEVIL

Strange! that amidst all this gaiety Karl should be so sad.

OLGA

Sad?

KARL, *with forced gaiety*

Oh, *no*—never felt happier in my life.

OLGA

I am glad to hear it.

KARL

I feel like—like a boy—of twenty—like a fool.

DEVIL, *coming down to C.*

No! No!

KARL

I am going to take your advice from this on—I'm going to get drunk tonight.

OLGA, *shocked*

You, Karl? You drunk?

KARL, *L.*

Yes. I am doing things today that I never did before. I've never been engaged before.

OLGA, *R.*

And tonight?

KARL

Tonight I shall become engaged.

DEVIL

I have already offered him my congratulations—she's a charming girl.

KARL

A splendid girl. Much too good for me—but marrying is something new to me—I want to try it. It is a sensation I have never had.

DEVIL

You don't seem very gay for a bridegroom.

KARL

That's only the last drop of single bitterness—the dregs of bachelorhood—I'll soon get rid of that and then—

OLGA

Bravo, bravo!

KARL

Oh spare yourself. I'm only thinking of my own pleasure.

OLGA

Karl, I am afraid you have been drinking already.

KARL

You are at liberty to think what you please.

DEVIL

He is in a bad humor to-day. I told you.

KARL, *cannot keep himself any longer*

You will catch cold. Why don't you take off your cloak?

[*Goes C.*

DEVIL, *very quiet*

Perhaps Madame *is* feeling cold.

OLGA, *wrapping herself tighter in her cloak*

Yes, I feel cold.

DEVIL

Any one not knowing you might think you wear this cloak just to show it off.

OLGA

Don't let us speak about the cloak.

[*To KARL in a different tone; crosses to KARL L. C.*

You seemed to get on very well with Elsa?

KARL

Did I?

DEVIL

It was really charming to watch them.

OLGA

I feel very cold.

DEVIL

I thought you would.

KARL

Cold. I find it hot in here.

OLGA, *crosses back R.*

I feel cold.

DEVIL

Perhaps your dress is thin. The way lovely woman flirts with pneumonia—she wears her lung upon her sleeve.

OLGA

Everything sweet in life comes through carelessness.

KARL, *L. C., very excited*

And do you find boldness sweet?

OLGA

What's that to you? Were you ever bold?

KARL, *crosses to C., losing his self-control completely*

Aren't you afraid of me—you two?

[*OLGA shivers.*

DEVIL, *R. C., coldly*

I? Not even of the legitimate husband—much less a moralising bridegroom.

[*HERMAN enters quickly from above stairs, comes down L., stands next to KARL.*

HERMAN, *banteringly*

Ah, Olga! I see you are well taken care of.

DEVIL, *bowing*

It is a privilege.

HERMAN, *taking KARL aside*

Well, how are you and Elsa getting along?

[*Goes with KARL towards the back of the stage.*

OLGA, *quickly to the DEVIL*

What have you said to him about my cloak?

DEVIL

About your cloak? Why should I speak of your cloak?

OLGA

You must have said something about my cloak—I felt it the moment I came in.

DEVIL

What do you mean?

OLGA

The way he seemed to look through me. It was almost as if he imagined—what did you say? What did you insinuate?

DEVIL

Just what you are thinking.

OLGA, *her hands dropping, her head falling backwards with closed eyes, shivering*

Oh! How *could* you?

DEVIL, *cynically*

Come now, don't pretend to be shocked. You admitted you felt it the moment you came in. The thought seemed to please you.

OLGA

How dare you speak to me like that! Oh! if I had known.

DEVIL

Then why didn't you take off your cloak? When you saw—you didn't even open it. Why don't you open it now? The idea seems to please you still.

KARL, *re-enters, angrily.*

Olga!

OLGA

[*A little scream.*]

Your arm, Doctor.

[*DEVIL gives her his arm. As they are about to go upstairs, KARL comes back from R.*]

OLGA, *looking coldly over shoulder at KARL*

Are you going to stay here?

KARL

Yes; and you, too!

OLGA

What do you mean?

KARL

You stay here.

DEVIL

What's that?

