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Hot on the heels of the super-cultish opening of Michelangelo Antonioni's thirteenth feature film, *The Passenger*, comes the release of his first, **Story of a Love Affair** (*Cronaca di un amore*), made in 1950, ten years before *L'Avventura* catapulted Antonioni into guru status for the alienation-and-angst cineastes, but marked by the clear camera eye and fascination with detail that became the hallmarks of his work.

An industrialist hires a private detective for no explicable reason to investigate the past of his young wife after seven years of marriage. The detective learns that the wife had once been interested in the fiancé of a girlfriend

who was killed in an accident. The detective's inquiries lead the fiancé, a man of humble means, to come to Milan to consult with the wife; the two, hitherto kept apart by an unspoken awareness that they had done nothing to prevent the girl's death, begin a passionate affair and, before long, are plotting the death of the financier. And once again external forces — accident? — separate the lovers.

It's a slickly involving tale, made so by Lucia Bose's portrayal of Paola, a woman titillated by immorality and roused to passion by a sense of sin and creating her own melodramas. Essentially, it's the kind of story that would have been tailor-made for Joan Crawford in her heyday. But it's little more than a dressy story about two not very interesting lovers, with perhaps a moral for curious husbands who won't let well enough alone.