

Patricia
The Great Romance of Preparedness
Louis Joseph Vance

NOVELIZATION OF THE MOTION-PICTURE PLAY OF THE SAME NAME. PRODUCED BY THE INTERNATIONAL FILM SERVICE, INC., UNDER THE DIRECTION OF WHARTON LINTAS. COPYRIGHT, STAR COMPANY.

THE CAST.

MRS. VERNON CASTLE as Patricia Channing. MILTON BILLS as Donald Parr. WARNER OLAND as Baron Huroki. DOROTHY GREEN as Fanny Adair.

SYNOPSIS.

Baron Huroki, chief of the Japanese secret service, conspiring to enslave the United States with Mexico, and desiring control of the great Channing munitions plants owned by Patricia—last of the 'fighting Channings'—schemes to cause the death of the latter, and substitute in her place Elaine, a notorious dancer and Patricia's physical counterpart. As it falls out, it is Elaine who dies, Patricia surviving, accepted as Elaine by Huroki and his confederates.

SEVENTH EPISODE.

Red Dawn.

COUNTERPLOT.

In a hand at once feminine and of decided character, the envelope was superscribed:

ORSON BERTRAM, Esq., General Manager, Channing, Inc.

Introducing 87 Broadway, New York. Capt. Donald Parr.

The addressee accepted it from the hands of Capt. Donald Parr with a slightly bored air which was swiftly dispelled once he had scanned the dozen or so lines composing the body of the note.

With a somewhat startled expression Mr. Bertram peered over his desk at this Captain Parr—a brief scrutiny which Donald endured with composure until Mr. Bertram (with the manner of one challenging the testimony of his own senses), returned undivided attention to a second reading of the note. Then a twinkle of amusement showed in Donald's eyes, he communicated this emotion in a swift glance to his companion, and again masked it with a semblance of impassivity.

Having verified his first impression of the sense of the communication, Mr. Bertram clicked his tongue against his teeth meditatively—"Tch! Tch! Tch!"

"Miss Channing reposes—pardon me—surprising degree of confidence in you, Captain Parr," he commented.

"I hope to prove worthy of her trust," Donald declared with all due humility. "I used the term surprising in view of the fact that it has been my misfortune never to have heard of you as a friend of Miss Channing's."

"Don't apologize," said Donald calmly—and let it go at that.

"Of course," Mr. Bertram amended hastily, "I am Miss Channing's servant. Her will is my law. Pray advise me in what way I may serve you."

"Permit me first," Donald suggested, "to introduce my friend, Mr. Edward W. Ryley, late of the United States Secret Service, now associated with me in the private bureau of information which I have organized for Miss Channing at her suggestion."

Mr. Bertram looked, if possible, more than ever startled.

"I know nothing of that," he said, mechanically shaking hands with Mr. Ryley.

"It is Miss Channing's desire that I inform you concerning it, in strict confidence—naturally."

"Naturally," echoed Mr. Bertram, and assumed a receptive attitude. Rapidly Captain Parr sketched for the benefit of the general manager an outline of the existing situation between Patricia Channing and himself, on the one hand, and on the other Baron Huroki and his associates.

As he drew to his conclusion Mr. Bertram betrayed boundless amazement.

"Extraordinary!" he commented, and rather needlessly mopped his brow. "May I ask—?"

"Anything, Mr. Bertram. It is not only my duty, I am only too happy to tell you everything."

"Why—since these Japanese and Mexican conspirators have so openly shown their hands—?"

"I won't indorse openly," Donald interrupted with a smile. "They have been very shrewd and cunning. It has thus far been our good fortune—with the assistance of Mr. Ryley here—to penetrate their intrigues and mate their every move."

"But surely you have ample excuse for swearing out warrants for their arrest!"

"If we do that," Donald explained patiently, "we merely exchange an enemy we know for one we do not know. Japanese conspiracy will not die out in this country if we expose and punish Baron Huroki; another will take his place; and warned by Huroki's fate, will work even more surreptitiously. But as long as Baron Huroki is suffered to remain head and forefront of the intrigue, we know whom to watch and, through our experience with his methods, how best to forestall his machinations."

see you looking so well. Permit me to introduce my friend, Baron Huroki and Senor de Lima."

With his usual admirable address, Huroki recovered from his disgust on recognizing Parr, and acknowledging the latter's presence with a slight, cool nod, turned to exhibit marked cordiality toward the general manager of Channing, Inc.

