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THE LADY VANISHES

(Britain/1938) 96 minutes \$32.50

Directed by Alfred Hitchcock - Screenplay by Sydney Gilliat and Frank Launder, from the novel by Ethel Lina White, adapted by Alma Reville - Cinematography by Jack Cox - Edited by R. E. Dearing and Alfred Roome - Sets Designed by Albert Jullion, Maurice Cater and Alec Vetchinsky - Music by Louis Levy - A Gainsborough Picture - A G.F.D. Release. Players: Margaret Lockwood, Michael Redgrave, Paul Lukas, Dame May Whitty (Miss Froy), Googie Withers, Cecil Parker, Linden Travers, Lary Clare, Naunton Wayne, Basil Radford, Emil Boreo, Zelma Vas Dias, Philippe Leaver, Sally Stewart, Catherine Lacey, Josephine Wilson, Charles Oliver, Kathleen Tremaine.

If I were to pick the Hitchcock film with which I would most like to be stranded on a desert island, *The Lady Vanishes* would win hands down. A sweet, twee-dish elderly British lady vanishes from a train, while crossing the European countryside, shortly after writing her name on a train window for the edification of Margaret Lockwood, who cannot hear the name above the noise of the train. Everyone else on the train swears the dear lady (Dame May Whitty) never existed and Ms. Lockwood is almost at the point of considering herself "bonkers" when she remembers the name on the window. Just as she is pointing it out to Michael Redgrave, a young man with grave doubts about her story but certain designs upon Ms. Lockwood herself, the train goes through a short tunnel and when it emerges, the name (Miss Froy) is gone.

Luckily, the train's doctor (Paul Lukas) comes to her aid with some kind words and a tranquilizing drink to steady her nerves (but why is he wearing those gloves? And what is he doing with those wine glasses?).



Another great espionage film from Hitchcock, it has one of the happiest endings with which he has ever indulged himself. Naunton Wayne and Basil Radford here first unveil their "stiff-upper-lip" British comedy act, which proved so popular with the public and the critics that they duplicated it for Carol Reed's *Night Train to Munich*, Charles Crichton's "golf" episode in *Dead of Night*, and briefly, in *Quartet* and *Passport to Pimlico*.

Regardless of how the film appears to the eye, Hitchcock has said that the picture was made with only one railway coach and one set of transparencies (plus, of course, long shots of actual

passing trains) and that the reason the secret message in the film is carried in Miss Froy's head as a phrase of music, rather than being dispatched by carrier pigeon, was because nobody would care to ride on a train very long with a pigeon. Furthermore, teaching a pigeon to write its name on a train window was out of the question.

Louis Levy is the composer who creates the unforgettable phrase of music for which Miss Froy is kidnapped, and Jack Cox's photography still looks very fine today. *DANE WILSON* -GDIV