

Pola Negri's Strange New Rival for Charlie Chaplin's Love

How a Mexican Girl Made the Comedian the Fairy Prince of Her Dreams and Then Tried to Kill Her-

self When She Found She Couldn't Have Him for Her Real Hero



"In her dreams Charlie Chaplin was always the hero who risked his life for her—the fairy prince who bravely climbed to the roof of her father's castle and saved her from the clutches of as wicked a villain as ever slit a girl's throat."

LONG before any man whispers words of love in her ears almost every normal minded girl is picturing in her dreams the sort of man she would like to hear whispering them—the ideal hero who will, she hopes, some day risk his life for her sake in countless daring ways and finally carry her off triumphantly to an everlasting honeymoon.

As a rule these romantic dreams serve only the good purpose of helping a girl better to pass the tedious time until the delightful reality of love comes to her. But sometimes a girl will become so obsessed with these visionings that she is driven to tragedy or the verge of it when she awakens to the utter impossibility of making these dreams come true.

What seems to be a most remarkable instance of this kind occurred only the other day out in the California film metropolis of Hollywood when a pretty young woman made a desperate attempt to kill herself with poison on learning that the hero she had enshrined in her dreams would not desert his beautiful fiancée and take her to his heart instead.

The unhappy girl is Marina Vega, a pretty Mexican. The hero of her dreams whose love she sought and without whose caresses she thought life not worth living is no less a personage than Charlie Chaplin, the promised husband of Pola Negri.

The fact that Marina Vega had never seen Charlie Chaplin in the flesh, nor he her, until the night when she so dramatically demanded his love made no difference whatever with the bitterness of her disappointment. She was as despairing, as broken hearted, as if he had been her actual suitor and had wooed her as earnestly as he is said to have wooed his adored film queen.

How this love-mad girl worked her way by slow and painful stages from her village home more than 2,000 miles away to throw herself at the feet of her hero and beg some of the tender caresses and heroic deeds with which he was always filling her dreams is an amazing story. Even the most brilliant of scenario writers would have hard work to imagine anything like its equal.

The fascination that may yet have a tragic ending for Marina Vega is said to have begun when she was a girl of 15 and was taken by her parents to see her first movie. The picture happened to be a Chaplin film and from the moment when the famous comedian shuffled before her wondering eyes he became the one man in the world for her—the man she at first admired, then really loved and yearned to have for her very own.

Other girls admired Charlie Chaplin—but only for his grotesque looks and the comical capers he cut up. When they fell in love with a film hero it was with a rough-riding cow-

boy or a seductive shik or a silk-hatted society man. Charlie was all right as a clown, they thought, but not the sort of man they'd care to have calling them pet names—not even in their dreams.

But Marina had quite different ideas. She regarded Charlie Chaplin's clownishness as the mask that hid from an unfeeling world a man of men, the living embodiment of all the noblest qualities, a modern knight, who could be as dauntless in deed as he was tender and devoted in love.

The movies existed for Marina only to give her all too fleeting glimpses of Charlie Chaplin, the hero she adored as worshipfully as any girl ever did her promised husband. And as she grew older the glimpses of him obtainable in the small, out-of-the-way village where she lived failed to satisfy her cravings. Several times she distressed her family by running away to Mexico City, where in a single day she could get many different film views of him.

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Of course this and other even bloodier adventures were always followed by moments more tender, more intimate, more satisfying to her girlish heart. She imagined her fairy prince gently raising her fainting, tearful self in his strong arms, pressing his lips against hers and murmuring in that manly yet softly musical voice:

"My well beloved! Come fly with me to my golden palace across the seas and be happy forever."

It distressed her not at all that in her dreams, while the rest of Charlie looked like the conventional fairy prince, he still clung to his comical derby and absurd little mus-

tache and grotesque shoes. She was too much in love to see anything incongruous or laughable in those things. To her they were quite as heroic as the sword on which he so neatly spitted every pursuing villain.