[*OLGA tries to go away with the devil into the ball-room, but KARL steps into their way on the stairs.*]

KARL

Olga, you shall not go into the ball-room!

[*DEVIL, as if about to leave them alone, is held off by KARL, who steps in front of him now.*]

You shall not leave—it concerns you, too.

OLGA

Doctor, give me your arm. Doctor!

KARL, *in tone of command*

Stop! We'll settle this thing now—right here!

OLGA

Are you mad?

DEVIL, *goes up stairs below KARL*

If I didn't think he was mad—

KARL

Take off that cloak.

OLGA, *at L. foot of stairs firmly;*

No

KARL

Take, off that cloak.

OLGA, *to* DEVIL

Please, Doctor, protect me.

KARL, *half maddened*

Then I'll make you!

[KARL *rushes down stairs*, DEVIL *catches him before he reaches the bottom and holds him back.*

OLGA, *standing very erect*, *to* DEVIL

Why did you stop him—?

[DEVIL *lets* KARL *go.*

DEVIL, *at foot of stairs*, *in a very low voice as if ashamed*

Really, Madame, for all I know—

[*Feigns embarrassment.*

OLGA, *to* DEVIL

Will you please help me off with my cloak?

DEVIL, *starts to help*, *then crosses to L. of her*, *with gesture of refusal.*

Madame! Ah!

KARL, *comes down to her*, *C.*

I will.

OLGA, *very loud*

No.

[*Wraps herself closer in the cloak.*

[DEVIL *and* KARL *stare at each other.* The DEVIL *shrugs his shoulders*, OLGA *goes up the stairs.*

HERMAN, *coming through the door* Oh! There you are. My dear! His Excellency is looking for you. He is about to leave.

OLGA, *as if very tired* All right. Please help me off with my cloak.

HERMAN

All right, darling.

[*Takes off her cloak and puts it over his arm.* [OLGA *stands in the same gown as she had on at the beginning of the act*, *with her back to the audience.*

OLGA, *looking at* KARL *and* DEVIL, *and speaking with ironical courtliness*, *taking* HERMAN'S *arm.*

Gentlemen.

[*Exit* HERMAN *with* OLGA.

[KARL *has been standing on one side of the stage as if dreaming*, *suddenly runs to the other side of the stage as if to choke the devil who stands there.*

KARL, *crossing to* DEVIL, *L. C.*

What have you done?

[DEVIL *thrusts revolver into* KARL'S *hand.*

DEVIL

Look out! It's loaded!

[KARL *stands absolutely still*, *holding revolver.* [To KARL, *insolently:*

If I hadn't given you that pistol you might have slapped my face. Believe me, there's nothing like turning the other cheek—if you turn it quickly enough—your enemy will miss both cheeks.

[KARL *turns away angrily*, *lays revolver on table R.*

[DEVIL *goes down and takes revolver from table R.*

[KARL *stands absent-minded, when ELSA enters with her cloak ready to leave.*

ELSA

Karl, I wanted to say good-bye to you.

KARL, *as if the tone of her voice was awakening him*

Oh! my dear, dear Elsa!

[*About to go towards her to kiss her.*

[*The DEVIL comes back and steps between them.*

[MAN SERVANT *enters from behind stairs and speaks to ELSA.*

MAN SERVANT

Your mother is waiting for you in the hall, Fräulein,

KARL

May I see you to your carriage?

[*Offers ELSA his arm and they go off.*

DEVIL, *to* MAN SERVANT

Will you accompany Miss Elsa to her carriage? It is slippery outside, she might fall.

[*Exit* MAN SERVANT, *following* KARL *and* ELSA.

OLGA, *enters from R., agitated; sits at table L.*

Your scheme was a great success.

DEVIL

What are you going to do?

OLGA, *writes on an envelope*

I'm going to write to him.

DEVIL, *crosses to her, reads the envelope*

To Karl—but what will you write?

OLGA

He wanted to settle my account. I will settle his. I will never see him again. Oh! To have thought me capable—of.... How could he? I despise him!

DEVIL

Pour quoi, Madame?

