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SOMMARNATTENS LEENDE (Smiles of a Summer Night), Sweden, 1955

Cert: X. *dist:* Intercontinental Films. *p.c.:* Svensk Filmindustri. *d. and sc:* Ingmar Bergman. *ph:* Gunnar Fischer. *ed:* Oscar Rosander. *a.d.:* P. A. Lundgren. *costumes:* Mago. *m:* Erik Nordgren. *sd:* P. O. Pettersson. *l.p.:* Ulla Jacobsson (*Anne Egerman*), Eva Dahlbeck (*Desirée Armfeldt*), Gunnar Björnstrand (*Fredrik Egerman*), Margit Carlquist (*Charlotte Malcolm*), Jarl Kulle (*Count Malcolm*), Harriet Andersson (*Petra*), Björn Bjelvenstam (*Henrik Egerman*), Ake Fridell (*Frid*), Naima Wifstrand (*Madame Armfeldt*). 9,450 ft. 105 mins.

Anne Egerman, the young, inexperienced second wife of Fredrik Egerman, a successful lawyer, discovers that her husband has resumed an old liaison with Desirée Armfeldt, a famous actress who is visiting their small provincial town. During a discussion with Desirée about his un-consummated marriage, Fredrik is interrupted and humiliated by Count Malcolm, her present lover. Deciding that she still needs Fredrik, Desirée plans an elaborate intrigue to regain his favour and arranges a house-party at her mother's country mansion. Those invited include Anne, Fredrik and Henrik, his moody disillusioned son (of a former marriage); and Count Malcolm and his wife Charlotte (a proud woman who bitterly resents her husband's indiscretions). The traditional, "symbolic" Swedish summer night affects their destinies in strange and unexpected ways. Anne and Henrik finally realise that they love each other and elope together; Malcolm interrupts a meeting between Fredrik and Charlotte, taunts the lawyer in a game of Russian roulette and, his honour satisfied, returns to his wife; and Desirée successfully re-ensnares the deserted Fredrik. Out in the fields, Petra, Anne's maid, finds her own happiness with Frid, a bucolic groom.

Turning from the contemporary scene to a period comedy of manners, Ingmar Bergman has evoked the spirits of Schnitzler, Wilde and Strindberg in this decidedly Nordic morality play. Manoeuvring his collection of fickle husbands and scheming wives and mistresses with cool, cynical detachment, Bergman delivers his sardonic comments on the vagaries of love mainly through epigrammatic dialogue closely reflecting 19th-century models. Consequently, one is lightly amused without being either emotionally involved or moved by this parade of infidelity. Also, the director's complex personality seems to delight in alternating pain (the handling of the Russian roulette sequence is almost identical with the taunting of the clown in *Gycklarnas Afton*) with moments of tenderness, such as the rapt, silent elopement of the young wife and her step-son in the present film. The fusing together of these varied elements is undeniably assured and there are some lively performances by Eva Dahlbeck as the resourceful mistress and by Gunnar Björnstrand and Jarl Kulle as the husbands. Delicately luminous photography and some stylish decor and set decorations give the film an attractive visual gloss, but this elegant facade fails to disguise its emotional hollowness. One cannot but feel that the facile ending holds little hope for the future happiness of the various couples, for Bergman seems to suggest that love is a distasteful necessity, more suited to mockery than to enjoyment.

Suitability: A.

J.G.

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