

EXCERPT ONLY

McTeague

Adapted for the screen by
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Based on the novel, *McTeague*, by Frank Norris

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EXT. ZERKOW'S BACK YARD - DAY

Trina, carrying a bundle of clothes, crosses through a dingy, brown grass yard heading towards a modest, clapboard house that's seen better days.

INT. ZERKOW'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Trina steps in and scrapes her feet clean on a door mat, noticing Maria sitting in a chair resting her chin upon her breast. Her back faces Trina.

TRINA

Maria... asleep at this late in the mornin'?

Trina approaches Maria and touches her shoulder. Maria's head rolls to the side, revealing her NECK SLASHED EAR TO EAR with blood still dribbling out of the wound and the front of her outfit drenched in blood.

Trina backs away from the body, her face writhing with horror, her hands involuntarily clutching her own shoulders.

TRINA (cont'd)

Oh...oh!

She turns and runs out of the house.

CUT TO BLACK:

HEISE (V.O.)

Lord!

INT. ZERKOW'S KITCHEN - LATER

Heise stands about a yard away from Maria's lifeless body. Trina is right behind him, and a wild-game STREET PEDDLER is right behind her.

Maria's face is already pale and her lips brown.

HEISE

By God! He's killed her?

STREET PEDDLER

Who?

HEISE

Zerkow, by God! He's killed her. Cut her throat. He always said he would.

STREET PEDDLER

Zerkow?

HEISE

He's killed her. Good Lord, how she did bleed! By God! He's done for her in good shape this time.

TRINA

Oh, I told her.

HEISE

Well, he's done for sure this trip. Lord, how she has bled! Did you ever see so much. That's murder. That's cold-blooded murder... Say, we must get a policeman. Come on.

They turned back through the house.

EXT. ZERKOW'S BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Dozens of passersby along with all the usual crowd the lawn to catch a glimpse of the crime scene.

EXT. POLK STREET - CONTINUOUS

Out on Polk Street the cable cars are nearly blocked inching through the throng of people with clanging BELLS. Zerkow's yard is the center of attention. Rubberneckers galore. Every window on the street has a cluster of FACES peering out their frames.

INT. ZERKOW'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A police OFFICER in a bright blue shirt. He radiates smugness but his eyes are warm. He ushers himself right next to Maria's corpse.

OFFICER

Whew! That's a cutting, by George! Somebody's been using his knife all right.

He turns another OFFICER next to him.

OFFICER (cont'd)

Better get the wagon. There's a box on the second corner south. Now, then...

The first Officer turns towards Trina and Heise.

OFFICER (cont'd)
...I want your names and addresses.