OLGA

Because—because—

DEVIL

Because you love him?

OLGA, *frightened*

What!

[*Tries to get her thoughts together.*

After what has happened, I hate him. And I shall tell him so.

DEVIL

I am very sorry.

[*Takes pen from her.*

OLGA

Don't be sorry. I have much to thank you for. You have rendered me a service. I shall feel better when I have sent this letter off.

DEVIL

You'd better make it plain.

OLGA

I shall speak my mind—there shall be no mistake.

DEVIL

That's it; express your real feelings.

[With ironical emphasis.]

Cold. Harsh.

OLGA

Cold? Harsh?

DEVIL

Make an end of it—once for all.

[Dipping pen.]

OLGA, *taking pen*

Once for all.

DEVIL

Now write.

[OLGA speaks the first sentence as she writes it. At the word "longer" the devil takes it up, finishing the sentence with a different meaning, and dictates rest of letter walking up and down.]



Dr. Miller (The Devil)

OLGA, *in hard voice, speaks while writing*

Sir, your behavior of this evening has shown me that you are no longer—

DEVIL, *continuing*

—able to keep up the wretched farce of mere friendship. I read your inmost thought tonight and—Karl—the knowledge that you love me has made me unspeakably happy. Dearest—

[OLGA looks up at the DEVIL, who is standing now at her L. He repeats "Dearest" and points to letter. She resumes writing.]

—why should we struggle any longer against the resistless tide that is drawing us together? My strength is gone.

[OLGA looks up again. The DEVIL repeats "My strength is gone" by motion of lips, making no sound. She writes:]

—without you I am lost in the black waters—save me, Karl. With your strong arms about me—with your lips to mine—I care not where we drift. I am yours, all yours. You are the master of my soul. Do not leave me, Karl; I love you, I cannot live without you. God bless you!

[OLGA'S *head falls forward on her arm*

OLGA, *as if awakening*

What have I written?

DEVIL, *folding letter*

What was in your heart!

OLGA, *laughs hysterically*

I have written everything I had meant never to say.

DEVIL, *taking up letter*

If women wrote time tables, they would tell all the hours that the trains didn't start and all the places you mustn't stop at to get to your destination.

[DEVIL *puts the letter into envelope.*

OLGA, *horrified*

What are you doing?

DEVIL, *coldly*

I will deliver the letter. Women sometimes do not write what they want, but they always want what they write.

OLGA

He must not. He *shall* not see it.

[HERMAN *comes down stairs*

HERMAN

Good! You're the kind of guest I like—when all the rest have deserted the ship you stay and keep the hostess company.

DEVIL, *crosses to C., putting letter into his pocket*

Madame has been so entertaining, that I—

HERMAN, *crossing to bell R.*

Well, let's have another cognac before you go—quite *en famille*.

DEVIL

Thank you very much, but I have an important call very early in the morning. Madame,—

[*Goes to OLGA, kisses her hand.*

[*To HERMAN:*

I have spent a very pleasant evening at your house.

HERMAN, *coming to him C., they shake hands*

The pleasure is mine.

[DEVIL starts to go. OLGA utters a suppressed cry.

DEVIL

Madame?

OLGA, *frightened to death, with a forced smile trying to appear undisturbed*

There was a piece of paper here. Did you perhaps take it by mistake?

[*She is almost crying from fright.*

DEVIL, *coming down stairs, taking the letter out of his pocket*

[*Going towards HERMAN as if he was going to give him the letter.*

Do you mean this?

OLGA, *deathly pale*

No, no It was not that.

[Laughing bitterly.]

DEVIL, *bowing*

Madame.

[Bows to HERMAN. Goes off upstairs. Bows low to both and goes out.]

HERMAN *crosses to* OLGA

Well, I'm glad it's over. You look tired, dearie.

OLGA, *standing by table L.*

I am tired.

HERMAN

You look flushed. But it's very becoming, you never looked prettier.

[OLGA is leaning backwards over the table, he takes her hand.]

My darling wife.

[Goes to kiss her.]

OLGA, *unkind*

Please, please don't.

HERMAN, *crosses to C. Looks at his watch*

It is after four o'clock, Olga.

