

## = It Is the Law =

It Is the Law is a 1924 American silent mystery film directed by J. Gordon Edwards and starring Arthur Hohl , Herbert Hayes , and Mona Palma . It is a film adaptation of the eponymous 1922 Broadway play by Elmer Rice , itself based on a novel by Hayden Talbot . The film depicts the story of Ruth Allen ( Palma ) , who marries Justin Victor ( Hayes ) over competing suitor Albert Woodruff ( Hohl ) . Seeking revenge for this slight , Woodruff fakes his death by killing a drifter who resembles him , and frames Victor for the murder . When Woodruff returns to court Allen under a new identity , she sees through his disguise . Once Victor is freed from prison , he kills Woodruff , and goes free because a conviction would constitute double jeopardy .

This was the final film for director Edwards , who died the following year , and was one of the last produced at Fox Film 's New York studio . Contemporary reviews were generally positive . Like many of Fox 's early works , it was likely lost in the 1937 Fox vault fire .

## = = Plot = =

Albert Woodruff and Justin Victor are friends who are both in love with the same woman , Ruth Allen . Allen chooses to wed Victor , and Woodruff storms off in a jealous rage . Woodruff locates his look @-@ alike , " Sniffer " Evans , a drifter and drug addict . On the evening following Allen and Victor 's wedding , Woodruff calls Allen and threatens to blackmail her . He also convinces Evans to come to his apartment .

Victor also travels to Woodruff 's apartment , intending to confront his former friend about the threatening phone call . When Woodruff sees Victor outside the apartment building , he feigns a cry for help and shoots Evans to death . Victor is blamed for the murder of the man presumed to be Woodruff , and is sentenced to life imprisonment .

Five years later , Woodruff disguises himself with a beard and monocle and assumes a new identity in an attempt to court Allen . She is able to recognize him as Woodruff because of his fear of fire tongs . Because she is friends with the governor , she is able to arrange her husband 's release from prison . Victor locates Woodruff in a casino and kills him . At trial , he declares that the prohibition against double jeopardy prevents his prosecution for the murder ; he is set free to live happily with his wife .

## = = Cast = =

Arthur Hohl as Albert Woodruff and " Sniffer " Evans

Herbert Hayes as Justin Victor

Mona Palma as Ruth Allen ( credited as Mimi Palmeri )

Arthur Hohl reprised the role of Woodruff from Broadway ; in addition to Woodruff and Evans , he played a third role as the casino 's proprietor . The cast also includes Dorothy Kingdon , Helena D 'Algy , Patricia O 'Connor , and Nancy Newman as casino regulars . This was Herbert Hayes final silent film ; he returned to acting in the 1940s .

## = = Production = =

In 1922 , theatrical agent Walter Jordan encouraged Elmer Rice to dramatize an unpublished novel by Hayden Talbot . At the time , Rice was best known for his 1914 Broadway play On Trial , which featured the first use of flashback , a narrative technique he adapted from film , in a Broadway production . Rice 's adaptation of Talbot 's work , It Is the Law , again featured a story told in flashback . It ran for 125 performances at the Ritz Theatre , and was a modest success .

Curtis Benson wrote the film adaptation for It Is the Law ; unlike the theatrical version , his screenplay presents the story entirely in chronological order . J. Gordon Edwards directed , the only time he did so in 1924 , as he was primarily serving as Fox Film 's director @-@ general at the time . It was also his last time to direct ; he retired from Fox after the film 's completion , and although he

expressed an interest to returning to the role , he died of pneumonia the following year . Filming took place at Fox 's New York studio , although most production had by then moved to Hollywood . It Is the Law was one of only four films Fox made at its East Coast facility in 1924 . Except for four Allan Dwan films in 1926 , they were the last Fox produced in New York . The Film Daily reported that a trailer was produced to advertise the film .

The copyright registration for It Is the Law stated its length as eight reels , but the released version was a shorter , seven @-@ reel film . When Twentieth Century @-@ Fox Film renewed the copyright in 1951 , they again referred to the longer run time ; the title was also restyled with an exclamation point , as It Is the Law !

= = Reception and legacy = =

It Is the Law received generally positive reviews . George T. Pardy , writing for Exhibitors Trade Review , noted that the audience was aware of the nature of the mystery while the characters were not , a welcome departure from the conventions of most melodramas . Motion Picture Magazine called the film " tense , suspensive , ... and new in its idea . " The Film Daily 's reviewer believed it would appeal to fans of the genre despite " some hokum and implausible twists " . Edwards 's direction was praised , including his pacing of the story , although the reviewer for Variety felt the film was unnecessarily long . Hohl , in his dual role performance , was considered the strongest of the cast , despite some exaggerated expressions .

It Is the Law is believed to be lost . The 1937 Fox vault fire destroyed most of Fox 's silent films , and the Library of Congress is not aware of any extant copies . Because little of Edwards 's work survives , few of his films have drawn attention from modern authors , but film historian Larry Langman included It Is the Law as an example of the evolution of avenging @-@ spouse films to " emphasize the inner strengths of their women " in the 1920s .