Years flew by, as the movie caption writers say, and Marina became old enough to marry. She was the belle of the village and her father and mother could not understand why she persistently refused the advances of the numerous men who showed eagerness to woo her. They little suspected that their daughter regarded herself as already betrothed to another—as sacredly pledged to her dream hero.

At last the pressure from her family on the subject of marriage became so great that she feared she would be forced to prove faithless to her fairy prince if she remained at home any longer. She decided to go to Hollywood and seek out Charlie Chaplin. Her obsession is believed to have reached a point where she felt sure that if she could meet him face to face and tell him how much she loved him he would reciprocate her devotion just as he always was doing in her dreams.

By slaving at menial jobs she managed to get together enough money to take her a 100 miles or so of the way. There she went to work again to earn the price for another stage of her journey, and so on, until months later she reached Hollywood.

For several days after her arrival there Charlie Chaplin was annoyed by the persistent attempts of a young woman to gain an interview with him at the studio where he was working on his next film. She refused to give her name and Mr. Chaplin's secretary, whom she pestered three or four times a day, could not recall ever seeing her before. One afternoon when Mr. Chaplin was leaving the studio she slipped out of a vestibule where



Pola Negri, from the painting by Tade Styka.



Marina Vega, the unhappy victim of her romantic dreams who is believed to have wanted to take Pola Negri's place in Charlie Chaplin's heart



Charlie and the expected future Mrs. Charlie.

she had evidently been lying in wait for some time and tried to stop him.

The following evening, while Mr. Chaplin was out motoring with Pola Negri, his fiancée, and a Hollywood physician his Japanese valet heard an unusual noise coming from his master's bedroom. It sounded suspiciously like the rustle of a woman's skirt.

As the valet entered the room and turned on the lights he saw at a glance that it was just that—the rustle of the clothing of a well-dressed, good-looking and quite agitated young woman, who was trying to conceal herself behind the hangings at one of the windows.

The valet seized her by the wrist dragged her out into the light and demanded to know who she was and what she was doing there. But Marina Vega—for she it was—only shook her head, pressed her red lips firmly together and said not a word.

The conscientious Japanese was in a quandary as to just what his duty as a servant and a gentleman demanded of him in this unusual situation. There had been many burglaries in Hollywood of late and

even if this girl were not a thief, she deserved to be punished for daring to invade his master's luxurious sleeping chamber.

Yet his gentlemanly instincts revolted against turning a young woman so attractive and so evidently a person of some refinement over to the police. Perhaps, he thought, it would be just as well to lead her out of the house and tell her sternly that she must never come there again.

While he was debating this question with true oriental thoughtfulness his problem was solved by the sound of Mr. Chaplin and Miss Negri and their physician friend entering the house. Tightening his hold on his prisoner's wrist, the valet led her down the broad staircase and into the library, where Mr. Chaplin stood.

As Marina Vega faced the famous comedian she is said to have thrown herself at his feet. Her body was shaken by a torrent of sobs, and from her lips poured a flood of words so hurried, so incoherent that nobody who heard them could make out what she was trying to say.

But facts revealed later at the hospital and obtained from her former home in Mexico indicate that this was her avowal of a long-cherished love—the love she had come 2,000 painful miles to offer as a substitute for Pola Negri's.

Miss Negri and the physician bent over the sobbing woman and tried to soothe her, but it is said that not until Mr. Chaplin added his soothing words to theirs did she begin to grow calmer. Then she suddenly rose to her feet, wiped her tear-stained face with a dainty handkerchief and started for the door.

In vain Mr. Chaplin urged her to sit down a minute to regain her composure or to let him call a motor car for her. She shook her head with a wan little smile, hurried out of the house and disappeared down the street.

Within half an hour or so after the departure of this surprising visitor the ears of Mr. Chaplin and his guests again caught the sound of a woman's sobs. The comedian

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