

DEVIL'S DUE

EPISODE ONE: A GAMBLER'S CALL

Written by

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Adapted from the short story "Devil's Due" by Paul Knauer

DEVIL'S DUE: EP. 101 9/16/25 (WHITE)

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INSERT: COMPANY THEME MUSIC

INSERT: HOST'S SERIES/EPISODE INTRODUCTION

INSERT: MUSICAL FLOURISH

INSERT: DEVIL'S DUE THEME MUSIC

EXT. KANSAS PRAIRIE - DAY

SFX: HORSES CLOPPING, ATMOSPHERICS

STORYTELLER

The life of a gambler was nomadic in nature. Stay in one place too long and one of two things happened --either the games dried up, or the tempers flared. Neither were good for the pocketbook. And, no one could argue the job was good for your personal life. Walt wasn't exactly sure, then, why young Nathan had fought so hard to ride with the worn-out card player. No one chose this life. It just happened to you. Walt wanted the company, though, so, after much hounding, he had finally said yes. Now, as the pair rode to the next town, for the next game, Walt found himself questioning the decision with a growing irritation.

NATHAN

I bet you've killed a lot of people.

WALT

Have I--what--? No. What is it that you think I do?

NATHAN

I just think, as a professional gambler, you probably get in a lot of trouble.

WALT

If you think I brought you out here to teach you to kill--

NATHAN

--No, sir.

WALT

I take people's money, not their lives. It's an honest living.

NATHAN

Yes, sir.

WALT

And, stop with the "sir" thing. You say sir, people think I have money. Now I gotta worry about protecting my money, when I should be concentrating on gathering theirs.

NATHAN

Yes, sir.

INSERT: WALT SIGHS.

IN THE DISTANCE: A GUN SHOT RINGS OUT

STORYTELLER

Walt and Nathan both flinched at the sound, though both quickly realized it had come from beyond a nearby rise--confirmed by the sound of the gruff voice that followed.

DIRK (O.S.)

Ain't no reason to make so much noise. It's just a robbin'.

STORYTELLER

Walt and Nathan dismounted, peeked over to see: two masked men, guns in hand, accosting a couple standing outside a nearby stagecoach. No doubt the shot had been a warning.

(beat)

Walt sized the bandits up immediately. Not as dumb as they looked, he thought. But only because they looked so dumb. Still, it was a dangerous situation. Maybe even more so, given their deficiencies.

MARVIN

Money. Jewelry. Anything valuable. Like that ring on your wife's pretty little finger.

MAN (GETTING ROBBED)
Please. That was my mother's ring.
Her's before that. It's my last
memory--

SFX: PUNCH THROWN, BODY HITS THE DIRT, WOMAN SOBS

DIRK
Shush. Or I'll put you out, too.

WOMAN (GETTING ROBBED)
You are evil men.

STORYTELLER
Walt and Nathan watched as Dirk
pressed a gun to the woman's
temple.

NATHAN
We have to help.

WALT
Not our fight.

NATHAN
We should do *something*.

WALT
You tell me you can make a shot
from this distance, we'll jump in.
But, I'm telling you...if you're
counting on me to make the shot,
I'm just as likely to kill her than
to save her.

STORYTELLER
The men peeked back over the hill.
They watched as the two bandits
mounted up and rode away.

WALT
Let's go. Hurry.

NATHAN
But, you said--

WALT
I didn't say we wouldn't do
anything. I said it wasn't our
fight.

STORYTELLER
Walt and Nathan jumped on their
horses.

SFX: HORSES TROT

EXT. SMALL KANSAS TOWN - NIGHT

STORYTELLER

They kept their distance as night fell--tracking them to the tiny town of Ellsworth. Appropriate, Walt thought, as the town had earned the reputation as the wickedest cattle town in Kansas--a reputation that gave Walt hope for a good night of poker in addition to the business at hand. They watched as the men tied up their horses outside the saloon and shuffled inside.

NATHAN

Maybe we should have stayed to help the woman and her husband?

WALT

You approached me. Remember? Said you wanted to learn how this was done. THIS is how it's done. Okay?

NATHAN

Okay.

WALT

Those men--they aren't the bankin' type. They got money, they're gonna spend it. Suspect they'll go upstairs to the ladies, first. That'll give us time to set up. Remember...tonight's about learning for you. Head down. Mouth shut. You'll be in the game. Observation only. You don't win. You don't lose. Play it right down the middle.

