

The title could be changed.

The cowardly girl.

Little drama in one act.

Scene A!

A sitting room adorned simply and prettily. A door on the left and in the background. On the right a window. At the opening of the scene Mary dressed in a graceful fancy dress, is shrunk in a corner of the sofa, and casts frightened looks all around her. From the outside, the noise of the Carnival is heard. She gets up and comes near the window.

~~Scene B!~~

Mary. Oh! oh! what a crowd! and Olga didn't yet appear. How silly I did not go with mammy. But how? Is it possible to lose the fancy-dress ball of my school. And then, I promised Olga to wait for her and go together..... Ah! she is giving me much trouble. How late she is! (She casts around her frightened looks) And I am all alone at home..... (she tries to laugh to take courage) Ha! ha! ha! Eh! what does it mean? Is it the first time that this happened to me, or because there are masquerades about to-day. Nice thing to be afraid of masqueraders and I to be a masquerader. (She comes near the mirror and looks in it with a coquettish manner) To tell you the truth, I don't think there is anybody who can be afraid of me. (She makes mechanically some dancing steps) Really let me try the dance which I shall have at school, so the time will pass. (She dances unwillingly, and singing in a

low tone). The noise of the street is heard more intensely.

Mary interrupts the dance and comes near the window.

Oh! that Olga! at least if I had the courage to go alone?
But how to cross through such crowd! And they are drunk!

If the entrance door is open and they come in? Dear me!

How afraid I am. Ah! I will call Catherine to keep me
company. (She half opens the door) Catherine, Catherine!

(No answer) She left also, after putting, in my head, so
many silly ideas. Bah! do you think that I believed

your clever words you liar Catherine? Was it ever heard?

She insists that at the Carnival the devils come down on
earth and mix with the people feigning that they are
masqueraders. Pf! Tell to others your stories dame Ca-
therine (Cries are heard from outside and noise) Again...

who knows... all may happen... Dear me! (Suddenly
wild shouts are heard as if an excited crowd entered
the house. The door opens violently and a devil rushes in,
holding a small stick. Mary cries out and hides behind
a piece of furniture).

Scene B

Devil and Mary

Devil. My little one you are very cowardly. Come out and
let me see you (He stoops and looks at her) You seem
to me very pretty.

Mary. (She is shrinking more and more, emitting inarti-
culate cries)

Devil. (He comes nearer and nearer, stoops and tries to
touch her with his stick) Come! come! I am not so

terrible as you think.

Mary. (Hiding herself more and more) Dear me! dear me!

Mammy, Daddy! help!.....

Devil. Not so, not so! Why such fear? Look, I am.....
handsome and..... a very good devil, I swear it.

Mary. He swears it.

Devil. Yes, yes, I have only a weak point. I dote on
beautiful girls. But this must not frighten you at all.

Mary. I would sooner do without such love (Suddenly
as if inspired) I am not beautiful. I..... M. Devil
I, I am unugly, very y y ugly.

Devil. (Laughing in his sleeve) What do you say? Let
me see you.

Mary (Untidies her hair very quickly, opens her eyes
very wide, twists her mouth and puts her tongue
out, trying to take, as much as possible, a more stupid
air and so she puts her head boldly out.

Devil. (Bursts into unrestrained laughter) (To the specta-
tors) Oh! the sly one! (To Mary seriously) I swear to
Hell that I never saw an uglier face. Well! I go,
but before going away I'll touch you with my wand
that you may become still uglier (The Devil with
suggestive movements is preparing to touch her)

Mary. (Arranging hurriedly her hair and trying to
take a graceful air) No.... No.... st...st... stay!
(She draws herself abruptly)

Devil (Laughs shaking his head). Direct descendant
of Eve, and still more, born in the Island of Venus!

You are not wrong my little one. Even I, who am a Devil adore beauty.

Song No 1

Inside my black heart
With the damned soul
I hide some golden corner
For you my little beloved one.

Mary. You can't deceive me
you can't deceive me
As beautifully you may sing

Go behind me Satan
Away, on the lonely mountains!

