©CL 17664 MAR 21 1922

THE VERMILLION PENCIL

Photoplay in ~~six~~ five reels

Story by Homer Lea

Scenario by E. W. Guyol and A. Catlin

Directed by Norman Dawn

Author of the photoplay (under Sec. 62)
R. C. Pictures Corporation of the U. S.

©CIL 17664 MAR 21 1922

Synopsis

"The Vermilion Pencil"

by

Homer Lea

Copyrighted 1921

by

R-C Pictures

"The Vermilion Pencil"

Story by Homer Lea
Scenario by Edwin Warren Guyol & Alace Catlin
Directed by Norman Dawn
Assistant George [illegible]
Cameraman Joseph Dubray
Art Director W. L. Heywood
Released by R-C Pictures

"The Vermilion Pencil"

Tse Chan (later called "the unknown) . Sessue Hayakawa
His Wife. . . . . Ann May
Pai Wang. . . . . Misac Seki

*****

The Unknown. . . . . Sessue Hayakawa
Li Chan. . . . . Sessue Hayakawa
Hyacinth. . . . . Bessie Love

Fu Wong . . . . . Sidney Franklin
Ho Ling . . . . . Thomas Jefferson
The Jackal. . . . . Tote Du Crow
Ma Shue . . . . . Omar Whitehead

"VERMILION PENCIL"

Tse-Chan, a viceroy of China, wishes to abolish the cruel custom of sentencing unfaithful wives to Ling Chee, the "execution-of-a-thousand-tortures." Connected with Ling Chee is the terrible Vermilion Pencil, a small baton which, when wielded by the viceroy at the execution of the guilty one, is the signal to begin the punishment which ends in terrible death.

But Tse-Chan's wife has been the innocent victim of Pui Kwang's scheming, and is caught in a most compromising situation with him but the viceroy himself. Tse-Chan's outraged sense of marital duty proves stronger than his desire to abolish the Vermilion Pencil, and in an outburst of cold, fanatical self-righteousness and perverted sense of justice, he sends his innocent wife to the horrible death by Ling Chee. As she dies, Pui Kwang goes to Tse-Chan and tells him that she was absolutely guiltless; and, drinking the contents of a vial of poison, utters a curse upon Tse-Chan and the son which is to follow him, calling down the wrath of the gods upon them both and praying that the shadow of the Vermilion Pencil will burn Tse-Chan's soul and blister the life of his son.

Aghast and repentant, Tse-Chan turns his infant son over to a friend, and enters a monastery. The boy is to have an American education, after which he is to return and serve his native country.

Years pass, and the son returns, a successful engineer, heading the construction of a dam in the valley below the monastery. While the son, Li Chan, is working on the completion of his dam, he meets Hyacinth, the lovely little daughter of an old basket weaver, Ma Shue. For awhile, the pretty romance develops, but it is inter-

rupted by the advent of a mandarin, the shrewd Ho Ling, who is out scouting for a wife for the present viceroy, Fu Wong. Ma Shue, immmsely flattered and overjoyed, is only too glad to proceed with the arrangements, regardless of his daughter's wishes.

Meanwhile, Li Chan has encountered an unknown hermit priest, from the monastery — his father, who has learned of his presence, and who has come down to try to induce him to enter the monastery and ward off the curse of Pui Kwang. But Li Chan, not knowing the unknown man is his father, tells him that he can best serve his people in the work he is doing on the dam. In answer, The Unknown points to the smoldering volcano, directly above the dam, saying that one breath of the sleepless old dragon that slumbers in the heart of the subterranean fires would undo all his handiword; but that nothing can interfere with a priest's reclamation of the souls of men. Li Chan is attracted to the Unknown, but remains politely unconvinced by his arguments.

In spite of Ho Ling's blandishments and her father's sterm orders, Hayacinth refuses to become the bride of the viceroy, having her own ideas on who she intends to marry. When Ho Ling returns to Fu Wong, in fear and trembling, to report his failure, the old viceroy is furious and orders Hyacinth to be kidnapped. His orders are promptly carried out, and the girl is carried off while waiting for Li Chan in her moonlit garden, and taken off to the viceroy's palace. Meanwhile, Li Chan, trying to find out why she did not keep tryst, has learned of her disappearance from Ma Shue. Believing her dead, he decides that the only way hecan avoid further unhappiness, under the curse of Pui Kwang, is to take up holy orders. But first he will become a student and live among the people, teaching them, until he is worthy to enter the monastic life.

rupted by the advent of a mandarin, the shrewd Ho Ling, who is out scouting for a wife for the present viceroy, Fu Wong. Ma Shue, immmsely flattered and overjoyed, is only too glad to proceed with the arrangements, regardless of his daughter's wishes.

