

Mrs. Palfrey at the Claremont

by *Chris Hirschhorn*

I own the DVD, Mrs. Palfrey at the Claremont, and play it several times a year. It was directed extremely well, the actors are the best and the story grabs the viewer from frame one to the very last frame.

Dame Joan Plowright plays Mrs. Palfrey; an elegant genteel widow. The story starts as she exits from a lorry and with several pieces of luggage enters a residential hotel not far from downtown London. She decided to relocate to the big city where she can easily attend the theater and concerts. Although she phones her grandson, Desmond, he never returns her calls.

One afternoon while walking back to her hotel, she trips and falls. A young Greenwich Village type writer (Rupert Friend) whose flat is one level next to and under sidewalk level, helps her stand up. He brings her down into his flat to bandage her minor leg wound. He prepares tea while she relaxes and looking around views his piles of typed papers on a desk where he writes stories. And NO he hasn't sold any as yet but he is hopeful.

To reciprocate his kindness, she invites him to her hotel for Sunday dinner. And since she has spoken so often to her hotel acquaintances of her grandson, Desmond, they all welcome Rupert as her grandson, Desmond. The residents say he gets his good looks and personality from his grandmother.

Things get confusing when one evening, the real grandson comes to visit. He enters the dining room and Mrs. Palfrey shoos him out whispering that relatives are not permitted in this hotel. The residents ask who was that horrid young man? She says, "My accountant" and they all agree that he looks like an accountant.

As Mrs. Palfrey and Rupert become friends, she tells him of a movie she and her husband loved. He stops by a shop and a young lady is purchasing the shop's 'one copy'. Eventually they become a couple. And they with Mrs. P even go on day excursions together. Everyone is happy.

Then Mrs. P's daughter looking like a storm trooper comes to the hotel demanding to see her mom. Mrs. P relates her interesting life and the daughter is totally furious with her mom's new life style.

After the daughter leaves, Mrs. P is so stressed that she collapses and is hospitalized. Her young friend comes to the hotel, discovers that she is in hospital and rushes over and says he is her grandson, Desmond, and is escorted to her bedside and after chatting, he leaves and returns to his flat to finish his story, "Mrs. P at the Claremont", types it and rushes to her bedside. She has just passed. In the last scene, we see Rupert aka Desmond leaving the hospital and the storm trooper daughter at the main desk shouting: "My son, Desmond, could not have been here, he is at this moment in Scotland."

This story was written by the one and only *Elizabeth Taylor*.