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FATE,

A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS,

— BY —

Hattie Mildred Coffin.

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❖ A DRAMA ❖

-IN-

FOUR ACTS,

34

BY

HATTIE MILDRED COFFIN.



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CHARACTERS.

LIONEL, Lover of Vinta.
LORD CHANCY Father of Vinta.
LATHROP Wealthy Lord, on whom Lord Chancy looked
with favor, and a Biganist.
VINTA Daughter of Lord Chancy.
O'SHANE Man servant at Crystal Palace.
FANNY LATHROP Deserted wife of Lathrop.
MINNIE Wife of Lathrop.
NED } Villians.
BOB }
KITTIE Minnie in disguise.

ACT FIRST.

SCENE—LONDON.

SCENE—Parlor of Crystal Palace. Enters Lionel and Vinta.

LIONEL. By all that's bright, and fair, and glorious ; by all that earth contains to minister to the wants of man ; nay, even by Heaven itself will I render to thee what thou deservest, false one ; thou unto whom power is given to win the hearts of men, only to cast them aside as a child some toy when weary of playing ; or, the wind some leaf hurled aside for the time being, then caught up at will and tossed about. No, I swear, it shall not be.

VINTA. Calm thyself, dearest Lionel, thou art cruel, very, very cruel, to heap thy wrath on me. 'Twas not my desire to wound thy sensitive heart, and would to Heaven I could tear thy image from my heart.

LIONEL. Tear my image from thy heart, hast thou not done so already ? Yes, and well nigh wrecked the hopes of him thou once professed to love so dearly. Now thou wouldst wish to rid thy memory of thy cruel deeds ; be forever freed from torturing thoughts and still more from my presence. So, thou wouldst turn to some other and leave me to mourn, aye, to perish, without one loving smile.

VINTA. 'Tis enough ; 'twas not my wish to be so rudely torn from thee — 'twas fate's decree. Thou sayest 'tis my wish to rid my memory of thee, or my cruel deeds to thee, so 'tis my

wish. But not because I spurn thee or the love that thou dost offer me, but that I might find some peace, some rest for my sorrowing soul, and, Lionel, thou never loved me or thou could not treat me thus.

LIONEL. Oh! would to God, I could make thee feel how dear thou art to me, how deeply thine image is engraven in my heart, could I but make thee feel that every breath I draw is an inspiration from Heaven to seek thee, to break down the barrier that separates thou and me and clasp thee to my bosom, lay thy hand in mine and feel that all the powers of the universe had not strength to separate two loving hearts, or fill their minds with fear.

VINTA. My mind is filled with a vague fear already. The future seems filled with undefinable darkness—seems over-flowing with unsolved mysteries, and, look which way I may, I see naught but darkness, dreary, desolate darkness, not pierced with any brightness, save the thought that thou dost love me and that is scarcely comfort, knowing that we are doomed to part, that thou in thy manhood will rise and rise higher and higher until the vision of the past grows dimmer and dimmer, fades away at last and with it the memory of Vinta, she whom thou sayest loves thee not, or any, unless it be to spurn the love they offer her. 'Tis bitter—bitter thus to hear such words from thee, but thou has spoken, and no matter how kindly thou dost treat me in the future, and though I may forgive, yet will thy words still be retained in my memory, still press heavily against heart and brain.

Enter O'SHANE.

O'SHANE. Who hasn't got any heart and brain? Miss Vinta, faith an' here's the biggest heart and brain ye iver saw; yis mum, the docter held a post mortem examination and said me heart was enlarged almost to the exclusion of my stomach, and for a man that is very remarkable, as in the ordinary make-up the stomach scarcely leaves room for any other ingredient. And me brain—well, the fact is, I niver wint to school much on account of it; for fear it would expand and cause an explosion.

LIONEL. But, O'Shane, brains are not counted great by the quantity as much as by the quality.

OSHAHE. Faith an' I don't belave that nather.

