



Bride is dead but otherwise cute, funny

By Staff report
The Post and Courier
Thursday, May 1, 2008

Just because you're dead and have a husband who can't stand the sight of you doesn't mean you can't still enjoy your honeymoon.

And chirpy chatterbox Camille Foster, who's gone through her clueless young life trying to make everything happy and right, is determined to get to Niagra Falls, preferably with her gloomy groom, Silas.

Silas (James Franco), on parole from prison and shotgunned into the wedding, is less enamored of the prospect.

Sienna Miller shines in the title role of debut director Gregory Mackenzie's "Camille," an uneven but generally engaging black comedy with a latent thread of sweetness.

The new film, chronicling a bizarre wedding road trip from the Carolinas to the Canadian border, is the featured opening night attraction of the first Charleston International Film Festival.

Camille is as cute as a button, and clearly adores the ground he walks on. She also believes that the love of a good woman will temper this small time thief's bad boy urges. But Silas is more concerned with keeping his new uncle-in-law, Sheriff Foster (Scott Glenn) from sending him back the hoosegow if he fails to make a go of the marriage. It's just that Camille can't shut up, ever, and the idea of a few decades of incessant chat has him ready to climb the walls.

"Everyone's marriage has problems in the first year," the Sheriff confides, after delivering a wake-up punch to Silas' gut. "Your's just happens to be in the first couple of hours."

A funny thing happens after the nuptials. Zipping along the highway in their motorcycle (with sidecar), the couple is run off the road by a truck and thrown violently into thicket. When Silas comes to, he finds Camille's body sprawled contortedly some distance away, a strange glow about her form having dissipated the moment before he arrives. No breath. No heartbeat. Dead.

But when he returns from a frantic attempt to make an emergency 911 call (which he decides against), Silas finds her gone.

Actually, she's just down by the water's edge, wiping away the blood from a severe neck injury but far more concerned about the grass stains on her wedding dress. So off they go again, eventually enlisting the aid of travelling act Cowboy Bob (David Carradine) and his blue-painted horse to get them to their destination. Problem is, Camille is an animated corpse, blissfully unaware of her condition, even when her body starts to decay and, well,

smell.

As if that's not bad enough, the cops are on his track for an imagined robbery and murder.

Desperate, Silas steals some formaldehyde (not the best perfume) to mask the stench and act as preservative. Bob's puzzled.

"She's dead," admits Silas.

"She don't seem too upset about it," avers Bob.

Finally, even the powers of love and obliviousness can't prevent Camille, paler by the hour, from realizing the truth. "I'm dead," she bawls, "And I think that's grounds for separation!"

Will Silas have a change of heart? Will he give the deceased her dream and get her to the Falls in time? What do you think?

Nick Pustay's script sports a number of amusingly droll one-liners and there are clever bits sprinkled throughout this re-imagined (if less farcical) echo of "Weekend at Bernie's." Miller proves her comedic acting chops as the girl who goes from intolerable ditz to lovable cadaver. But these high points must overcome a rather sluggish opening and a few narrative longueurs.

If you can get into the spirit of it, however, Mackenzie's inaugural effort has its portion of wit and charm.

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