

**ERICH MARIA REMARQUE'S THREE COMRADES**  
 ADAPTED FROM THE METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PICTURE  
 BEATRICE FABER

**SYNOPSIS**

In the period directly after the war, Erich, Koster and Lenz, three inseparable comrades, have opened a small auto repair shop. They build a phenomenally fast racing car for their own use and one evening have an impromptu race with Franz Breuer, a profiteer and one of the newly influential men in Germany. With him is Patricia Hollmann. Erich is sorely smitten and though he resents her "friend" Breuer, he takes her to dine. One day the three comrades find their taxicab half demolished. It is a warning from the revolutionaries to Lenz to discontinue his work in the patriotic group.

**CHAPTER TWO**

Sitting at the piano in Alfons' bar, Erich was happier than he'd ever been in his whole life. Lenz had been right about the flowers. Pat had accepted them and forgiven him for his boorishness. Not only that, she had mentioned, quite casually of course, that she was not seeing Breuer any more.

Striking a chord he went on with the magnificent lie he was concocting. "And then," he continued, guiltily aware that he had never traveled further than south Germany, "I batted around the world on freighters, especially South America." A fellow had to tell a girl something. It made him sound important. "Let's see. There was Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires—"

Lenz halted them from the doorway and strode over. "I've always wanted to get away myself," he jibed, "but first there was school you know, then the war. Hello Pat, Hello Munchausen." He turned, hearing Koster's voice. The two men drew aside.

"Well," Koster asked, "did you tell Becker that you're through with the party work?"

Lenz' face twisted a little. "Yes, and I've just put a knife through my conscience."

Koster clapped his shoulder. "It's better this way. You'll see."

A week went by and for Erich were days of thinking about Pat and evenings of boating or singing or walking through the park with her. Then one day she telephoned him. Someone had given her two tickets for the opera and Erich must act as her escort. There was a rowdy hour of dressing that night as Koster and Lenz pinned, tied and squeezed him into an old-fashioned dress-suit. "You'll be all right if you don't dance," Lenz said. "Whatever you do, don't try that."

Sitting in the nightclub with Pat after the performance, Erich felt the blood surge warmly within him. "You're like a silver dream in that dress. You're beautiful, Pat."

She touched the frosted sleeves. "I couldn't afford it, really. It was my last extravagance."

Suddenly Erich's eyes darkened. Franz Breuer had entered with a party of friends and the place was buzzing with whispers. At the next table someone was saying, "Breuer's very fond of that young Fraulein Hollmann. And it's been a lucky thing for her too. These fallen aristocrats haven't much chance these days. He's a man of influence, you know. Political influence. Germany is changing . . ."

And then Breuer was at the table. "How nice seeing you here, Pat. Dance with me?"

"Pat's tired," Erich said belligerently.

Breuer's voice had a nasty edge to it. "You haven't known her as long as I have. Pat dances until dawn."

Erich started, as Pat put her arm through his. "You promised this dance to me," she said and they moved to the floor. Cautiously, Erich circled about. A drunken dancer behind him laughed boisterously and jerked at his coat-tails. Desperately, Erich struggled to recover. His coat opened at the seams.

Breuer's voice rang out. "I've just placed that coat. My grandfather was buried in it."

The place was now roaring with laughter and suddenly Erich dropped his hands away from her. What a fool he'd been to think he could carry the evening off. Humiliation swamped over him. "It's no good, Pat," he said hoarsely, "no good at all. I'm not—I'm sorry, it's no good." Clenching his teeth he strode quickly to the door.

Outside, he made straight for Alfons' cafe. To the queries of Koster and Lenz, he said, "At sharp midnight I changed back from Cinderella into a garage mechanic, that's all." Pat? She was with Breuer.

Lenz nodded disappointedly. "She's a rich man's girl. I knew it. Well, what can Erich do?"

"He can get good and drunk," Erich said savagely, downing a stiff whiskey. It was almost dawn as he moved unsteadily down the street. Then, reaching his door, he fumbled for his key. There was a small, indistinct sound and a flash of gleaming silver.

He knelt down. "Pat, Pat. What are you doing here? You're shivering." His arms were around her and he crushed her close.

She stirred in his embrace. "I believe I've been asleep." Her eyes blinked drowsily. "Erich, you got drunk because you couldn't dance and you ran away and left me and I don't want you ever to run away and leave me. I'm much warmer now and this is a lovely time of day."