LIONEL. Don't believe that?

O'SHANE. Not for several reasons I don't, but I'll not explain this time—faith an' what's the matter, Miss Vinta; You look so sad like, 'most as sad an' sorry as meself when I wanted Kathleen to be my wife, and she said, no, that she was getting

two dollars a week an' that was bether than she could do if she married me. An', says I, Kathleen, I've got a great big heart to offer ye, if I haven't so much money. Yes, says she, but the reason for that is because you have the heartache so much wishing for money. An', says she, it don't matter so much about the size of the heart for that don't show, but money shows, an', says she, O'Shane, ye jist keep your heart an' I'll take the money. An' I jist sank down so sad like an' thought, what does a big heart or brain amount to if ye haven't any money.

VINTA. 'Tis too bad, O'Shane—but leave me now, I wish to be alone.

O'SHANE. Yis, but ye won't be alone long, for I heard Mr. Lathrop say he was comin' down shortly. [Vinta startled.]

LIONEL. So I'm to yield my treasure into other hands. To give up all the world holds dear to me that another may enjoy thy presence, bask in the sunshine of thy smiles. Great God, help me to bear all this. Oh, Vinta! thou art cruel, cruel, but, Vinta, say, oh, say, that sometime thou wilt be mine and I will patiently wait. Say that at some future time I may come to thee.

VINTA. Nay, Lionel, our paths diverge henceforth and forever.

LIONEL. Then, Vinta, fare thee well, I leave thee. But remember, I shall always love and hate thee. Love thee, because of a power I cannot control. Hate thee, because thou art so cruel. [Exit.]

CURTAIN.

ACT SECOND.

SCENE—A Room in Crystal Palace.

Enter LORD CHANCY.

L. CHANCY. Vinta, why art thou so melancholy? Cheer up, for thy prospects were never more flattering than at this time.

VINTA. Never were they so dark and unfathomable to me.

L. CHANCY. Lathrop will be here soon to claim thee as his bride. Then, wealth, love, position and all that the world can give will be thine. Thou wilt be the envy of all thy set.

VINTA. Nay, father, talk not thus to me, for my hand shall never go where my heart cannot.

L. CHANCY. Then will I banish thee from my mind and heart. Leave thee dowerless to battle with the world. Leave

thee to find what solace thou canst in poverty and disgrace, for, by Heavens, I swear no child of mine can disobey my wish, thwart my plans and still be a child of mine, so, fare thee well for all time. I leave thee to thine own sweet reflections. [Exit.]

VINTA. Oh, Heavens! have mercy on my poor, throbbing heart, guide and direct me in this dark hour. Forsaken by he whom my infant lips were first taught to murmur the name of father; called heartless and cruel by he whom I love better than my own life. And persecuted by one on whom I can never bestow any favor; and he coming. What can I say? Other than what I've already said, that I cannot, will not wed such as he? A thousand times had I rather be laid in my grave than stand beside the altar and speak those solemn words of constancy that bind for all eternity, (and from which there is no escape but disgrace or death) and feel that I was uttering a lie, that lips and heart could never speak or beat in unison or harmony, those words that mean so much. No, no! 'tis better I should suffer alone, without friends or kin, than make the sacrifice, bear the censure of the whole world. 'Tis better, far better.

Enter O'SHANE.

O'SHANE. What's that she is saying? bear the censure of the whole world? No, indeed, ye won't while O'Shane lives with his great big heart. That all belongs to thee since Kathleen took money instead. No! ye won't bear the censure of the whole world, for I'll jist slip around 'mongst them as fast as I can and whisper a good word for ye, and it will be, "bread cast on the waters will return after many days." [Aside.] Oh! how sweet she looks, if it wasn't a breach of etiquette I'd like to steal just one kiss, sure now I would. I'd rather have it than money, sure I would now.