[Tries to kiss her again.]

OLGA

Please, please don't. I feel so nervous.

HERMAN

Your cheeks are burning.

[Pats her cheeks.]

OLGA, *nervous, impatient*

Please—

HERMAN

All right, all right, I'm going.

[He goes towards the door on the R.]

Are you going to stay here?

OLGA, *at table L.*

Let me rest a minute.

HERMAN

As you please.

[MAN SERVANT comes in above platform, and goes up side stairs.]

OLGA, *to servant*

What do you want?

MAN SERVANT

The lights, Madame.

OLGA

Turn off the lights.

[The MAN SERVANT puts all the lights out. The lamps in the street and the garden are lighted, but the room is dark.]

HERMAN

It would be wiser to sleep, my dear.

[He waits a minute, shrugs his shoulders, then]

goes out R.

OLGA, *stands leaning on the table*

To go to sleep....

[The DEVIL can be seen outside in his fur overcoat, crossing through the garden. As he passes a lamp in the garden his shadow reaching up to the ceiling is thrown on the white wall of the room, OLGA is crossing to R. He takes his hat off, at which moment she sees the shadow on the wall, OLGA shrieks.

No!

[She drops into a chair.

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*Like Act I. The afternoon of the next day, about three o'clock. When the curtain rises, the DEVIL is seated in a big chair. Bell rings off stage R. HEINRICH enters R.*

DEVIL, *rising from chair*

What do you want?

HEINRICH

There is a lady, sir.

DEVIL

What kind of a lady?

HEINRICH

A real lady, sir.

DEVIL

What does she want?

HEINRICH

She wants to see my master. I told her he was not up yet, but she said she would wait.

DEVIL

Do you know who the lady is? Have you seen her before?

HEINRICH

Never.

DEVIL

Ask her to step in here.

[HEINRICH goes off, shows ELSA in.

[DEVIL bows.

Ah!

ELSA

You seem to be everywhere. What are you doing here? Are you his secretary?

DEVIL

No, merely a good friend. Nothing else. I just happened in. By the way, how do you do?

ELSA

How do you do?

[Crosses to couch, sits.

I didn't know there was anybody in this room or I would not have come in. But as it is only you I don't mind.

[ELSA sits down, intentionally turning her back to

the DEVIL.

DEVIL

Karl is expecting you, then?

ELSA

Oh, no.

DEVIL

Will you permit me to prepare him for this pleasant surprise?

ELSA

No, thank you. Don't disturb him. I can look around while I'm waiting. I have never been here before.

DEVIL

I know it.

ELSA

Who told you?

DEVIL

The man—a lady might come every day and escape notice—but coming for the first time she would be sure to attract his attention.

ELSA

I feel embarrassed coming here alone.

DEVIL

I know that, too.

ELSA

From the same source?

DEVIL

Yes; he said you were a real lady.

ELSA

He is the only one here who has spoken to me like a gentleman.

DEVIL

He must have thought you were a model.

ELSA, *rises; angrily*

How dare you?

DEVIL

A servant can only speak like a gentleman to—his equals.

ELSA, *sits down again; sarcastically*

Then I was mistaken—it is not Heinrich who is the servant.

DEVIL

Who knows—perhaps he is a clergyman.

ELSA

I don't understand you.

DEVIL

Only two people in the world may open the door of a bachelor's apartment to a young lady—the man servant, or a clergyman with a marriage certificate—you can take your choice.

ELSA

Let me tell you I was once left alone with a gentleman who tried to kiss me, and I slapped his face.

DEVIL

Indeed? I was once left alone with a lady who tried to slap me and I *kissed* her face.

[*Enter* HEINRICH.]

ELSA, *controlling herself with difficulty*

Oh!

DEVIL

Heinrich! There's a little leather satchel in the pocket of my overcoat.

[HEINRICH *goes out.*

ELSA

Don't be afraid. This is not my day for crying.

DEVIL

It's when a girl laughs that I'm most afraid.

[HEINRICH *brings the satchel, puts it on the table L. C. and goes into studio.*

Why did you come here?