Then, the secretary placing chairs for the party, they disposed themselves to the business of the hour.

Ignoring Donald completely—turning toward him a cold shoulder which served its master ill since it provided Donald with an opportunity to place Patricia's chair near his own—the Japanese buttered his selected victim with his very best grade of urbanity.

"It is a pleasure to make the acquaintance of one with whom I am to transact so much business," he averred—"to our great mutual profit, I trust."

"I'm sure I hope so," Bertram agreed pleasantly. "But may I inquire the nature of the business?"

"Miss Channing has not yet advised you—?"

Bertram responded to Huroki's artful look of surprise with one of blank non-comprehension.

"Then—permit me—perhaps these papers will best explain."

Bertram accepted a bundle of legal papers and leaned back in his chair to examine them.

"Agreement between Channing, Inc., and Senor Juan de Lima," he read aloud the indorsement on the uppermost—two machine guns and munitions for the de facto government of Mexico."

He managed a moment of embarrassment. "I am sorry, gentlemen, but the strictly defined policy of Channing, Inc., does not permit us to accept these contracts."

"I am sorry to seem rude," Baron Huroki said suavely; "but if you will be good enough to examine the signatures you will find that the president of Channing, Inc., has seen fit to reverse your policy."

Hastily unfolding the document in hand, Bertram scrutinized the foot of its last page.

"Channing, Inc., by Patricia Channing, President," he read, and hesitated, and looked dubiously at Patricia. "This is your signature, Miss Channing?"

The girl, avoiding his gaze, murmured an affirmative.

"You can hardly question its genuineness," Huroki commented with a superciliously lifted eyebrow. "You surely do not mean to imply that the signature could be a forgery?"

"No," Bertram admitted mildly—"no. But I am surprised—yes, much surprised."

"But why?"

"Because—you know, of course, this contract is dated yesterday; whereas I hold here—"

Bertram exposed the paper Donald had given him at their earlier interview—"an absolute power of attorney given Capt. Donald Parr by Miss Patricia Channing ten days ago, by which it appears that any and all contracts signed by her and lacking his counter-signature become automatically invalid."

Even the racial serenity of Baron Huroki was hardly proof against this blow. He took a rather long moment to recover.

"None the less," he said at length, turning toward Donald, "Captain Parr will hardly withhold his signature when Miss Channing requests him to affix it."

"I am sorry," Donald said quietly, "Even should Miss Channing command, I must refuse."

"Captain Parr!" This was Patricia's contribution, an excellently simulated cry of indignation.

"I am sorry," Donald repeated firmly. "But so long as this power of attorney rests with me, and so long as Japan conspires to enslave the United States with Mexico, by way of preparing for the allied Japanese-Mexican invasion of the Pacific Coast states—so long, indeed, as Japan maintains a naval base at Magdalena bay—just so long will Channings refuse to sell arms and ammunition to any Mexican faction whatsoever!"

The power of attorney, of course, revocable," Patricia suggested maliciously.

"If Miss Channing wishes to revoke it, that can doubtless be attended to without delay," Donald agreed. "Do you wish Mr. Bertram to call in a stenographer and a notary, Miss Channing?"

Now, as Elaine, Patricia could not make a creditable forgery of the signature of Patricia Channing; the extraordinarily skillful forgeries appended to the contracts in Bertram's hands were the work of Huroki's able confederates. As Elaine, she dared not attempt to sign the name of Patricia in the presence of witnesses.

"No, no," she said hastily rising—"not now, not today. I shall, of course, revoke the power—tomorrow. This afternoon I haven't time. I'm already late for an appointment with my dressmaker."

"Then I shall expect a call from you tomorrow?" Bertram inquired amiably. "At about what hour—?"

"Till telephone," Patricia evaded. "If you please—Baron Huroki—Senor de Lima—"

When he had courteously shut the door upon the backs of the discomfited conspirators, Bertram turned to Parr with a grin of unfeigned delight. "Good work!" he chuckled.

But Donald did not respond. He was studying with a look of exasperation a small slip of paper which he had just unfolded.

"What now?" Bertram asked. "Read that!" Donald told him wrathfully. "You didn't notice—none of the others did—but Patricia dropped her handkerchief and I picked it up. This message was in its folds. I pulped it and— Oh, read the d—d thing!"

