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"ONE YEAR TO LIVE"

A Photoplay in 7 Reels.

Author of Photoplay First National Pictures Inc. U S A.

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Before the Cafe de la Paix in Paris three men sit watching the world pass by. Them to the curb draws up a grey Hespano Suiza. In it Elise Duchanier, whose great sweet beauty draws the game of all towards her. But it is her eyes that make one forget all the other beauty. There must be a story in them, thinks one of the three men who does not know her. He is thereupon introduced to her, and learns that there is.

Some years ago Elise, of gentle birth, found herself, in spite of her beauty, fighting the most piteous and apparently hopeless of battles. Her sister, Marthe, is a hopeless invalid, and Elise must bear the insults heaped upon her by the world-famous dancer, Lolette, in order that the little money she earns as one of Lolette's dressers -- money that, nevertheless, keeps her and Marthe alive and buys the so necessary medicines -- will keep coming in.

Lolette is as famous a courtisan as she is a dancer, and in her dressing room at the International after the performances gather from all the world men famous as connoisseurs of feminine beauty. Chief among these are Maurice Brunel, owner of the International and enterpreneur who had made Lolette famous, and Count Mordac, wealthy, unscrupulous in his dealings with women; both Lolette's lovers. It is only natural that these men should notice Elise's beauty, it is just as natural that Lolette should resent any of the little signs of this with rages that are reminiscent of her childhood in the slums of the Butte.

A hard grinding life, Dr. Lappierre, who is caring for Marthe, constantly reminds Elise; a life which one of her gentle breeding is not fitted to stand. One afternoon as she calls for her medicine, he is more than usually insistent in telling her this. Instinctively, Elise feels that there is something behind his insistence. Finally, hesitatingly, he gets it out. "I love you, Elise. Who could help it? Why go on this way when, as my wife, both you and Marthe could be taken care of." As kindly as she can, Elise refuses him. Always she has admired him, but

love him that way she cannot.

How hard it will be for her to fight her way alone she doesn't know. Even as she refuses Dr. Lapierre, Lolette is telling Brunel that she is tired of Elise's simple innocent ways and that soon she will destroy this innocence. Thereafter, Lolette is never angry with Elise, but her quiet, catlike waiting is much more sinister. Further, Dr. Lapierre tells Marthe that he loves and wants to marry Elise. When the latter returns to her sister after her work is through, Marthe urges her to make both their lives easier by marrying the doctor. It is harder to refuse Marthe's request, yet somehow Elise is able to do this.

Her reward seems to come the following evening, when to Lolette's dressing room Count Mordac brings the young American, Tom Kendrick. He is the kind of man Elise has dreamed of: Strong capable hands. Though by no means uncouth, he seems out of place in this atmosphere; as one who would be more at home on the playing fields. And he is obviously struck by Elise's beauty. Thereafter he is a frequent visitor to the dressing room, and he makes no attempt to conceal the fact that it is Elise and not Lolette who interests him. A beautiful intimacy springs up between the American and the little dresser; and as it does, Lolette is strengthened in her resolve to destroy the girl's innocence which so annoys her and which has attracted the American.

Her opportunity comes sooner than she had expected. Yearly, Brunel gives a masked ball at his wonderful house behind the Champs Elysees, once the home of a nobleman of the old regime. This ball is to the theatrical profession what the Quartz' Arts Ball is to the beaux arts. To this Count Mordac takes the liberty of inviting Kendrick and for his partner he asks Elise, who is delighted to accept. To further her plans, Lolette gives Elise one of her own dancing dresses, daring, suggestive enough of the orient to pass for a costume. Lolette then discovers that Elise has herself shown considerable talent as a dancer, which completes the stage for her plot.

At the ball, which commences at one, in the morning, Elise is for the first time in her life completely happy. The fascination of the gay revelry about her seems as nothing compared to the thrill of dancing, held in Kendrick's strong arms. It seems she could dance for ever this way, but Lolette has other plans. Towards dawn, Lolette, perched on the shoulders of two of her lovers, announces that she will dance her famous Dance of Witches. At her orders, the orchestra strikes up the savage, Zulu music -- bestial in every note. And Lolette starts, the foulness of all theages in every movement and gesture. For its end, she needs a partner, and before the great crowd she selects Elise for this honor. Elise hesitates, and Lolette hisses fiercely, "Come on -- little fool! It is but a game!" And Elise dances, at first afraid, but then forgetful of everything but the throbbing music. In a frenzy, the dance ends, both women flung full length face downward on the grass, their arms outstretched. Then a thunder of applause breaks out, while Brunel stands on a terrace, staring fixedly at Elise like a man awakened to a great realization and filled with a great resolve. Lolette's plan has worked. Through Brunel's hands many women have passed to fame, but all have paid for this with their innocence. So, thinks Lolette, will Elise.