ELSA

I intend to sit for my portrait—to do that, I must come every day.

DEVIL

You intend to come here every day, and to do that you must have your portrait painted.

ELSA

You are clever at twisting words.

DEVIL

Perhaps you know there is another lady coming every day to have her portrait painted?

ELSA

Yes, I know. That's why I want mine painted—we'll see which will be the better likeness.

DEVIL

Come now—you must let me sit down—this time I want you to be right.

[*Raises her and swings her in front of him.*

[DEVIL *sits on couch, ELSA leans on table.*

Are you aware—

ELSA

This is awful—you question me like a judge.

DEVIL

It is you who answer like a prisoner. Do you know that Karl is in love with Olga?

ELSA, *bitterly*

Do I know it!

DEVIL

And you still mean to fight?

ELSA

Yes, I mean to fight—you gave me good advice.

DEVIL

That was yesterday.

ELSA

Well—this is to-day.

DEVIL, *impressively*

Yesterday was your winning day. Yesterday it was written that you, Elsa, would succeed in whatever thing you made up your mind to do, with the whole strength of your will.

ELSA

Last night I made up my mind to—

DEVIL, *interrupting gravely*

—to dance every dance—

[*Pause*

You danced every dance.

ELSA, *defiantly*

Karl asked me to marry him last night.

DEVIL

—and you refused.

ELSA

Yes—but to-day I shall—

DEVIL

To-day is not your winning day—yesterday you chose—to-day you will have no choice.

ELSA

I won't give him up—I can't—I don't know how.

DEVIL

You will have to learn—let me see—I think I know some one who has learned the lesson and can teach it to you—

[Goes to hall door which he opens.

Why, Mimi! Why do you wait out there? Come in here where it's warm!

[MIMI comes in—DEVIL seats MIMI C. He regards them both with a satanic smile—begins to hum a tune and exits L., singing as he gets out; he laughs—his laugh dies away outside.

MIMI, *sitting on small chair C. After a silence*

Are you waiting for the painter, too, Madame?

ELSA, *seated on couch*

Yes.

MIMI

Yes—

[Pause.

He must have been on a spree last night.

[Smiling.

When he goes on a spree he always sleeps late.

ELSA, *somewhat embarrassed*

Yes?

MIMI, *making conversation*

Yes. If you haven't slept for a long time, then—you must sleep a long time.

ELSA

Yes?

MIMI

Yes. Madame—

[Silence.

Is Madame going to have her portrait painted?

ELSA

Yes.

MIMI

Yes, Madame—I know all the ladies that come here—

[Quick look from ELSA.

I'm quite at home here—I'm his model

[Explaining.

I don't pay for my portraits.

[Regarding ELSA.

You have a splendid profile, Madame.

ELSA

You always say "Madame"—I am not married. My name is—

MIMI, *interrupting*

I know your name. I've heard it often. You belong to a very rich family. I know what that means, I used to be well off, too. I wasn't always obliged to work for a living.

ELSA

No?

MIMI

I was a chorus girl, but I had bad luck.

ELSA

I am so sorry for you.

MIMI

[*Silence.*

I know all about you and Herr Karl.

[*Rises, goes C.*

ELSA

From whom?

MIMI

I know everything that goes on in this house. I told you I was his model—I sew on buttons and count the laundry.

[*Importantly.*

ELSA

Does the laundry-woman steal?

MIMI

No. But she uses strong blueing—I know everything Herr Karl thinks of.

[*Pointing at ELSA.*

ELSA, *as if she was getting interested*

And does that interest you?

MIMI

Yes, indeed it does. But that's all over now

ELSA

Why so?

MIMI

Because he is going to get married

ELSA

But he will paint just the same—he will want models.

MIMI

Yes, but—

[*Ingeniously.*

you know, when one has sewn on buttons—and counted the laundry—then to be—just a plain model—that hurts.

[*Goes up C.; ELSA crosses.*

ELSA

And you like Herr Karl?

MIMI, *repressing her feelings*

Yes—I—I like him—he's such a dear boy.

ELSA

Does he paint you now?