He paced furiously to and fro while Bertram deciphered the message. Written in pencil, hastily, it ran without date or salutation or signature: "Huroki insists I must marry De Lima tonight at eight at the Little Church Around the Corner. I dare not refuse. What am I to do?"

POWDER TOWN.

As that long summer twilight ebbed into dark of night, the softly glowing windows of the Church of the Transfiguration signified to a largely indifferent metropolis that a private wedding was being very quietly celebrated.

Within, in the radiance that bathed the altar, Patricia Channing stood on the left of Juan de Lima. On either side waited the best man and matron of honor, respectively Baron Huroki and Mrs. Fanny Adair.

Patricia waited in a state of nervous tension in no way perceptible.

She did not doubt her Donald; she knew that he would find some way to prevent the consummation of this impossible affair; she was not afraid.

The organ fell silent. Its sonorous cadences were replaced by the accents of the clergyman intoning the marriage service.

If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together—let him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace!

There was a little pause, abruptly broken by a scurry and scuffle of feet confused with a fro-rouf of skirts.

Out of the shadows that cloaked the remotest portions of the church darted—with surprising agility, considering her bulk—a woman of substantial mien, a plump, dark creature of distinctly Spanish type.

Half a dozen feet from the altar she uttered one piercing cry: "Juan, my husband! At last, I've found you! Monster of ingratitude and infidelity, why did you desert me?"

She thrust him from her at arm's length, shook him mercilessly, then overcame by a tidal wave of quenchless affection, clasped him, struggling vainly, once more to her bosom.

Half-suffocated with exasperation Huroki went to his confederate's assistance. But even while disentangling the unfortunate, he bethought him of the bride-elect, and looked around for her.

She was no more there. Nor—buried search developed—was she anywhere within the church. Investigation

of the doors elicited the information, from innocent and disinterested bystanders, that a young woman, clothed beautifully in white had run madly from the church, met a young man at the gate, and with him had vanished in a taxicab whose chauffeur unquestionably placed little value in his license.

At twenty minutes past eight that taxicab, having eluded all attempts at pursuit (if any such there were) drove up before the apartment house in which Captain Parr maintained his New York home.

A moment later the door of his quarters closed upon Patricia Channing and the lover of her choice. "I thought you would never come!" she stammered.

"I had to work very quietly," he explained. "It was obvious from the first that this arrangement couldn't continue—you couldn't go on hoodwinking Huroki and at the same time keep out of marrying de Lima. And when Huroki found out that you had made a fool of him, you would have to be mighty safely hidden to escape reprisal. So I fixed things up for you here—I've moved over to the Vanderbilt—got hold of Anne, sent her to the Ritz with an order for your belongings—she was there within ten minutes of the time you left for the church—brought everything of yours here and . . . Well, here we are!"

"But how did you ever find out de Lima had a wife?"

"I didn't," Donald explained gravely. "She wasn't his wife." . . .

There came a knock at the door. "That's Ryley. Let him in, please, Anne. I left him to protect the woman in case either Huroki or de Lima became violent."

The grin of the detective as he entered was evidence of the fact that he had experienced no great trouble. There had been a bit of a rumper, he reported—nothing to speak of.

His account was interrupted by the shrill, imperative clamor of the telephone. Donald answered, and sobbed to sudden gravity as he carried on a brief conversation with Bertram in Powder Town.

"Trouble at Channing," he announced as he hung up. "Bertram says our man Barnes was shot in a street fight this afternoon by some loafer who interrupted him when he was phoning me. In addition the town seems strike-mad all of a sudden—agitators, even now, are preaching strike and destruction of property. Bertram thinks we'd better run down and look the situation over for ourselves. It may prove necessary to call on the governor for militia to protect the mills."

"Donald—please! I am so afraid for you!"

"I must go, dear—I must. You need not worry on my account—we've a dozen men down there who will help Ryley take care of me. Not that I anticipate any serious trouble. The rabble have no excuse for rioting till the company refuses the strikers' demands—and it can't do that till tomorrow."

He found a time-table, scanned it rapidly, snatched up his hat.

"With luck and a fast taxi-man we can just make the next train, the last tonight."

The door banged; incredibly, Patricia was alone—alone, that is, except for Anne.

She threw herself into a chair, when she had suffered Anne to change her bridal garments for a negligee.

Womanlike, she was stubbornly bent on spending a sleepless, wretched night. In spite of herself, toward eleven o'clock, she nodded in her chair, then slept.

It was two when the telephone aroused her.