But Elise is thinking only of Kendrick, of the joy of being near him. As she rides by his side towards her dingey home in the Rue Jacques, she could find all the joy in the world in giving him her lips. But at the door to her place, he only raises her hand to his lips. "Au revoir, Until we meet again -- little girl." And he is gone. Hope for what this "again" may hold fills Elise as she comforts Marthe, awake, fretful, because of her sister's unusual absence.

Two days later Brunel sends for Elise. He praises her dancing. Offers to make her greater than Lolette. Lays the kingdom of the earth at her feet. Only there must be between them understanding, friendship. Innocently, Elise says she will try to have this. Then Brunel repeats himself, and into his eyes comes a look which explains what his words concealed. Indignantly, Elise refuses his offer and leaves, to sob out her disappointment on her knees by Marthe's bed, while her sister strokes her head.

For days Elise waits for word from Kendrick. But none comes. Only from a casual remark by Count Mordac does she learn that the young American has left for a business trip to Bagdad -- left without seeing her. This, on top of her other nervous strains, proves too much for Elise. Caring for Marthe that evening, she faints. When Dr. Lapierre is called, he studies Elise carefully. Finally he seems to reach a decision. He gets Elise by herself and there, after explaining that, because she has no one to care for her, he cannot keep from her what he would otherwise, he tells her that she has only one year to live. He then says that it makes it all the more important for her to marry him, otherwise, who will take care of Marthe? But when the wave of fear that this news brings to Elise has swept over her, comes the realization that for everything a price must be paid. Dr. Lapierre will take care of Marthe -- for a price. Brunel will make her famous -- for a price. Lolette has become rich and famous -- for a price. And Kendrick, the only person she feels would not demand a price, is gone. Indignantly she refuses Lapierre again. Goes home to think. There she reaches a decision. Since the price must be paid, she will pay it to the highest bidder.

Next day she calls on Brunel. It is a different Elise who faces him. Harder. She will accept his offer, but point by point she fights over the contract, and when it is finally finished and signed, Brunel finds it a better one than he had ever expected to be. She is to be the star in a review, especially made for her, in Brunel's newest and finest cabaret, the Joyeuse. She is to prepare her own dances, and while she is preparing them, Brunel is to pay her a handsome retaining fee. On the stage she will be known as La Phalene -- the moth. This settled, Elise does not repulse Brunel's caresses -- but she withholds further payment until he has fully lived up to his contract. Rehearsals start, and Brunel adheres religiously to the financial stipulations in the contract. Elise's advance salary is more than she has ever dreamed of. From a great specialist she learns that an operation may save Marthe, and to strengthen her for this she sends her with an attendant to the Picardy coast. Then Elise moves to a small apartment. Returning there one day she finds Lapierre waiting

for her. He is a broken man. He tells her how his love for her was greater to him than anything in the world. Now that she is gone from him he has decided to retire, give up his practice, go someplace where he may try to forget. He makes one last plea that she give up the career she has started on. He knows, as does all Paris, the payment Brunel asks of the stars he makes. But Elise having started on her way, will not turn back. So Lapierre goes from the room. Elise is left to travel the path she has chosen alone.

Brunel is pleased with the dances Elise originates, particularly the dance of the Valley of Hope Forgotten, in which she puts all she has suffered. And his judgment is justified. At the opening of the new revue, Elise is an instant success. The audience, the critics, are unanimous in their praise. Next morning Lolette is in a jealous rage when she reads the praises of Elise. She had not counted on making a professional rival, and her own egotism will not let her admit that she has done this. But when Count Mordac arrives to talk over the sensation with her, she sees in his growing interest in Elise that she has done just this. With intensity she warns the count that she loves him, and that she will not share him with this Elise, that in her birthplace, the Butte, she had learned to kill for love. Assuring her this will not be necessary, the Count leaves -- and the next night calls on Elise in her dressing room.

He can easily guess the situation, and so, that Elise may be free from Brunel, free to become, as he hopes, his, he tells her what a more experienced girl would have known:- that her success has made her Brunel's master, for now all theatrical Paris is at her feet, ready to give her whatever she may ask. The entrance of Brunel interrupts the interview. Both men realize that, for the first time, they are rivals. Each is afraid to leave the other alone with Elise, so they leave together, thus freeing Elise from both of them.

