

# **THE LITTLE BLUE DEVIL**

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The Little Blue Devil by Dorothea Mackellar & Ruth Bedford

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**DOROTHEA MACKELLAR & RUTH BEDFORD**

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BLUE DEVIL**



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BY  
DOROTHEA MACKELLAR  
AND  
RUTH BEDFORD



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### "THE LITTLE BLUE DEVIL

"The wind went down with the sunset,  
The fog came up with the tide,  
When the Witch of the North took an egg-shell  
With a little Blue Devil inside.  
'Sink,' she said, 'or swim,' she said,  
'It's all you will get from me.  
And that is the finish of *him*,' she said.  
And the egg-shell went to sea.

"The wind came up with the morning,  
The fog blew off with the rain  
When the Witch of the North saw the egg-shell  
And the little Blue Devil again.  
'Did you swim?' she said; 'Did you sink?' she said,  
And the little Blue Devil replied,  
'For myself, I swam, but I think,' he said,  
'There's somebody sinking outside.'"

*Rudyard Kipling.*

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# The Little Blue Devil

## CHAPTER I

### ANTOINE'S FATHER

"Here they speak and tell the story."

*Aucassin and Nicolette.*

4 "ANTOINE, my son."

"Yes."

Antoine sat quite still, far back in a big leather chair in the lounge of the Parisian hotel—a morose little boy with an unchildlike face. He did not look at his father—he rather preferred not to. He never expected his father to be anything but unpleasant, and the parental expression this morning was, if possible, more unpleasant than usual. The only effect of the mellifluous caressing tones which Gaston threw into his voice was to put his small son on his guard.

"Yes," he said indifferently.

"What a grunt, little pig! Your manners grow more charming every day. . . . Antoine, I go to Moscow to-night."

"I know, but I needn't go and pack yet. It does not take me long to—"

"I said *I* go. For you there is no room."

Antoine's head flew up with a jerk. There was generally something to be afraid of behind the jokes of Gaston Ste. Croix, and this sounded like a particularly heavy example. Antoine and his father were alone in the world—ever since

his mother had died two years since, worn out by seven years of misery and Ste. Croix. Perhaps if the marriage had been a happy one she would have tried to be reconciled to her father, and gone back to the old home, and then the small Antoine would at least have known something of his near relatives, and who they were, and where they lived. But as it was, Antoine's mother could not bear the thought of returning to Trent Stoke defeated, and showing her wounds. And so it came that Gaston, his father, was the only near relative that Antoine knew, and Gaston had just announced that he was going to leave him in a Paris hotel.

He raised his head sharply and looked his father full in the face. "Then what do I do?" he said gruffly—but there was a note of fear in his voice.

"You? Really, I do not know. For long, my brave Antoine, you have shown an unbecoming independence of me."

Antoine waited, silent. He was very much like what Gaston must have been as a boy, except for the grey eyes under his straight black brows. But years had not improved the elder Ste. Croix. His face was lined and puffy, and its expression unpleasant to the last degree, especially at this particular moment. Gaston broke the strain impatiently.

"You make your own arrangements, you understand? I have done enough for you."

Another pause. Then Antoine, stammering and suddenly childish: "But—but you'll leave me here? Wh—what can I do?"

"You can ask your friends. Don't whimper—we never pretended to be devoted to each other, O *Télémaque le jeune*. You can ask your friends—our friends—for advice and help. I have done everything for you and I am tired of it."

Antoine showed his teeth in a snarl very like Gaston's own.