One of her force of private secret service agents was calling from Powder Town for Captain Parr, in ignorance of the fact that, according to the time-table, and providing he had caught his train, Donald should have been there with Ryley for a matter of three hours.

In response to her catechism the agent reported that the situation at Channings was one of imminent emergency. A strike had been called at midnight; the employees of the powder mills who had come off shift at that hour had not been replaced; rioting was already in progress; the general store maintained by the company had been burned and looted; the mob was threatening to march upon the mills.

Instructing the man to seek Captain Parr at the mills, Patricia left the telephone and stealthily entered the bedroom which had been Donald's, which now was hers.

From the adjoining chamber sounded an unmistakable snore: Anne unquestionably slept.

With every precaution to avoid waking her, the girl found a sports-suit and hurriedly dressed, interrupting that process but once, and then to telephone her garage to send her favorite motor car, a high-powered racing machine, round to the door.

It was waiting for her when at length she crept quietly out of the apartment house.

Dismissing the mechanic, she took the wheel alone.

Constrained within the limits of New York to go warily, once across the Hudson she gave the motor its head.

Patricia knew that country well; she made no miscalculation as to her way; for all that, she could not hope to reach the neighborhood of Channings before the dawn.

With madly throbbing heart, Patricia began to recognize landmarks of the countryside that told her she was close upon Powder Town.

The sun was rising in crimson splendor when Patricia, arriving on the crest of a hill overlooking Powder Town,

brought the car to a full pause, that she might spy out the situation before running on into possible peril.

She had brought with her, for just such use, a pair of binoculars belonging to Donald. Now she unslung and focussed these.

Off to the right, at the bottom of the cup, stood the unlovely huddle of mill buildings. Her glasses showed the yard gates closed and guarded by armed sentries.

On her left the single-track railroad spur issued from between hills and sloped down across-country to the mills. On this she discovered a train consisting of half a dozen cars and a locomotive, all strangely motionless—strangely, since the cars were outward bound, the locomotive had steam up, and no reasonable excuse was apparent, for the stop in that particular place.

The circumstances made Patricia wonder daily if, possibly, the railroad people had joined hands with her employees and declared a sympathetic strike.

Dismissing this thought for the nonce, she turned attention to the town.

This last lay in the middle distance, half concealed by an intervening rise of wooded land. But the smoke of its burning buildings was billowing up in the still morning air.

A stentorian puffing called her interest back to the train of freight cars.

The locomotive was getting under way with vast complaints because of the strain of the up-grade pull.

With a start Patricia discovered that the rear car had been uncoupled and its brakes thrown off. As the train moved uphill, it was moving downhill, at first slowly under unassisted momentum, but momentarily gathering way through the attraction of gravity.

It was at most a mile from the mills. By the time the car had covered half that distance on that steep grade it would be careering downhill at express speed. When it struck the mill-yard gates it would cave them in like eggshells.

Horror's frigid hand clutched at Patricia's heart as she realized that this thing had come to pass through no accident but through deliberate and fiendish design.

That freight car was loaded to its caves with high-explosive. When the crash came, the Channing mills would be wiped off the face of the earth.

Without conscious thought the girl released the brakes and swiftly consoled the motor to its utmost.

There was a bare chance that she might save the mills and the many loyal men who guarded it—including, doubtless, her Donald.

About an eighth of a mile from the yard gates the road crossed the railroad tracks; if she could but forestall the freight car at that junction. . . .

She had half a mile to go; the freight car was moving at good speed before her racer was even started. It was gambling with death, but Patricia could not refuse the game because the stakes were high.

Miraculously, as it seemed to her when she was permitted time for retrospect, she made it.

The freight car was a hundred yards distant and bearing down like a juggernaut gone mad, when she stalled the motor-car on the rails, jumped, and ran for dear life.

The ensuing explosion was like the trumpet of doom. Patricia, lifted bodily from her feet, was flung to earth again with stunning force.

When she came to her senses again there was neither freight nor motor-car to be seen—nothing but a great gap in the tracks, a crater-like hole in the ground.

But that was nothing: Donald Parr was bending over her, lifting her in his arms; and he was whole and unharmed if pale with fright on her behalf.

And she was quite unharmed. With a broken little hunch of happiness Patricia swung an arm around his neck.

(END OF SEVENTH EPISODE.)



Slipped Out of the Church.



A Message Was in Its Folds.

At The Dreamland Theatre Every Thursday