But Brunel does not give up his campaign. He rents for Elise a gorgeous apartment near his house. Then he invites Elise, to whom he has as yet made no advances, to the most notorious of Montmartre's cabarets, and as they start for it Elise realizes

that the crisis has come. The dinner is served in a private room, its whole atmosphere suggestive of the big scene for which Brunel is playing. But he allows himself to drink too much. When he tries to take Elise in his arms, h is brain is not clear and he finds himself faced not with the simple girl he had expected to face, but with an arch coquette, who furthermore knows the power of her success. She easily puts him off, even makes him drive her to her apartment and leaves her at the door.

Soon there is gathered about Elise a multitude of admirers who lavish her with presents. Amongst the presents are two Alsatian wolf hounds and a monkey. These are paraded each day by Elise's negro man servant and their pictures are in all Parisian papers. The reception room in the apartment is barbaric with its ebony walls and red ceilings, and it is there that Elise's admirers gather, the admirers who live on hopes for to none of them will Elise give more than encouragement. Two she likes more than the others, an Italian Felice Donatelli, and Ahmed el Yessad, from the east. About him is the fascination of the desert sands of his home -- a quiet power that thrills Elise. More thrilled is she when one day he asks her to marry him, to return to his home with him, and there live as his princess. She is quiet before his great love, and yet she cannot accept him, for her love is all for the absent Kendrick, though she realizes that, even should he return, it is hardly possible that he would understand and forgive her life; this life of which Elise thinks she is mistress until suddenly catastrophy sends it crashing about her.

All because Elise thinks it would be amusing to have two men fight over her. So, when Ahmed comes unexpectedly to her room one day and finds Donatelli making love to her, she thanks Ahmed for his interruption. Thanks him still more with her eyes. He leaves with Donatelli and on the street knocks him down for insulting the woman he loves. The hot blood of Donatelli demands revenge. A duel, to which Ahmed willingly agrees. Learning of this, Elise is terrified at the result of her "little joke". She calls Ahmed to her, explains she was only joking. In the swift anger and hurt that comes into his eyes, Elise sees she has killed his respect for her. Still she begs him not

to fight Donatelli, but he sternly replies that, greater than his love for her, is his honor. For this he must fight. But out of respect for her, he arranges a strange duel. In a quiet woods they will meet, with them enough poison to kill one of them. Then they will throw dice. The winner will leave the place. The loser will drink the poison, leaving a note to say he has committed suicide. To oversee this, they will have a third man, and Count Mordac, who still follows Elise in the hope that he may be able to get her some day for his mistress, is selected to play this part.

Wildly Elise tries to stop the duel, and finally persuades Count Mordac to find out for her the exact hour when it will take place. Unfortunately, Lolette is just as interested in the affair, for she thinks its publicity will ruin her rival. She therefore persuades Mordac to tell Elise that it will take place three quarters of an hour later than is really the case.

The night before the duel, Lolette receives an unexpected visit. Kendrick back from Bagdad, calls at her dressing room expecting to find Elise there. The crowds that were once there are now with Elise , but Lolette explains that she has sent them all away. Then, seeing that Kendrick knows nothing of Elise, Lolette tells him a few details, suggesting that Elise has now become as bad as the worst of them. Suddenly she has a further inspiration. The duel! She will let Kendrick learn of this in the most dramatic way. And so she persuades him to take with her an early drive the next morning.

At the appointed time, Mordac, Donatelli, and Ahmed meet in the woods. The poison is prepared. The dice thrown. On the last throw, Ahmed loses. The bravery of his meeting of death, awakes something in Donatelli that disgusts him with the whole thing, particularly with its authoress. He leaves the spot, and later, Paris, without seeing her. Misinformed by the Count, the frantic Elise arrives at the spot to find there only Ahmed's body. Nor has Lolette failed with Kendrick. Apparently by accident they come on Elise's car, and Lolette lets him know it is hers, lets him go into the woods to find her, lets him find her by the body of Ahmed. Even then, Kendrick thinks first of saving her from the notoriety, and himself takes her, fainting, to her home.

That afternoon Kendrick calls on Elise again at her apartment. Ahmed's body has been discovered with a note saying he had committed suicide. Elise's name has been kept out of the affair. But what puzzles Kendrick is the cold, hard way in which Elise describes her new life. "How could the Elise I loved ever have become La Phalene?" he asks. To break his last illusion Elise replies with a hard laugh, "Because she always was La Phalene." Yet when Kendrick asks if he may see her in her dressing room, the laughter dies from her eyes as she refuses him. Wishing he had never returned to Paris, Kendrick leaves. But that night he goes to the Joyeuse. That very afternoon Elise has told Brunel that she was going to rest awhile, and so will stop dancing and go to Monte Carlo. Nothing Brunel can say, even his threat of a suit, will change her mind.

Before going to Monte Carlo, however, Elise visits her sister in Picardy. She finds Martha weak, but with a new light in her eyes. The operation has been performed and in three months she is assured by the doctor she will be perfectly well. All her glad plans for what she will do with Elise when she is well are like so many whip lashes to Elise, now that her little world has been toppled over by Kendrick's attitude.

