



SOULS FOR SALE

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Remember Steddon comes West to avoid revealing the result of an unfortunate love affair to her father.

The Rev. Dr. Steddon, a clergyman of kind heart but narrow mind who attributes much of the evil of the world to the "movies" and constantly inveighs against them. Mem, her lover Elwood Farnaby having died in an accident, at the advice of Dr. Bretherick, gives her bad cough as an excuse to get to Arizona and from there writes home that she has met and married "Mr. Woodville," a wholly imaginary person. Later she writes again to say that her "husband" has died in the desert. She takes a job as a domestic to avoid being a burden on her parents. A fall prevents her becoming a mother. In Arizona she had met

Tom Holby, a leading man in a motion picture company, and through him gets the opportunity to play a part in a desert drama. With the company is

Robina Teele, a Star, fond of Holby and Leva Lemaire, an extra woman. After her accident, Mem becomes friendly with

Mrs. Dack, a poor woman of Palm Springs, Arizona, and takes an interest in her bright little son.

Terry Dack, who has a great gift of mimicry. Inspired by a letter from Leva, Mem plans to go to Los Angeles to take a job in a film laboratory.

She gets a job in a film laboratory, but loses it. She meets a Mrs. Sturges from her home town, who talks of the evils of the movies and says the stars are forced to sell their souls. Mem then learns her mother is

her finances.

She sees a casting director, Arthur Tirrey, and abruptly offers herself to him in return for a job in the movies. He tells her the talk about "paying the price" is all rot. Meanwhile the attention of Mr. Bermond, head of the company, is diverted to her and he decides to give her a chance. Soon she finds herself posing with Claymore as her director, obeying his commands in a kind of stupor.

Mem's father reads a publicity story calling her "the prettiest girl in America" and writes a letter of protest to his wife and daughter. Mem's fame begins to spread, and Claymore, the director, takes an unusual interest in her. He is infatuated with Mem but tries to be aloof and professional to hide the fact from the company.

Mem and Claymore become more and more interested in each other. Out riding one day, Claymore makes physical advances to her. While they are parking a hold-up man approaches and demands their money.

Dear Wife, he wrote her mother. —The Lord giveth and taketh away. I have lost you and my darling daughter and my loneliness, but I still can say, "Thy will be done."

I think you should know, however, how things are here. Otherwise I should not write you. But I am afraid that the daughter that was once ours might tire of the husks of sin and wish to come home repentant.

Bitterness filled my soul when I learned that she was leading a life of riotous mockery, and when I saw the picture of her smiling in wanton attire at the side of that smirking French general, I had it in my heart to curse her. I wrote in my haste. I repented my hardness of heart and bowed my head in humble shame when I read your angry reply. I had lost your love and your admiration, but that was deserved punishment for the idolatry that had grown up in my heart towards you; and for the mistakes I must have made in not giving our erring daughter a better care.

But now it has pleased the Lord to pour out the vials of his wrath on my gray hairs. The old mortgage on the church fell due long ago, but foreclosure had been postponed



He made her sit down on a long couch and snuggled close to her.

from time to time. We gave a benefit to pay it off, but everybody was too poor to respond, and it did not pay expenses.

The manager of the motion-picture house here offered to share the profits on the showing of a picture in which, as he had the impudence to tell me, my daughter played a part. But while it would have drawn money for curiosity that would not have responded to a Christian appeal, I felt that it would be a compounding with evil, and I put Satan behind me and ordered the fellow out of the house.

* * *

The church is to be closed. What I shall do next or how take care of the little children that still cling to our home, the Lord has not yet told me in answer to my prayers. I still have faith that in His good time he will provide a way or call His servant home, and I hope you will not take this letter as a plea for pity.

My cup is full and running over, but my chief dread is that unhappiness and want may be your portion as well as mine, and that I shall fail you utterly after providing so scantily for you all your days. I can only pray that my fears are the result of loneliness and age and weariness.

And now may the Lord shield you with his ever-present mercy, or at least give us the strength to understand that in all things he knoweth best.

Your loving
Husband.

