"Marriage": saucy and dramatic

By Jeff Stokes

He met her during an air attack in a place of business. A man of leisure and dignity, he was in the house long after all the others had run half-naked down the street to the public shelter, fixing his tie and combing his hair. All had fled, that is, except one, a shy little seventeen-year-old named Filumena, who was hiding in her room. Don Domenico, pausing her door on his way out, stuck his head in and asked her casually if she were coming to the shelter. Protesting that she was ashamed, she crumpled into a closet. But then he took a good look at her, and the both of them stayed in the house while the bombs leveled it.

Sach is the stormy beginning of a stormy relationship. Domenico, a prospering Italian businessman, returns periodically to make love to his favorite mistress, but she decides she wants something more from him: his name. She wants to be his equal in society, more from him: his name. She wants to be his equal in society, but he keeps her figuratively in the back closet. Not willing to be treated like a maid, she walks out.

Not much later her love-baffled brain conceives a brilliant plan, just as Domenico is about to marry his dimple-cheeked cashier. One day she collapses in the street and is brought to Domenico's house crying, 'Domenico, Domenico!' Both doctor and priest examine her and conclude that she will go to Heaven. 'Now breath, the priest observes, 'Now reluctantly, to do it; and as Filumena when she's not secure and happy. A transparent mixture of comedy and tragedy makes the film quite authentic. Laughter is inevitable in the most serious of relationships, especially when one of the partners is a playboy who never took anything seriously in his life. Blinded by his own lust, he attains into all kinds of hilarious traps, like the indestructible couple in the cartoons that come before. He himself seldom laughs, but we laugh at him, and so does Filumena when she's not mooping or chewing him out.

Although the characters speak in Italian we feel no lack at all, because the English titles are easily read and suit only when necessary. The well-directed film, along with superb performances by Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni, make the movie worth the price of a ticket. There is never a moment of boredom, and if your troubles are other than love, 'Marriage Italian Style' provides a perfect evening's escape.

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