Devil
(Dancing)

I love the little girls
The song, and the joy
The lively games
The beauty of life.

(Mary drawn by the song and dance peeps out her head and follows it. But the song stops abruptly and Mary hides herself like the snail in his shell) the Devil seeing that he did not succeed with his song to make Mary come out, he comes near her hiding place with decisive air.

Devil. I see that I must use great means.

(He takes an air comically grand and cries out touching with his wand Mary's hiding place) Mary! come forth!

Mary. (While hiding more and more) He knows my name also.

Devil. Mary, I said! come forth! (Mary doesn't move) Now you will come out willy, nilly. (He stoops and approaching his wand to Mary's face, he draws back with slow steps

with an air of a hypnotist: Mary comes out slowly, slowly and follows him as hypnotized with her nose almost stuck to the wand. They make half the round of the scene so, and return to the centre. The Devil puts down his wand and Mary as if coming to herself tries to escape. The Devil again raises his wand before Mary's face and Mary remains still.)

Devil. Disobedient little one! you will not escape (he goes away a little and looks at her smiling with satisfaction). By the Hell, I did not come down to earth in vain. I found the most beautiful girl in the world. A real little queen. Now I will give her her train of honour. (He makes some magical signs, in the air, with his wand, and then he strikes it on the floor with force. At the same time through the doors and windows, twelve black Devils jump on the scene. Mary hides her face in her hands and draws back crying out. The Devils stand in attention. A short silence follows. Mary takes courage and slowly slowly uncovers her face.)

Devil. (ordering) Pay homage to your Queen! (The Devils advance a few steps, kneel before Mary and lean their head on the floor. Mary cries out again and draws back frightened.)

Devil. Stand up! (He comes near and takes Mary by the hand.)

Devil. Don't be afraid, my beautiful one. Nobody will touch you, you are under my high protection. These are your slaves. Your least wish will be order for them, your will

law. And nothing is impossible for them, because I want it so, I, for my love to you. (He sings)

Song

~~Devil~~ Inside my black heart
With the damned soul etc.

From outside the noise of the Carnival is heard to ~~approach~~ approach. Some serpentines are falling in through the open window and unroll on the floor.

Devil. (Draws lightly Mary near him; she seems dazed and without will any more. The Devil embraces her and they turn so, opposite the spectators, while behind the chorus of the Devils forms a semi-circle.)

Devil. Listen to the howling of the false joy which that miserable crowd of men has let loose that they may forget their enmity. When in a little while we will proceed in my all golden chariot, drawn by six winged horses, all black like the darkness of Hell, with our horrible train of honour in front and behind, all these run away crowds will humbly stop to pay us homage, and on their pale face, only the stupid laughter of the mask will remain unchanged.

(New wave of noise, new serpentines)

Devil (singing) My little queen **N^o 2a**
My sweet companion!

Act **N^o 2a** Duetto.

Devil
Inside my black heart
Inside my damned soul
I keep some golden corner
For you, my little beloved one

Mary
Oh! my poor heart
It beats, beats as broken
A little corner of the heaven
Is not lit up for me!

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z They dance z dance No 2c

(They sing and the chorus of devils follows them with suitable steps)

Mary No 2c

Who would ever tell me such a misfortune!

I'll go mad! Have pity on me Christ!

Become the companion of the Devil!

May God preserve me from worse misfortunes!

The Devil (alone)

Don't think of anything

Drive fear away

It is a pity to lament

In this mad Carnival.

Devil

It is not a misfortune

Yes, believe me

Your slave I'll become

Yes, believe me

(All the Devils together)

Come, little one let us go forth together

We shall rush in the madness

All will look stupidly at us

And we shall laugh under the mask.

Duetto.

Devil

In my dark Kingdom

You will enter like the light of dawn

Like the shining sun

And like the golden Pleiades

Mary

In your dark Kingdom

Living you drag me

Far from the sun of life

Will my happy youth end.

Duetto

Duetto.