VINTA. What a dear, good soul—would there were more such hearts in 'his world as thine. So honest, so true, so self-sacrificing. Would I could imitate thee; would I could feel joyous and happy as in days past, when e'en the stars in Heaven looked not brighter than did my pathway, but maybe the dark veil will be rent sometime and a brighter light shine for me. [Exit.]

Enter LATHROP.

LATHROP. Good evening, O'Shane.

O'SHANE. Good evening, Mr. Lathrop, be seated.

LATHROP. This is a beautiful moonlight evening?

O'SHANE. Is it? (Faith and I thought it was the diamond on his bosom made things look so bright. It looks in size

very much like the moon.) Faith, and how's [yet folks; Mr. Lathrop?

LATHROP. Folks? Why, my good man, I've no kin.

O'SHANE. Indeed, an' I heard you were married, or going to be soon.

LATHROP. Yes, going to be soon, if my pretty bird will come o time.

O'SHANE. Faith, an' who is the bird ye spake of?

LATHROP. Vinta.

O'SHANE. No, ye don't.

LATHROP. Don't what, O'Shane?

O'SHANE. Oh, I was thinking aloud. Mr. Lathrop, here s a stereoscope and views of all the criminals wanted by the aw. Ye can amuse yerself by looking at them, till Vinta comes ; oh, yes! Mr. Lathrop, one looks very much like ye, see? [holding up the picture.] Aside. (Faith and I believe it s he.) [Exit.]

LATHROP. Great Heavens, can it be my secret is known? [Rising.] That officers are already on my track? What shall I do? If Vinta would only consent to be mine, we could fly ; could escape to some foreign clime, live a quiet life and defy the law. But she is so obstinate, so willful ; will not yield to my wish. But something must be done—shall be done ; for, by the stars that glimmer in yon firmament, I will not be thwarted. I shall not yield my treasure thus.

Enter VINTA.

VINTA. You here, Mr. Lathrop? You surprised me. (Aside.) Yes, more surprised, than delighted me.

LATHROP. Yes, Vinta, I come to claim thee. It is thy father's dearest wish, the idol of his dreams that thou should be my bride.

VINTA. But, I cannot, I cannot, e'en though it be the desire of he whom once claimed the title of father to me, but now, no more.

LATHROP. Now, no more ; what meanest thou?

VINTA. That my father has forsaken me.

LATHROP. What, refuse to become my w fe? break thy father's heart by not yielding to his desire? Then, by the Gods, thou shalt be mine. Come! fly with me e'er it be forever too late.

VINTA. Nay, nay, I will not, for I do not love thee. My heart throbs not with joy at thy coming, or my eye brighten at the sound of thy footsteps. Sooner would I wander in desert

lands, far from all who ever knew me, than be thy bride and live a lie.

LATHROP. But thou shalt be—by all that's great, I swear it!

VINTA. Heaven help me, take me from the power of this wicked man. He unto whom love and honor are as naught, compared with his wicked, mighty will. Oh! will no one save me from this awful fate that seems pending.

Enter O'SHANE.

O'SHANE. Yis, Miss Vinta, ye jist remember this big heart and brain of mine that are workin' together for yer good, since Kathleen took the money instead, oh! it makes me sad to think of it. I'll help ye, sure now I will, as sure as my name is O'-Shane. (ASIDE. Faith, an' I'd like to stale jist one kiss, she looks so swate.) Oh! Kathleen, why were you so mercenary? Why weren't ye swate like Miss Vinta? But that's the way with Irish, nice to look at, but deceitful as ignis fatuus. Yis, Miss Vinta, I'll rid ye of this burden, sure now I will.

LATHROP. What's that you were saying?

O'SHANE. Oh, Mr. Lathrop, nothing. Sure an I was only dhraming aloud. Mr. Lathrop, some one at the door to see you.

LATHROP. What's wa ted?

O'SHANE. A letter for ye.

LATHROP. A letter for me; who can it be from.

(READS.)