MIMI, *coming to head of couch; sadly*

No. He only paints landscapes and—bank presidents.

ELSA

Then you did not come to pose to-day?

MIMI

A model always comes to pose. It's tiring work, too, I can tell you—and if the artist wants to make love—it isn't her fault—and—

[*Sighs.*

Oh, it's such a rest.

ELSA

Oh, please.

[*Draws herself up stiffly, offended.*

MIMI

Now I've offended you—I ought to have known better—my people are all refined—I wasn't born a model.

ELSA

I'm sorry I showed it—but—I—I'm nervous to-day.

MIMI, *brightening*

Oh, I know what it is—I used to suffer dreadfully from nervousness when I was in the chorus.

ELSA

Come over here, Mimi; I want to talk to you.

MIMI, goes over and sits on the couch

You can talk to me about everything, I'm not a bad sort, really I'm not. I've known all along about Herr Karl and—and you—he's such a kind man. I was crying when I went away yesterday, and he felt sorry for me and he came to see me on his way to the ball—in his evening clothes—but I didn't receive him. If it's over, it may as well be over.

ELSA

Was he fond of you?

MIMI

I loved him, but what's the use? It's like the railway—the station is there and the train comes and then the train goes away, and the station cannot run after it; if the station is small, the train only stops a minute, and—

[*Sighs.*

one must wait until another train comes

ELSA

You loved him and can speak like that?

MIMI

Yes, I loved him, but it's all over now. I was foolish to come here again when I'd made up my mind I wouldn't, but now I'm sensible again; I'll go away and try to forget him, I hope he will be—hap-hap—happy!

[*Begins to cry, looks for handkerchief in muff, but can't find it. ELSA takes handkerchief out of "weeping satchel," and gives it to her.*

ELSA

Poor Mimi! Poor Mimi!

MIMI, *wiping her eyes with handkerchief, then returning it to ELSA.*

I—hope—you will be—hap—happy—too!

ELSA

I—happy?

MIMI

You are going to marry Karl—

ELSA

No—no—I'm not.

MIMI

But it's you he's in love with—

ELSA

No, Mimi; I'm not the one—it's some one else.

MIMI

You don't mean Mrs. Zanden—it can't be—why, she's your friend.

ELSA

She was.

MIMI

I don't believe it—it's not love—it's a madness—a—

ELSA, *jumping at the idea*

An infatuation?

MIMI

Yes, that's it—he's not in love with her—he's not himself.

ELSA

You think so?

MIMI

Yesterday he acted as if he were under some strange—

[*Rises.*

[*MIMI looks nervously behind her on both sides,*

ELSA follows her example.

under some strange—

ELSA

Influence?

MIMI

Yes.

[*The two girls look at each other in silence—for what seems like a minute.*

ELSA

Mimi, who is that man?

MIMI, *looks behind her again nervously*

I don't know—I *hate* him.

ELSA, *after looking behind her*

So do I.

[*They grasp each other's hands across the table.*

[*A pause.*

MIMI, *holding ELSA'S hand*

I'm glad I came, I feel better already for having seen you. I'm going to be sensible now. I'm going away—and I'm never coming back!

[*In altered voice.*

What time is it?

ELSA

It's almost three o'clock.

MIMI

Three o'clock! Then I must hurry. I have an appointment at half past—he's an illustrator—such a talented boy; he's just had a picture accepted by the *Fleigende Blatter*.

ELSA

And you are posing for him?

MIMI

Oh, yes; but tonight he goes to the artists' dinner, and I have to find his dress studs, and iron a tie for him, and trim his cuffs.

[Makes gesture of cutting with scissors outside the edge of her cuff.

Good-bye.

[Goes out quickly.

ELSA

[Looks after MIMI, then around the room, suddenly begins to sob, and calls in frightened voice:

Mimi! Mimi!

[Runs off.

[DEVIL enters just as ELSA leaves.

[DEVIL rings bell on table.

HEINRICH, *entering*

Did you ring, sir?

DEVIL

Where is my tea? Have you any rum in the house?

HEINRICH

Yes, sir.

DEVIL

I'll have some with my tea. Is your master getting up?