Mary

If this is a bad dream

Devil

For me it is sweet

My God, let me awake.	Not to awake
To my poor dwelling	And I long, in a charming spot
Without cares again to return.	With you to live.

The Devil (alone)

Song. Do not think of anything etc.

The Devils (dance & sing)

Come little one etc.

(Dance)

All the Devils together (While singing) Come little one etc.

they draw up in front and behind as a guard of honour to Mary and the Devil. But as they turn to leave soon after the end of the repetition, a low melody is heard, which rises gradually. A soft rosy light bathes the scene and a dozen of angels moving all-white wings, come down on the scene. With the first rumour of the melody, the devils withdraw frightened to the end of the scene, except their leader who remains in the middle holding Mary tightly.

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The melody continues until the angels draw up and the light becomes more vivid. The leader of the angels advances towards the centre slowly; stops a few steps away from the group of Mary and the Devil, raises one hand and orders (The Devil seeing him approaching leaves Mary and withdraws).

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Angel. Cunning child of the black night
I order you! go back to Hell!

To Tartarus, to the horrible gloom
To the unshaken, eternal darkness.

(The leader of the devils raises one hand before his face as if he wanted to protect himself from the strong intense glow and withdraws stepping back. All the Devils make the same movement and shrink as much as they can. Mary timidly but with an illumined face, comes near the angel and kneels before him, joining her hands. The angel puts down slowly, slowly his wing and covers Mary. Then he turns to the angels and says:

At a nod of ours. Forward!

No 40 The enemy will scatter like smoke.

Like ice he will melt in the sun. Forward!

He will extinguish, like foam, at the breath of wind.

(The angels advance; repeating all together the same repetition, against the devils who shrink as much as possible, trying to disappear) (The angel in a little while.)

No 46
Angel. On your bright wings raise the innocent child
And give his poor little soul, joy and peace.

4c (The angels advance, to the rhythm of the music, as they entered and surround Mary, who is kneeling before the angel. They kneel slowly around her, and stretch their wings that she may sit on, while the angels kneel slowly, slowly. Mary rises with the same rhythm and so she appears as if mounting. Then suddenly the leader of the Devils comes to himself and orders.

Devil. Charge! my faithful friends! they take our Queen! (the leader of the angels raises his hand and the angels leave Mary in the middle with the leader and draw back a few steps with raised and joined wings among them, as if to raise, a protective wall, around Mary. The devils in an impetuous assault pass between the angels and advance towards Mary. They are driven back by the leader of the Angels and go out passing again between the angels.

In the meantime, in the middle, the two leaders dispute the possession of Mary and now the one and now the other predominates. All these are done with suitable dancing movements. At the culminating point of the music and dance, Mary wain out collapses. At once the dance stops and both angels and devils surround Mary, and take off their masks.

Olga. Kuckoo, Kuckoo.

(Mary raises her head timidly and facing the laughing faces of her friends, who are bending over her, is astounded. She opens and closes her eyes as if waking from a dream and then gets up and comes near Olga a little frightened still.

Mary. Olga! - you!

Olga. Yes - I.

Mary. (Embracing Olga and then the others, one by one. You Phroso! Nina! Helen! Dear me! really; you are yourselves, the self-same or perhaps..... you are also magical persons that come to deceive me

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and torment me the more.

All (They laugh all together) No, don't be afraid, look at us, we are the same, your friends.

Olga (Embracing her) It is a trick, that we played.

Mary Trick? - How? Why?

Olga To cure you from the illness of fear.

Mary Ah! cunning fellows! and in reality you succeeded. I feel quite cured.

(Mary singing) Fear is gone and joy came in
No 5 my little heart.

All together dancing. Pardon us and we shall not do it
Another time little sister

Come now, let us go forth all together

We also to rush in the folly.

All will look stupidly at us

And we shall laugh under the mask.

Dancing they withdraw with the accompaniment only of the music. When they arrive in the background they repeat the two last verses.

"They will all stupidly look at us

And we shall laugh under the mask."

(Stage) Curtain

Limasol 1943.

Helen. Chr. ~~Antonova~~