As Elise packs to go to Monte Carlo, she thinks she is escaping. Instead, she is only fleeing from the storm which is eventually to overtake her. In Paris, Brunel tries to save his show at the Joyeuse by having Lolette take Elise's place. His reward is Lolette's storming refusal to understudy "that...that...dresser." Furthermore, when Brunel tries to insist, Lolette promptly resigns from the show she is in, having an offer to dance in London, which she accepts. In spite of this, Brunel determines to follow Elise. So, too, does Count Mordac, when he learns what she has done. Cold rage settled on Lolette when she learns that the man she loves is going after Elise, and she follows.

Just as Elise is ready to leave her apartment in Paris, Kendrick calls. He has seen through Elise's disguise, and he calmly tells her that she is not La Phalene she pretends to be, but is still, and always will be, the Elise he loves. Before he

leaves, he takes her in his arms and kisses her, startling from her the confirmation of his belief, "How dare you do what none of the other men have dared." Twenty-four hours after Elise starts south, Kendrick is enroute for Monte Carlo.

There, again, Kendrick, Elise, Brunel, Count Mordac and Lolette, those five whom fate holds together, meet. On the surface, they are friends, playing together at the casino. Kendrick is awaiting for the time when Elise will have finished her game of La Phalene. Elise knowing that the death to which she has been doomed alone can finish it. Often thinks of the four with whom she started her adventure being still together, and wonders where the fifth, Dr. Lapierre, could be. One evening she does glimpse the face of Lapierre at a gambling table -- changed almost beyond recognition to that of a professional gambler. But when she looks again for it, the man has gone. Time passes swiftly and apparently happily.

There are parties at Count Mordac's villa on the outskirts of Monte Carlo. There are motor rides, always the gambling at the casino, and then the promise of a trip to the old robber baron castle in the Pyrenees that Brunel owns.

At last, Count Mordac decides that his time to strike has come. Pretending that there is to be a party at his house, he gets Elise there alone. Locked with her in an inner room, he tells her that she has played with him long enough. That the end has come. And that he fears no consequences, for La Phalene has a reputation. Elise starts for the door, but Mordac is there before her, his back to the locked door.

In the casino, Brunel and Lolette wait for Mordac, who had promised to meet them. As the time passes and he does not come, Lolette grows more and more suspicious. Finally she sees it: Mordac is in his house with Elise. Mordac, the man she loves.. She forces Brunel to drive her there in his car.

In another part of the casino, Kendrick, having no suspicion of what is happening, plays, more interested in the man opposite him than in the game. This man is Dr. Lapierre, now always gambling, trying to forget. Finally he is cleaned out. Dejectedly, he goes away and Kendrick, seeing the phial he is handling, follows him. In a

secluded spot, Kendrick speaks to him, persuades him not to use the phial. Then suddenly Lapierre starts to talk to him of Elise, for he has seen that Kendrick's love for her is as great as his. He urges Kendrick to marry her, tells him of the time he had informed Elise she had but one year to live, and then adds that he had only told her this to force her to marry him. That she was then, and still is, as healthy as anyone. Pressing a loan on Lapierre, Kendrick goes back to the casino. At the entrance, an attendant tells him he is wanted on the phone. Over it he hears the frantic voice of Mordac's valet urging him to come to the villa at once as something terrible has happened. He jumps in his car and soon is there. In the little room in which Mordac had attacked Elise, there is terrible confusion. On the floor, the dead body of the count. By it, Lolette, who admits having killed Mordac so that he should not have her rival. But Elise is not there. From the valet, Jules, he learns that Brunel had carried her off in his car. Carrying her to his castle in the Pyrenees, Kendrick sees. He at once forces Jules to come in his car and show him the way there. A terrible race over the five hundred miles. Brunel's lead gets him there first, not suspecting that the American is behind him.

There is no one in the castle when Elise and Brunel enter. Her plight seems hopeless, yet Elise fights off Brunel. Then suddenly, from the courtyard comes Kendrick's voice, and Brunel turns from Elise to him. A terrible fight follows, but at last the American knocks his opponent senseless. Elise comes down the stairs to him. "My dear --- my dear! You were in time." So she answered the question his eyes asked her. Together they go to his car.

Next day, in Eaux Bonnes, they sit together in the cool. No longer are the shadows of Brunel and Mordac over them. And there Kendrick tells her of his talk with Lapierre. "So I shall not die!" Elise exclaims gladly. "But could not La Phalene die," Kendrick asks. "If you wish it," Elise replies. "There is nothing more I could ask -- nothing."

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