HEINRICH

Yes, sir.

DEVIL

Has anyone called to see him this morning?

HEINRICH

Mrs. Zanden's maid has been here three times.

DEVIL

What did she want?

HEINRICH

She inquired whether Mrs. Zanden could see my master. I told her I had strict orders not to call him before three.

DEVIL

Hurry with the tea.

[Door bell rings.

I'll have it in here.

[DEVIL goes into studio.

[HEINRICH goes out to hall, door slams, OLGA speaking outside.

OLGA

Is your master at home?

HEINRICH

Yes, Madame.

OLGA, *entering*

My maid told me I could not see him until three—it is three o'clock now.

HEINRICH

I am very sorry, Madame, but you will have to wait a few minutes longer. I will tell him that you are here.

OLGA

Thank you.

[HEINRICH crosses to studio door.

Wait! Has anyone called to see your master this morning?

HEINRICH

No, Madame.

OLGA

Didn't anyone leave a letter for him?

HEINRICH

No, Madame.

OLGA, *aside*

Thank God! Please tell him I'm here.

HEINRICH

I'm afraid, Madame, you will have to wait a moment; but I will tell the doctor

OLGA, *quickly*

What doctor?

HEINRICH

The gentleman who was here with you yesterday.

OLGA, *aside*

Dr. Miller? *He—is—in—there?*

HEINRICH

Yes, Madame.

OLGA, *aside*

Then I'm too late.

[*To HEINRICH, reluctantly*

Did you see Dr. Miller give a letter to your master? A piece of paper?

HEINRICH

Possibly, Madame, but I don't remember.

OLGA

Tell Dr. Miller to come at once. Say a lady wishes to speak to him, but don't give him my name.

[HEINRICH *goes out.*

[OLGA *walks up and down terribly agitated.*

[DEVIL *enters.*

DEVIL

Are you the lady who wishes to see me at once?

OLGA

Oh, tell me—did you—have you...?

DEVIL, *nods*

Yes—delivered.

[OLGA *sinks into chair, clasping her hands tightly.*

[*Enter HEINRICH, busy with tea things.*

Put it here. Thank you.

OLGA

[*Without looking at the DEVIL.*

Did he read it?

DEVIL

Yes.

[*Is busy with his tea.*

[*Silence.*

OLGA

My God!

DEVIL

[*Now standing behind OLGA, tea cup in his hand.*

After he read it, he buried his face in the pillow and cried.

OLGA

He cried?

DEVIL

I hate men who cry.

OLGA

I did not want him to have that letter. I wanted to speak to him first. I wanted to ask him to give me my letter back unopened I am too late.

DEVIL

You were not too late. It's I that was too early.

OLGA

He cried?

DEVIL

From joy.

OLGA

I haven't the courage to speak to him, and yet I feel that I must. I would like to go away, but something holds me; something I cannot—I cannot—oh, what will become of me?

HEINRICH, *at door*

My master will be here in a moment, sir.

[HEINRICH *goes out.*

DEVIL

I must be going.

OLGA

Don't go! Please stay. I don't want to be alone with him.

DEVIL

But if I am here you cannot speak to him about the letter. I shall only be in the way.

OLGA, *very weak*

Very well, then, I shall speak to him quite frankly. I shall ask him for the last time—

KARL, *voice from the studio*

Heinrich!

DEVIL, *quick*

There he is.

OLGA, *very weak*

Please stay.

DEVIL, *pointing to the small door at L.*

I shall be here. If you need me, call.

[DEVIL *goes out.*

[KARL *comes in from the studio.*

KARL, *kisses OLGA'S hand passionately*

Olga! I ought to go on my knees and beg your pardon for what I did last night.

OLGA

Speak low—Dr. Miller is in there.

KARL

Olga—can you ever—

OLGA

No, no; it is I who should ask forgiveness I was to blame. I lost control of myself. After what happened, I wanted to know—I wanted to make sure—but, you understand now, my letter has told you everything.

KARL

What letter?

OLGA, *reproachfully*

Karl, I understand. You want to spare me—you're being discreet; but you don't know me; I mean every word of that letter, I'm glad I wrote it—

KARL

But I didn't get any letter.