Meanwhile, Li Chan has encountered an unknown hermit priest, from the monastery — his father, who has learned of his presence, and who has come down to try to induce him to enter the monastery and ward off the curse of Pui Kwang. But Li Chan, not knowing the unknown man is his father, tells him that he can best serve his people in the work he is doing on the dam. In answer, The Unknown points to the smoldering volcano, directly above the dam, saying that one breath of the sleepless old dragon that slumbers in the heart of the subterranean fires would undo all his handiword; but that nothing can interfere with a priest's reclamation of the souls of men. Li Chan is attracted to the Unknown, but remains politely unconvinced by his arguments.

In spite of Ho Ling's blandishments and her father's sterm orders, Hayacinth refuses to become the bride of the viceroy, having her own ideas on who she intends to marry. When Ho Ling returns to Fu Wong, in fear and trembling, to report his failure, the old viceroy is furious and orders Hyacinth to be kidnapped. His orders are promptly carried out, and the girl is carried off while waiting for Li Chan in her moonlit garden, and taken off to the viceroy's palace. Meanwhile, Li Chan, trying to find out why she did not keep tryst, has learned of her disappearance from Ma Shue. Believing her dead, he decides that the only way hecan avoid further unhappiness, under the curse of Pui Kwang, is to take up holy orders. But first he will become a student and live among the people, teaching them, until he is worthy to enter the monastic life.

In this new capacity, Li Chan's fame reaches the ears of the viceroy, and he is summonedd to tutor the "niece" of Ho Ling, in order that she may be schooled in the various things befitting the wife of so important a personage as the viceroy. Not very many lessons pass by before Li Chan learns of the "niece's" identity, in spite of the fact that a screen separates them, and that she has been receiving her educational instructions via this medium. As soon as Li Chan learns the truth, he lays plans to rescue his beloved from the clutches of the viceroy.

With the aid of T'sang, a fatalist, whom he has befriended, the litter containing Hyacinth is attacked while passing through the streets during the Feast of Lanterns, and Lichan escapes with her to the water front, with the police and guards close upon his heels. There seems to be no way of escaping but [illegible] the Sleepless Dragon, in the very side of the mountain where rumbles the ominous volcano, they will be safe, for no one will dare follow them there. But the sulphurous fumes overcome them, and they are at length captured by the soldiers of the viceroy and brought back to the palace. Li Chan does his best to shield Hyacinth from guilt by claiming that he stole her against her will; but the enraged and cheated ruler pronounces her guilty and sentences her to die by Ling Choe.

But Li Chan's father has been told of the great danger which threatens his son and the girl, and comes from his distant monastery in anxious haste, hoping to save them from the terrible Ling Chee and death at the hands of him who wields the dread Vermilion Pencil. Failing in every attempt to reach them, he goes up into the mountain, where the volcano is muttering, and prays that if

a sacrifice must be made, let it be him. The gathering fumes choke him, but he prays on, faithfully -- earnestly.

In the city below, the execution is about to take place when the viceroy, in the very act of holding high the Vermilion Pencil, his symbol of power and of the power of Ling Chee. Drops dead. At the same moment, the great volcano which towers above, belches forth in all its fury, pouring hot ashes and molten laava down upon the terrified city. Ho Ling, crazed with fear, but derermined that the guilty girl shall die, painfull makes his way toward her, his sword upraising to cut off her head. But Li Chan, freed from prison by the eruption and the earthquake which follows, arrives in timeto save Hyacinth from the maddened mandarin and leads her to a place of safety. The two, with T'sang are the only ones left amid the ruins. Tse Chan has died in the lava rush on the mountainside, his prayer answered.

The End

This document is from the Library of Congress
"Motion Picture Copyright Descriptions Collection, 1912-1977"

Collections Summary:

The Motion Picture Copyright Descriptions Collection, Class L and Class M, consists of forms, abstracts, plot summaries, dialogue and continuity scripts, press kits, publicity and other material, submitted for the purpose of enabling descriptive cataloging for motion picture photoplays registered with the United States Copyright Office under Class L and Class M from 1912-1977.

Class L Finding Aid:
https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mbrsmi/eadmbrsmi.mi020004

Class M Finding Aid:
https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mbrsmi/eadmbrsmi.mi021002

National Audio-Visual Conservation Center
The Library of Congress