

Saving Grace

Every now and then, the British Isles come up with a bit of cinematic whimsy to warm the cockles of hearts on this side of the Atlantic, which whimsy often depends in part on the setting of a picturesque, charming village full of local idiosyncracics (*Cold Comfort Farm*, *The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill...*, *The Full Monty*, *Brassed Off*, *Waking Ned Devine*, etc.). *Saving Grace* is definitely in this tradition and should please folks who appreciate this genre.

Grace Trevethyn (Brenda Blethyn) is a recent widow whose ne'er-do-well husband has died suddenly and left her in the lurch, with no money in the bank and her 300-year old manse on the Cornwall coast ready to be repossessed. To save her house, Grace, an amateur gardener, turns to her own inept gardener Matthew (Craig Ferguson, who also co-wrote the screenplay) to grow enough premium marijuana to sell and save her property. The growing of the crop is indulged by all the locals, and Grace brings a sample to London where, using her husband's ex-mistress Honey (Diana Quick) as a contact, she must confront a smooth Frenchie dealer, Jacques (Tcheky Karyo). But before making a killing and fearing the law, Grace decides to burn her weed, which results in a general doping of the community.

Directed by Nigel Cole and co-written by its producer Mark Crowdy, the picture is sweet but lacks the bite of true satire, provoking more giggles than guffaws. There are distinctive comic moments--like when two local biddies (Phyllida Law and Linda Kerr Scott) get loopy over tea laced with pot--but most of the film's rather gentle tone is set by Blethyn (*Secrets and Lies*, *Little Voice*) who is winning as the once befuddled Grace who eventually learns to stand up for herself. To be honest, the movie's soft-on-drugs message could sour the humor for some viewers. As W.C. Fields liked to say, *Saving Grace* is "a mere bagatelle" but a pleasant one.

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