

SOULS ^{for} SALE

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Remember Steddon, a pretty, unsophisticated girl, is the daughter of a kindly but narrow-minded minister in a small mid-western town. Her father.

Rev. Doctor Steddon, violently opposed to what he considers "worldly" things, accepts motion pictures as the cause for much of the evil of the present day. Troubled with a cough, Remember goes to see

Dr. Bretherick, an elderly physician, who is astonished at the plight in which he finds her. Pressed by the doctor, Remember admits her unfortunate affair with

Elwood Farnaby, a poor boy, son of the town sot. As Remember and Dr. Bretherick discuss the problem a telephone message brings the news that Elwood has been killed in an accident. Dr. Bretherick accordingly persuades Remember to go West, her cough serving as a plausible excuse; to write home of meeting and marrying a pretended suitor—"Mr. Woodville"—and later to write her parents announcing her "husband's" death before the birth of her expected child. Unable alone to bear her secret, Remember goes to her mother with it.

Her mother agrees with the plan of the doctor. Mem leaves town. On the train Mem accidentally meets Tom Holby, movie star, traveling with Robina Teele, leading lady in the movies, who are the cynosure of all eyes. The train comes to an abrupt halt; a disaster having been narrowly avoided, and the passengers get out and walk about.

Luc' on Mem meets Dr. Galbraith, a pastor, who knows her father and takes an interest in her. She miscalls Tom Holby "Mr. Woodville" in order to make her fancied suitor seem more real. While the Galbraiths are away, she writes them as well as her parents that she has married "Mr. Woodville" and that they are to live in Yuma—for which price she buys a ticket.

Mem decides to kill off her imaginary husband by saying he died of thirst in the desert, meanwhile she starts off for another town to get a job as a servant. On the way she runs into the movie company of Tom Holby. Tom insists that she become an extra, and is most cordial to her. She finds herself in the movie game.

Now Go On With the Story

Close-up of individuals were taken, the most striking types being selected and coached to express crises of feeling: "You go mad and babble, old man, will you? Tear at your throat and let your tongue hang out?"

You, miss, will you fall back in your mother's arms—you be mother, will you, miss, and catch her—you are to die, you know; just roll your eyes back and sigh and sink into a heap. And you, mother, wring your hands and beat your breast and wail. You understand—Oriental staff, eh? . . .

"And I'd like somebody just to look up to heaven and pray for mercy—somebody with big eyes—You, the young lady over there—will you step out? Oh, it's Mrs. Woodville, isn't it? I met you this morning. Here's your chance. Do this for me like a good girl, and give yourself to it. Look up to heaven; if the sun brings tears to your eyes all right, but let them come from your soul, dear, if you can. You see, you have seen your people dying like flies about you, from famine and hardship: You look up and say, O God, you don't mean for us to die in this useless torture, do you, dear God? Take my life and let these others live. Won't you, dear God?"

Mem stood throbbing from head to foot with embarrassment and with a strange inrush of alien moods. The fiery eyes of the director burning through his dark glasses, the curious instigation in his voice, the



"God bless you. That was the real stuff. You're a good girl."

plea to do well for him; quickened her magically.

Folger took her by the arm and murmured:

"Now, dear! Let your heart break! Look round and see your dying people. That's your father over there just gasping his life out. Your mother lies dead back there; you've covered her poor little body with sand to keep the jackals from it. Can you do it? Will you? That's right. Look around now and let yourself go!"

She felt herself bewitched, benumbed, yet mystically alive to a thousand tragedies. Her eyes rolled around the staring throng, and made out Tom Holby gazing down at her from his camel and pouring sympathy from his own soul into hers.

Then she flung her head from side to side in a torment of woe, cast her head back, and heaved her big eyes into the cruel brazier of the skies, seemed to see God peering down upon the little multitude, and moved her lips in supplication.

She felt the words and the anguish wringing her throat, and the tears trooping from her eyes, ran shining into her mouth, and she swallowed them and found them bitter-sweet with an exultation of agony.

There was such weird reality in her grief that the director's glasses were blurred with his own tears; the camera men were gulping hard.