Central House, June, 1884.

MY DEAR HUSBAND: I await your arrival; am very anxious to have you come to me. Not hearing from you in so long a time I came in search of you, thinking something might have happened. Come immediately.

FANNY LATHROP.

LATHROP. So she has hunted me down at last; come to frustrate all my plans. Great God, what can I do. Oh, I have it! I'll just write her a letter, that's my plan. O'Shane, bring me paper, pen and ink, if you please.

(WRITES.)

Crystal Palace, June, 1884.

MADAM: So you come to me again. I thought I was well rid of you, but it seems not. I make you one more offer: Will give you two hundred pounds to leave the city quietly. If you refuse will denounce you an imposter and blackmailer and cause your arrest, for no one in the city will credit the story of your being my wife, and you have no proof. Accept these terms and all will be well. (RISING.) Refuse and suffer the consequences. Yes, that will do. (TO MESSENGER.) Deliver immediately.

O'SHANE. Mr. Lathrop, what's the matter.

LATHROP. Oh! another chance for Christain charity, now for the papers.

O'SHANE. (Messenger at door.) Miss Vinta, a letter for ye. (Hands her the letter. She reads.)

VINTA. Another application for lady's maid. O'Shane, what kind of a looking personage is she?

O'SHANE. Oh! Miss Vinta, purty 's a rose in June, before some insect creature has destroyed the heart.

VINTA. Show her in.

(O'Shane exit. Returns with the new maid.)

VINTA. I have concluded to take you on trial, so consider this your home.

MAID. Oh, thank you, thank you! It will be such a comfort for me to assist ye. (Glancing at Lathrop, exit.)

LATHROP. (Crossing the room.) Miss Vinta, darling, hast thou made up thy mind to become my wife.

VINTA. No, Mr. Lathrop, and repeat what I've already said, that I cannot, will not be thy wife, for I do not love thee, my heart yearns for other than thee. And would to Heaven thou might be persuaded to leave me and this house, forever.

LATHROP. Oh, my pretty one, the tates otherwise decree.

VINTA. Oh, Lionel, Lionel! 'tis thee I love. O'Shane, you remain in while I walk in the garden.

LATHROP. (Rising.) Shall I accompany thee?

VINTA. No, no! a thousand times no. [Exit.]

LATHROP. Ah! independent, very; but that will wear away. Constant dipping wears a stone.

O'SHANE. She tould me to remain here. Sure an' I'll stick as close as the sun does to the Heavens. Yis, for I belave he'd (pointing to Lathrop) steal the gilt off the wall paper if he wasn't watched. Didn't Miss Vinta look swate though when she wint out? How I wish Kathleen had liked hearts and gardens and sich things bether that money. But that's the way with the Irish.

Enter KITTY.

KITTY. Indeed, and where is me mistress? (Lathrop starts at sight of her face.)

O'SHANE. What would ye be afther knowin', Kitty?

KITTY. Just wanted to know where me lady was.

O'SHANE. Faith, an' she jist went out in the garden for a bit of a walk among the roses. Indeed, Miss Kitty, an' she nades it too, for she, like mesilf, has had lots of trouble.

KITTY. Were hearts made to ache?

O'SHANE. Kitty, does ye iver have the heart ache?

KITTY. I will if I stay around this house long.

O'SHANE. Wonder if she means that she is getting to like me? I never spoke one word of love to her. Never to any girl since Kathleen tould me to kape me heart an' she'd take the money. Sure now that was hard.

O'SHANE. Kitty, were ye iver inarried?

KITTY. Yes; no—why, O'Shane, what a question to ask the likes of me. [ASIDE Oh! I wonder if he suspects anything?]

O'SHANE. Where's Mr. Lathrop?

KITTY. He wint out some time ago.

O'SHANE. Kitty, how does ye like Mr. Lathrop?

KITTY. I would not like to say—have not been here long.