OLGA

Didn't Doctor Miller give you a letter?

KARL

No, no; really.



Olga and Karl

OLGA

[Angry and almost crying, crossing to door.]

Doctor Miller.

[DEVIL enters.]

My—my letter.

DEVIL

Ah, pardon me, Madame, a thousand pardons, I quite forgot. The only excuse I can offer is that there are some letters which ought never to be delivered.

[Takes letter out of his pocket]

OLGA

[Takes a step towards KARL, looks at DEVIL over her shoulder, shivers slightly.]

Who is that man?

[Silence, KARL looks at DEVIL, OLGA is terrified.]

[DEVIL crosses, gives the letter to KARL with a smile.]

[OLGA, quickly, to KARL.]

Tear that letter up.

[KARL tears up letter.]

Put it in the fire.

[KARL *crumples up the pieces and throws them in the fire. As he does so, OLGA makes an involuntary movement with her hand as if to stop him, but he does not see it as his back is turned. The DEVIL sees it, however, and smiles*

DEVIL

I sincerely regret if my forgetfulness has caused any inconvenience

KARL, *at alcove, pointing to door R*

[*Offensively.*

Pray don't let me detain you—

DEVIL

My train doesn't leave for an hour. Once more a thousand pardons.

[*Crossing to C., turning to both.*

If I could have foreseen what terrible distress the non-delivery of this letter—

KARL, *firmly*

You may be quite sure it contained nothing—er—nothing—

[*At a loss for a word.*

DEVIL, *looking at OLGA*

Nothing.

KARL, *at large chair*

You will miss your train.

DEVIL, *to OLGA, bowing*

Madame—

[*To KARL, offering hand.*

[KARL *turns his back.*

Good-bye, a thousand pardons.

[*Exit DEVIL at door to hall.*

OLGA

I would have given anything in the world if you had not burned that letter.

KARL

Why—you told—me—

[OLGA *shrugs her shoulders as if to say, "What can one expect of a man?"*

What does it matter anyway, whatever it is? I would rather hear it from your lips.

OLGA, *firmly*

No! The letter is burned; it is nothing but ashes—it is dead—no human power can bring it back to life.

KARL

But, Olga!

OLGA

A moment ago I would have given all I possessed to save it from the fire—and now—

KARL

What has happened?

OLGA

I can't tell you. I only know I am glad—I'm glad.

[OLGA *here seems to have suddenly become composed, almost happy, as if something had been settled, though not as she had wished, still it is a*

relief.

KARL, *takes her hand*

Olga, do you mean you will never—

OLGA, smiling

I mean *you* will never know what was in that letter—it is as if it had never been written—it has ceased to exist, and we are past the day of miracles.

KARL, *impatiently*

Miracles?

OLGA

No, no! Only the devil himself would re-create that letter from its burnt ashes. Good-bye, Karl. I'm going now—I shan't see you again.

[Shakes hands naturally.

[At word "Devil" the DEVIL enters silently from hall door. He has his fur coat on. He smiles wickedly, and at OLGA'S words "re-create that letter," pulls OLGA'S letter out of his pocket, and stands so that the chair hides him from KARL and OLGA, who are close to studio door.

KARL

Olga, you are afraid of something. What is it?

OLGA

I'm afraid of—myself—good-bye!

KARL

Good-bye, Olga.

[They turn and see the devil.

[To DEVIL, angrily.

I thought you'd gone!

[Goes abruptly into the studio, OLGA stands as if hypnotized.

DEVIL, *to* OLGA

I *beg* your pardon, I am so upset to-day—

[Holding out letter.

I made a mistake—I gave you my tailor's bill instead of your letter—here is your letter!

[DEVIL gives the letter to OLGA, who snatches it from him in a frightened manner and tears it open. She recognizes her letter.

OLGA

Karl! my letter! I have my letter—

[She runs into the studio.

[The DEVIL goes to the door of the studio, smiles diabolically, listens a minute at the door and rubs his hands as if he was very pleased with himself.

DEVIL

Voilà!

CURTAIN.

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