As they read this letter and saw back of the lines the heavy brows of her old father, saw the bald spot she had stared at from the choir loft, saw all the sweet wrong-headedness of the veteran saint, Mem's heart hurt intolerably.

Her mother sobbed: "What on earth can I write the poor darling?" Mem replied: "The answer is easy,

I'm going to send him all the money I've got."

Her mother cried out against robbing one of her loves to pay another. It seemed a cruel shame to take the first bit of cake from her daughter and sell it to buy bread for her husband.

"You'll need it yourself. You may not have another job soon. You need new clothes and a rest."

"Rest and the clothes can wait." Her mother kept a miserable silence for a long while before she could say: "Your father will never accept money that you have earned from the pictures. He'd rather die."

This gave Mem only a brief pause. She answered simply:

"Doctor Bretherick got me into this business by making up the pack of lies that brought me out here. Now he can make up a few more and save poor daddy from desperation."

She sat down at once and wrote the doctor a letter, telling him what he must know already of her father's helplessness. She inclosed a money order for two hundred and fifty dollars. She wrote a check at first, but she was afraid to have it put through the bank at Calverly lest her father hear of it. She instructed the doctor to make up another of his scenarios about a repentant member of the congregation wishing to restore some stolen funds—or anything that his imagination could invent.

Then she set the wheels in motion to secure an immediate engagement with the next to the greatest comedian on the screen, Ned Ling, a reader of important books; a debater of art theories—but above all a man afraid of nothing so much as he was afraid of love.

It was a period of dead calm and torpid seas, and so Mr. Bermond willingly arranged to "rent" her to Ling, who wanted her at once at first sight.

Meanwhile, through Claymore, Terry Dack was about to be struck off in innumerable portraits and show-

ered upon a grateful world.

At the age of five he would commence his business career with a salary of two or three thousand dollars a year.

One of Mem's pictures was shown soon after at a theatre in Los Angeles, and she sat in a vast throng. She saw with pride a fat woman snifle and thought it a beautiful tribute. She saw a baldheaded man sneak a handkerchief out and, pretending to blow his nose, dash his shameful tears away. And that was beautiful to her with a wonderful beauty.

The papers the next day in their criticisms gave her special mention. A marvelous thing to see one's name in print and with a bouquet tied to it.

She had but a little while to revel in this perfect award, for in a few days a letter came to her, forwarded from the studio.

Her heart plunged with terror as she read.

I seen your pictur last nite and it made me sick youre awful in-nasent and sweet in the pictur and you look like buter wouldnt melt in your mouth but I know beter for Im the guy who held you up wen you was with that other guy and took your wedin ring off you I didnt know who you was then and I dont know who he is yet but Im wise to you and all I got to say is Ive got my ey on you and you better behave or els quit playin these in-nasent parts you movie people make me sick youre only a gang of hip-procrits so beware.

Mem felt odious to herself, with all the revolting nausea of evil revealed. There is remorse enough for a struggling soul that knows its own defeats and backslidings, but it is nothing to the remorse that follows a published fault.

This letter was more hideous than headlines in a paper. It was more dreadful than such a pilloried public shame as Hester Prynne's. It meant that somewhere there was a man in an invisible cloak of namelessness and facelessness who despised her and jeered at her sublimities of purity. Her highest ambitions were doomed to sneering mockery.

After a day in Ling's studio, he took her to "The Beggar's Opera."

She had so lost her orientation at the end of the seductive villainies, that she did not faint when Ned Ling said:

"I've laughed myself hungry. I haven't ordinarily any appetite. Let's go to my house and have a bite."

"To your house?"
"Yes. It's all right. I'm quite alone there. Just a Jap. Very secluded."

She wanted to say: "You tell me not why I should go, but why I should not. And I won't."

But it seemed silly little-girlish, old-maidish, prunes-and-prismish thing to say so she said, "All right," and got into Ling's car.

When he said, "Home," to the driver she almost swooned, but not quite.

The Jap showed no surprise at the late arrival of his master with a lady. Evidently it was the ordinary thing. Mem longed for a mask or a fire escape or a gun. She glanced about for weapons of defense.

But Ned Ling said: "Some scrambled eggs and bacon—some wine. Would you rather have red or

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