NATHAN

You sure they'll play?

WALT

They'll play.

NATHAN

At our table?

WALT
I'll see to that.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

STORYTELLER
Like any other saloon in any other town, the piano, slightly out of tune and playing endless unnerving, overly happy ditties, competed with the laughter and professional flirting as women in frilly clothes worked to fill the empty beds upstairs. Across the room, whiskey flowed as the bartender fought to keep up with the unquenched thirst for escape, the clinking of glass adding to the night's sinful symphony. Walt wouldn't allow the distractions. He was on the job now, and this was his office.

NATHAN
Where do we sit?

WALT
Back to the wall if you can. Best to keep the action in front of you. But, we sit where the money is.

STORYTELLER
Walt surveyed the room.

WALT
There. In the middle. Follow my lead.

SFX: COINS CLINK, CARDS SHUFFLE

STORYTELLER
It wasn't long before the money flowed Walt's direction. And, as Walt predicted, it wasn't long before the two men sauntered downstairs. He was right. Nathan couldn't contain his smile--a move that was quickly rewarded with a kick under the table.

WALT
One more hand fellas?

STORYTELLER

Walt pushed all his cash into the center. It was a bold move, designed to get the attention of two men. One hand and one win later, Walt stood...very publicly counting his fresh-won wad of cash.

WALT

Haven't had a run of luck like that since that night in Mississippi.

STORYTELLER

It was amateur night in the saloon and Walt was the star. One man, though, got the message that Walt was sending.

MARVIN

Surely you got more in you tonight, old man?

STORYTELLER

It was the first close-up look Walt got of them. Marvin was better looking than Dirk, Walt thought, but only because he wore his hat so low. Dirk himself was a skinny man, his face as twisted as his teeth. Walt guessed that Marvin was the smarter of the two...though he also suspected that particular bar was very easily cleared.

WALT

I suppose I could handle another hand or two.

INSERT: MID-ROLL AD INSERTION POINT

STORYTELLER

The men settled back around the table, though Dirk chose a seat at the bar instead.

WALT

What's your name?

MARVIN

Marvin.

WALT

Pleased to meet you Marvin. I'm Walt. This here is my apprentice, Nathan.

MARVIN

Apprentice?

WALT

Finance. Banking and the such. Money men. Here to blow off a little steam.

STORYTELLER

Walt laid his cash back on the table and the game was on.

MARVIN

I don't have me an apprentice, or nothin'. But, I don't mind helping out with your money.

STORYTELLER

Marvin smiled. He was less clever than he thought, but Walt could work with that.

WALT

Five-card draw?

STORYTELLER

Marvin nodded and the game was on.

SFX: COINS CLINK, CARDS SHUFFLE, THE PIANO PLAYS

STORYTELLER

Nathan was out of the game quickly. Walt had set him up with a small amount of cash and luck wasn't going his way. In fact, luck wasn't going Walt's way either. He hadn't taken a shellacking this bad since Eudora a couple of years back. Though, Walt was beginning to suspect this one wasn't as legitimate as that one had been.

WALT

I'll take two.

SFX: TWO CARDS SLAP AGAINST THE TABLE

STORYTELLER

Walt checked his cards. Then, as casually as he could, he checked over his shoulder--to the bar. Sure enough, Dirk spun away. Subtlety would never be Dirk's strongpoint. Marvin didn't see the exchange, but Nathan surely did. His eyebrows raised: a move that said..."What are you going to do about it?" Losing was one thing. Cheated out of your money was another. As casually as he could, Walt slid his hand to his waist and nestled his fingers around the gun's handle.

WALT

Marvin, I believe we've got something to discuss.

SFX: THE SALOON FALLS QUIET

STORYTELLER

Everybody's eyes swung around. Only...not to Walt. And, not to Marvin. Instead, everyone stared at the odd man now standing just inside the saloon entrance.

(beat)

Walt was the last to look up. There--the most unusual sight Walt had seen in years--stood a preacher--his collar closer to dirt brown than white--his bony fingers clutching a large burlap sack. He stared at the scoundrels before him, his face wrinkled with judgment and, Walt thought, just a tinge of...joy. Walt watched as the preacher slowly shuffled to the bar.