As her upward stare again encountered Tom Holby's eyes she saw that tears were dripping from his lashes and that his mouth was quivering.

The sight of his tears sent through her a strange pang of triumphant sympathy, and she broke down sobbing, would have fallen to the sand, if Leva Lemaire had not caught her and drawn her into her arms, kissing her and whispering: "Wonderful! Wonderful!"

She felt a hand on her arm and

was drawn from Leva's arms into a man's. Her shoulders were squeezed hard by the big hands and she heard a voice that identified her captor as the director. He was saying:

"God bless you! That was the real stuff! You're a good girl! The real thing!"

Then he began to laugh and choke, became an utter fool.

This was her first experience of the passion of mimicry. She was as ashamed as glorified, as drained yet as exultant, as if a god had seized her and embraced her fiercely for a moment, then left her aching, an ember in the ashes.

The director was already calling the mob to the next task. She could not help glancing toward Tom Holby. His camel was moving off with the crowd, but he was turning back to gaze at her. He was nodding his head in a salute of profound respect.

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Mem's sin had led her to the edge of paradise, and then drawn her back by the hair.

She was doomed to spend a certain time in increasing heaviness, and then to die or to go about thenceforth with a nameless child holding on to her hand and anchoring her to obscurity.

She found a place as maid in the home of a storekeeper at such wages as he could afford. She began the sordid routine of her tasks, but, contrasting them with the glamour of playing tragic roles, she felt herself entombed.

Then the summer heat began and grew so fierce that her employer and his family went to the seashore.

She spent much thought upon the letter home that she had not yet written, that she must write if ever she were to go home again. The whole purpose of this long, long journey into loneliness was to be able to write that letter; and it had not yet gone.

Every time she made the beginning her hands flinched from the lying pen. But one night in a frantic fit of histrionic enthusiasm she dashed off her fable, sealed it in an envelope, and dropped it after dark in the mail box.

Darling Mamma and Papa:—

How I can hardly bear to think of it, let alone write about it. But my darling husband passed away in the desert. I cannot write you the particulars now, for I am too agitated and grief stricken and I do not want to harrow you with details. I know your poor hearts will ache for me, but I beg you not to feel it too deeply, because I am trying to be brave. And I remember what you taught me, that the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. * * * I cannot write you more now and I will come home when I get a little stronger. All the love in the world from
Your loving
Mem.

After she had slipped the letter irrevocably into the mail box she realized that the postmark of Palm Springs would be stamped on the envelope. Her place of concealment would be disclosed.

Still, it would not matter. She was a widow now in the minds of her people and she could go back to them and face the future in calm.

The mountains had a beckoning look always, and on this afternoon, when a clouded sky gave a little shelter from the sun, she set out to obey an impulse to climb as far as her strength would take her.

The exertion of climbing was more than Mem had bargained for. The steepes that looked so inviting from a distance were ragged and forbidding. The burnt-almond mountains were hot and sharp-edged gridirons to her feet. The sun came blazing forth and seemed to spill upon her a yellow hot mass of metal that slashed her about the head and rolled over her shoulders in blistering ingots.

A stone rolled under her foot and shook her from her balance. She wavered, clutched at nothing, whirled, struck, bounded from the hard rock, fell, and then—a smashing blow, blackness, silence.

A young Indian girl chasing her stray pony about the sand had seen Mem stumble, then fall; had heard the thump of the body on cushioning sand; had run to the nearest house and told what she had seen. Mem was taken home. The village doctor did all that his skill could do.

Though she had never dared to visit him, he knew of her, and knew her as a widow. When she was strong enough to be talked to he prepared her for bad news.

"Am I to be crippled for life?" she cried.

"No," he sighed. "You will bear no marks of your accident. But you will not—but your other hopes and expectations—will not be realized."

She was dazed and he was timid, and he had some difficulty in making her understand his bad news; that she would not be a mother.

She bore this blow with a fortitude that surprised him.

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And now Mem was weak and woe-begone, at the bottom of the cliff of life. She had never climbed very far, but she had fallen far enough to give
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