Erich looked at the dawn and knew it was the most beautiful time in all creation. "It's the edge of eternity," he whispered, "between day and night." She rubbed her cheek against his. "Let's stay right here forever. It's what we were born into. It's where we belong."

His lips found hers and held them a long, long time. Then she smiled and held his face in her hands and the silver dress was reflected in her eyes. Suddenly she gave a stifled cough and buried her head in his shoulder.

"You're cold," Erich cried. "Let me take you home."

She looked at him again with that special radiance. "Take me home? But how? I am home."

His breath caught. Then, without a word, he swung her up in his arms and opened the door . . .

Spring budded into flower and burst upon an enchanted world in a riot of color and fragrance. Pat was sitting in the repair shop one night, waiting for Erich who was out with the taxi. She sank back in the chair, her eyes misty.

Out of all the maelstrom that had beset a troubled world she and Erich had managed to snatch some joy. It didn't matter whether it would last or not. That was the way of love. Once it happened, it could go on forever, if only as a memory. It was like immortal music, never to be forgotten.

Koster looked up from a bashed fender he was fixing. "Pat," he said abruptly, "let me give you Erich in a nutshell. No, let me finish. Ability to make a living better than average. Honest, ten per cent off for South America but that leaves ninety. Spirit? All there is."

She jumped up and moved around restlessly. "Otto, you're telling me things I know."

"Then why don't you marry him? Oh, I know he hasn't asked you. He's scared. Why don't you ask him?" No answer. He hammered at the fender viciously. "It's each other you want, Pat. Never mind about anything else. Half the trouble in the world comes from worrying about what might happen."

Her lips quivered. He was opening her mind, daring her to probe into things best kept hidden. "Please don't talk about it Otto."

He levelled the hammer at her. "I'll tell you what's the matter with you. You're scared of suffering, scared of joy because you're afraid you might lose it. But you've got to think of Erich now. You're being a coward, you're being selfish."

"That's not true," she said very quietly. She looked away. "I told you once I'd been very ill. I'm just patched up now. It will come back." A cry burst from her. "Otto, don't let me marry him. Erich would want a happiness that could last. A home, children—not a future that might vanish any day."

Koster grasped her elbows. "Live, Pat. Take the gamble. Stake your life against a love like yours and Erich's every time. You can only win."

She whispered, "I'd have to tell him—"

He shook her. "No. That's part of it. Don't make him afraid. Just make him happy. Play to the limit. Aim at the stars."

And so it happened that just a week later, Alfons' bar was closed to visitors for the afternoon. The shades had been drawn, the tables and chairs set back against the walls.

Standing before the Burgomaster with Pat, Erich was sure that there had never been a finer place for a wedding. His heart thudded rapidly as the ceremony began. "Dearly beloved . . ." Alfons wiping his eyes. Koster and Lenz wearing stiff smiles. The phonograph playing softly. Joined hands. Now the ring. Trembling, he gathered Pat in his arms and took the sweetness of her lips.



Each day he made a new discovery. About Pat. About himself.

The Burgomaster was whispering aggrievedly, "wait a minute. Now, I pronounce you man and wife."

Then everyone laughed and chattered a great deal to cover up the sentimental tears and finally, with the wedding luncheon eaten and the wedding wine drunk it was time to leave for their honeymoon destination.

At the door Koster stopped Erich for a moment. "Remember the happy life you were going to come back to from the war? You're starting on it now. We'll see to it. All four of us will see to it."

Down the country road sped the taxi, devouring the miles that led to the little seaside resort. "What does the meter read?" Erich asked.

"Three hundred and eighteen marks." She laughed delightedly. "But don't worry, I know the driver. He's a husband of mine." Then she pointed eagerly. "Erich look. The sea. And there's the hotel. Oh, it can't be. It looks just like the postcards."

He twisted around to kiss her. "I'm glad, I wouldn't be able to bear all this if it were real."

But if not reality, then the better to dream. Dream in the cool green water, dream under the moon and stars, dream beneath the blazing sun. Erich had thought he knew his world. But that had been another place. Now,

each day he made a new and glorious discovery. About Pat. About himself. They were lying on the beach late one evening and Erich said happily, "that Burgomaster had such a nice way of putting things. 'For better or worse' was one of his phrases. In what's and what's in, sickness and health, till death do us part." She turned away from him and emptiness leaped into his heart. "There, you see? I was afraid of that. You're bored."

She was facing him instantly. "Darling, I'm not. Let's talk."

His face shadowed. "I don't know anything about books or about music."