O'SHANE. Well, the fact of it is, Miss Kitty, I think he's a brick, and burned pretty hard, at that.

KITTY. [Reclining.] O'Shane, bring me some camphor, quick, my head is bursting. (O'Shane exit)

KITTY. Oh, Heavens! why did I come here? Here only to find the man that is my lawful husband; the man that led me to the altar, only two short years ago and spoke such words of constancy and love to me; here trying to win Miss Vinta for his wife. Yes; before my very eyes. Oh! my heart will break. No, it must not be. I will save her at all hazards from becoming his wife. Oh, Lathrop! why did you deceive me thus? I who loved thee so well and deemed thee not guilty of such perfidy. But they must not suspect me. I must save Miss Vinta and bring him to justice. Oh, dear; oh, dear!

Enter O'SHANE.

O'SHANE. Miss Kitty, don't groan like that or ye'll scare the life out of me, for my heart is enlarged, and when it beats so fast it almost upsets me. Sure now, Miss Kitty, what can I do for ye?

KITTY. Bathe my head with camphor.

O'SHANE. Faith an' my nerves are all in a quiver. Sure an' I feel so queer a-rubbin' Miss Kitty's head. I belave I'm goin' crazy.

CURTAIN.

ACT THIRD.

SCENE FIRST—GARDEN.

Enter LATHROP AND VILLIANS.

LATHROP. What are your terms.

VILLIANS. One hundred pounds a-piece.

LATHROP. Good. Be on hand tomorrow evening and we will find a cage for the bird that she cannot escape from very soon. Remember, eight o'clock sharp.

VILLIANS. Yes, Yes!

SCENE SECOND.—Garden, Crystal Palace.

Enter VINTA.

VINTA. All looks cheerful and bright; the air is filled with sweetness; the stars shine ever so brightly. All the darkness—comes from my own soul. Oh! if Lionel would only come to me. Could I once more look in his dear face it would be such a comfort. Alas; 'tis hard, 'tis hard. [Resting in a seat and dropping her head on her hand. Is startled soon by the sound of footsteps.]

VINTA. What, you here, Mr. Lathrop, why didst thou come? I thought to be alone. Art thou not satisfied with my answer, but must persecute me still?

LATHROP. To seek thee, my pretty one. What other purpose could I have but that? and tell thee that this night thou shalt be mine, by fair means or foul.

VINTA. Oh, Heaven, save me!

LATHROP. By fair, if thou see'st fit to yield peacefully to my wish—foul, if thou dost refuse.

VINTA. (Rising) Then I defy thee, for I will not be thy wife.

LATHROP. Don't run off like that; oh, no!

VINTA. Help! Help! Murder!

O'SHANE. Yis, Miss Vinta, I'm here with this big heart. Sure, I'm a cousin to Sullivan that can knock any of ye down. sure now I am.

LIONEL. Villain, what would'st thou do. (Turning to Vinta.) At last, darling, I come to thee. (Vinta faints in his arms.)

CURTAIN.

ACT FOURTH

SCENE FIRST—Drawing Room, Crystal Palace.

Enter VINTA.

VINTA. What a miraculas escape. Even now my mind

cannot dwell on the scene without horror. Why, what's this! A letter for me? That's strange. From Kitty, too:

“MISS VINTA: Have deceived thee; am not Kitty, the Irish girl, but Mr. Lathrop's lawful wife. He left me almost two years ago and not hearing from him I was in great need of money so came here and to my horror soon found I was living under the same roof with my lawful husband and that he was trying to win thy hand. I have full proof of our marriage; I was determined to save thee. Believe me, this is true.”

MINNIE LATHROP.”

VINTA. Yes, why should I not believe thee, noble girl? Thou hast suffered too, even as I have suffered. Oh! the deep-dyed villain! Oh, father, if thou only knew what thy child has suffered and escaped from thou would'st not curse her.

SCENE SECOND—Street.

Enter LORD CHANCY.