PREACHER

The treacherous and the lecherous shall go to hell, 'less they be saved first.

STORYTELLER

His voice demanded attention, though he already had all of it. Reaching the bar, he extended the burlap sack, heavy with coins, to the bartender. It wasn't an offer. It was a request. A demand, really.

(MORE)

STORYTELLER (CONT'D)

The bartender dropped in a few coins, but the preacher held his position: sack open, extended to the sinner before him. The bartender, with no other choice, obliged with several more coins.

STORYTELLER

Walt leaned in to his protege and whispered...

WALT

I'll handle this one.

STORYTELLER

The preacher worked his way along the length of the bar, fresh coins landing with a satisfying "tink" as they settled against those already extracted.

PREACHER

For deeds done, or about to be done.

STORYTELLER

The piano player. The frilly ladies. The ranchers and the rest. Each calculated the cost of their sins and paid the price.

(beat)

He turned for Walt's table—the center of the room, and now, the center of attention.

PREACHER

Such a...*productive* table.

STORYTELLER

He extended the bag to Nathan, whose eyes were wide with fright.

WALT

Sorry to say, the young man's dry. That one there, though, he's flush.

MARVIN

No, sir. I mean, I got this small stack here, but, that's everything I have really. A man's gotta eat.

PREACHER

The Lord will provide. If only you have faith. Do you have faith?

STORYTELLER

Marvin pushed a couple of coins to the preacher. When the preacher's attention turned to Walt...

WALT

I don't believe I'm inclined to give.

STORYTELLER

The preacher reached for Walt's stack of cash, but Walt quickly slammed his hand to the table.

SFX: THUMP

STORYTELLER

The preacher leaned in...whispered in Walt's ear.

PREACHER

There are them that give, them that take. But the devil always gets his due.

STORYTELLER

Walt turned to meet the preacher's gaze.

WALT

He'll have to be satisfied with just one.

PREACHER

You can't outrun it. What you've done. It'll be a much higher price. Someday. Maybe soon.

STORYTELLER

With that, the preacher shuffled away, climbed the stairs, and disappeared down the upstairs hall.

(beat)

Slowly, the saloon spun back to life. Walt's mind raced. A new plan was forming. He turned back to Marvin, their game still at hand.

WALT

I believe I'll go all in.

STORYTELLER

Marvin smiled as he laid his cards on the table.

WALT

You got an angel on your shoulder
tonight, Marvin.

MARVIN

Yes, sir, I do.

STORYTELLER

Marvin gathered his money and
prepared to leave. Walt, though,
had one last detail to clear before
he could turn his full attention to
new business.

WALT

One more?

MARVIN

You don't have any money.

STORYTELLER

Walt pulled a pocket watch from his
vest--set it on the table.

WALT

It was my father's. Gave it to me
when I was twelve. Right before he
died.

(beat)

You and me. One hand. My watch,
against that ring in your pocket.

MARVIN

How do you know about--?

WALT

You in, or are you out?

SFX: SOMETHING HARD HITS THE TABLE

MARVIN

I always wanted a pocket watch.

INSERT: END OF EPISODE CUE

INSERT: EPISODE MUSIC

HOST

Thank you for listening to Devil's
Due: A Gambler's Call. We hope
you'll join us for episode two: The
Serpent, already available for
streaming.

INSERT: TRANSITION

STORYTELLER

Walt pulled a pistol from its
holster, held it up to his temple.

NATHAN

What are you--?!

INSERT: TRANSITION

WALT

That preacher--converting the
town's guilt into money--it's a
shakedown, plain and simple, but
it's a good one. Very lucrative. I
need you boys to help me nip that
big bag of shame he carries.

INSERT: TRANSITION

RACHEL

They're going to betray you. Like
you did me.

INSERT: TRANSITION

DIRK

I ain't got no more in me, Marv.

INSERT: TRANSITION

HOST

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invite you to visit Crooked Stories
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about the team behind Devil's Due
as well as Crooked Stories' plan
for future projects. For now, thank
you for listening, we hope to see
you again soon.

INSERT: POST-ROLL AD INSERTION POINT

INSERT: DEVIL'S DUE THEME SONG, FULL VERSION

INSERT: COMPANY TAG