She tweaked his ear. "I'll teach you. It's time you went to school."

A sudden savage fury came over him for that year he had lost. He could show her a few things, how to keep a machine gun from jamming and prove why it's better to shoot a man in the stomach than the head. Then her smoky blue eyes were full upon him and it seemed as if a clean wind had come up and blown all ugly things away. "Oh Pat, I'll teach you things, too. How to swim and drive and climb mountains and—play tennis."

Her laugh caressed him. "You see how much you know?"

He rolled over and looked down into her face. "But I never knew I did until now. I thought I belonged to what's dead and gone. I suddenly know I'm

alive, Pat. With you I'm alive." "We're alive darling. And I'm glad." She cupped his face in her hands and said timidly, "but maybe I can't learn all those things. Maybe you're in love with—a fragment."

He drew her close. "A lovely fragment, if ever there was one."

"Oh Erich, I love you so," she whispered and gave him a kiss that was all fire and flame.

Afterwards, he looked around dazedly and said, "I've just been kissed. Would you mind telling me which way is east and west?" Then he rose and began brushing off the sand. "Think of it, Pat. Someday we'll have a silver anniversary. Let's try to imagine the scene. Our handsome son and heir has left college and refused to go to war. Thrown into jail for the rest of his life—"

"Lift me up, Erich."

He stooped and caught her so that she hung by her arms. "No darling, turn your wrists the other way."

A lancinating pain shot through her chest as she struggled to put herself erect. Her face twisted and suddenly she coughed. Weakly. Just once. Dropping to the ground she landed in a peculiar sprawl, resembling a runner's crouch.

Erich burst into teasing laughter. "The idea is to go up, not down. All right, I'll race you to the hotel. Go ahead, Pat." But even as he spoke she coughed again, put her hand to her mouth and pitched forward. "Pat! What's the matter?"

Then the heavens seemed to split asunder and all the mighty gods of destruction descended. "Pat! Pat!" he cried, springing to her side. He gazed in horror. She was still and pale and there on the fine, white sand, spilled the very life blood from her throat in an ever widening pool.

(Tragedy has suddenly darkened Erich's idyllic happiness. Pat's illness is an unguessed blow to him. Can he save the life that has become so dear to him? Don't miss next week's concluding installment.)

(To be Continued)

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**Behind The Scenes In Business World**

**BUSINESS**—A better feeling prevailed last week in business and agricultural circles. Farmers, especially in the west, were cheered by the fact that the price of wheat which two weeks ago dropped to 67½ cents a bushel, was back to the 75-cent level. With America's wheat crop estimated at one billion bushels, this rise means \$80,000,000 more for farmers. Cotton rose too, more than \$2 a bale, on reports of heavy rains damaging the crop. Great Britain ordered 400 airplanes from U. S. firms, practically assuring capacity operations in this industry for at least two years. Auto manufacturers said that it may not be necessary to close Detroit plants for two months this summer, as previously expected. Renewal of confidence is seen in the fact that railroads last month ordered 6,114 new freight cars. In April only three were ordered.

**THINGS TO WATCH FOR**—A new treatment for cloth which will enable designs to retain their sharpness and original luster on fabrics even after repeated washing . . . An apparatus which permits a patient to administer anesthetic to himself while having a tooth filled, a bone set or while undergoing a minor operation; as long as he feels pain he squeezes on a bulb similar to those used on atomizers . . . A vending machine that sells flashlight batteries . . . A rear view vanity mirror for women interested in seeing what is going on behind their backs without being observed . . . A method of freezing bread so that it can be kept in storage six to eight months . . . Bowl of Rice Party in your community Friday night, June 17th, to aid 50,000,000 Chinese civilians of aggression. **WHO PAYS?**—A recent survey reveals the rather astounding fact that if everyone had to turn over to the government all income in excess of \$5,000 a year, the sum collected would pay only about one-fifth the annual cost of government, federal, state and local.

**HEADLINES**—By 1942 nearly 90 per cent of America's sea-going freight ships will be 20 years old or more . . . Americans use 12.6 pounds of coffee each year . . . Conversion of farm crops into substitutes for coal, petroleum and natural gas will be accomplished before these natural fuels are exhausted, says noted chemist . . . New remote-control device permits reporter with typewriter to set type on lino-type machine 611 miles away . . . New \$6,162,000 stream-lined cars for Twentieth Century Limited have trial run behind locomotive which can go 123 miles an hour . . . Province of Alberta has seven inch snowfall.

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