LORD CHANCY. Oh, how I've repented, yes, sadly repented cursing my only child. Oh, Vinta, if thou hast suffered so have I. If I could only be with thee once more.

Enter O'SHANE.

O'SHANE. Lord Chancey!

LORD CHANCY. O'Shane! Yes, it is I. Tell me where is Vinta, pray?

O'SHANE. Jist where you left her—as purty as iver. Lionel returned; about to be married; Lathrop proved a villian. Sure now, he is; I felt it all the time.

LORD CHANCY. Take me to her.

O'SHANE. Sure now I will, without delay.

SCENE THIRD.—A Room, Crystal Palace.

LATHROP. So I've come to wearing bracelets with a pretty chain; well this is an episode, truly; but I was playing rather a risky game; that of having two wives and trying to get another; so, if the right card didn't turn trump no one is to blame but I. Well, I'll take a smoke and await fate's decree. (Messenger brings a letter.) A letter? Well, now, who thinks of me. Ah! so Fanny's dead. Died of a broken heart. That's queer. Just about as pleasant, though, as to have to sing, “in the prison cell I sit,” &c. So; happily rid of wife No. 2; fate's decree.

Enter LIONEL AND O'SHANE.

LIONEL. Mr. Lathrop, we have come to offer thee conditions. Kitty says she is not Kitty, but Minnie Lathrop, thy lawful wife, and loves thee dearly, and has full proof of her marriage. So, if thou are willing to claim her as thy wife, all will be well. If not, off to prison thou must go. Which wilt thou do?

LATHROP. Verily, this is a rubber. Of the two evils I'll choose the least—take Minnie instead of prison fare; for her pa's rich. (*ASIDE.* Good bye, Vinta, I wish thee well. I'm not so bad after all, only one wife.)

LIONEL. So that is thy decision?

LATHROP. It is.

O'SHANE. (*ASIDE.*) I knew I'd git away with ye.

SCENE FOURTH—Parlor, Crystal Palace.

Enter LORD CHANCY AND O'SHANE.

Enter VINTA.

VINTA. My dear, dear father, thou forgivest me?

LORD CHANCY. Yes, my child, I fully and freely forgive thee, and humbly ask thy forgiveness for trying to compel thee to wed one thou didst not love. Heaven was wiser than I and kept thee for a better fate.

O'SHANE. There, Miss Vinta, faith an' I tould ye I'd help ye.

VINTA. Yes, O'Shane, thou art a dear, kind friend and thou shalt be rewarded.

Enter LIONEL.

VINTA. Lionel, at last I have the full and free consent of father to be thy wife. I could not think of wedding thee without, and since he learned how near he came to wrecking my life by compelling me to wed Lathrop, he fully forgave me for disobeying his wishes. Dear Lionel, thou hast suffered too.

LIONEL. Aye, more than thou ever dreamest. I traveled in hopes that a change might cheer and comfort me, but 'twas of no avail. But heaven has seen fit to restore us to each other and we will bury the past in the brightness of the future. You will (a kiss) forgive those cruel words I spoke to thee so long ago?

VINTA. Yes, dear Lionel, never speak of them more.

Enter LATHROP AND KITTY.

LATHROP. We have come to say good bye before we sail for America.

LORD CHANCY. When wilt thou sail?

LATHROP. Tomorrow morning.

LORD CHANCY. Then remain with us this evening, and since we are all united once more, let's all arise and join hands.

O'SHANE. Faith an' they have all found a heart but me. Mine is very large, but Kathleen took money instead. Sure, an' that's the way with the Irish—purty to look at, but decateful as ignis fatus. Lord Chancy is very nice, but I'd rather join hands with some girl; but Kathlee said, "O'Shane, ye jist kape ye'r heart an' I'll take the money," an' here I am. Sure, now, that's true, an' if ye don't belave me come an' take hold of me hand, and see if isn't Irish.

CURTAIN.







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