

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

LOVE STORY

(Gainsborough)

"YOU know, this isn't getting us anywhere," says one of the characters towards the end of *Love Story*, taking the words almost right out of my typewriter. But since we have to spend two hours to get nowhere, and since this British picture is certainly going to prove enormously popular, I feel it is necessary to examine *Love Story* in some detail, instead of according it the summary dismissal to which its fatuous plot rightly entitles it.

So get your hankies out and I'll tell you the touching tale of Lissa Campbell (Margaret Lockwood) and Kit Firth (Stewart Granger). As the strikingly original title at once makes clear, it is a Love Story. But have no qualms; the hankies are not intended to cover your maidenly blushes. Nothing could be more Proper and High-minded than the behaviour of Lissa and Kit when tempest-tossed by emotions which would

prove too fierce for the average mortal. She is a London concert pianist who wants to join the WAAF's and Do Her Bit, but her doctor rather unethically tells her that she has Only a Year to Live because of a bad heart. So she goes to a Cornish resort to Enjoy Life to the Full while she can; and there she encounters Kit, who seems to meet all the requirements for at least one form of enjoyment. They go driving together in a donkey-cart, tramping, rock-climbing, fishing, boating, and swimming (some of which, I must confess, struck me as rather strenuous activities for a severe cardiac case). Of course they Fall in Love; but their Romance, though Passionate, remains Platonic.

And then, by a twist in the story which nearly wrenches the long arm of coincidence right out of its socket, it is revealed that the young man also has an Awful Secret: he is an R.A.F. pilot who is due to go blind in a few months because of a delayed-action injury. One might reasonably think that two such doomed young persons in such circumstances would not be sticklers for the

conventions; and once indeed it does look for a few breathless moments as if they will spend a night together in a cottage on the Scilly Isles without benefit of marriage lines. However, in spite of numerous opportunities for a tête-à-tête, they never once discuss the state of their health. There is no valid reason why they should not, except of course that if they did the plot would be ruined—and I'm not sure that this is a valid reason. So naturally, since he is a very athletic young man and very flip-pant about the War, everybody (including Lissa) imagines that he is just a Cowardly, Caddish Slacker and she Can't Go Through With It, much as she really loves him. Thus it is Patriotism as much as Maidenly Virtue that prevents the heroine from Enjoying Life to the Full Stop, which makes the film doubly High-Minded and Ennobling.

WHILE you are wringing out your hankies, I had better mention now that there is Another Girl (Patricia Roc) who is not so Splendid and Unselfish. She has loved the hero in silence ever since they used to blow soap-bubbles together on the back-porch as children, and she knows all about his Approaching Fate and is, in fact, only waiting until he goes blind before she breaks her silence and claims him as Her Man

At Last. Because she is so Selfish and Possessive, she has made him promise that he won't take the 100-to-one chance of an operation that will either kill or cure him. But Lissa, who apparently enjoys gambling at long odds, makes the Other Girl release Kit from his promise, on condition that she (Lissa) will Go Out of His Life Forever.

This keeps the film running for another half-hour or so, while Kit has his operation (successful, naturally: what's a 100-to-one chance in a movie?), and gets engaged to the Other Girl, and Lissa recklessly throws what remains of her life away on an Ensa tour of North Africa. But as we have remarked already, for a cardiac case Lissa is pretty tough. She returns to the Albert Hall to play the strenuous piano part in her own Cornish Rhapsody, after which she faints into the arms of Kit, who is now back in uniform. When she comes to, he whispers, rather belatedly, "Don't be afraid, darling. Let's grasp to-day and the little bit of happiness we can see." He also assures her that doctors can sometimes be wrong, which strikes me as one of the few sensible lines of dialogue in the whole film. The Other Girl sees that Her Love is Hopeless and fades out; and in the finale, there is Lissa on top of a Cornish cliff waving

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