KINONIK

# NOTORIOUS (1946)

## Directed by Alfred Hitchcock

**WEDNESDAY September 30th 7PM**

**SATURDAY October 3rd 2PM / 7PM**

***16mm - B&W - 1h 42m***



Alicia Huberman wakes up in last night's dress with a head like a cracked bell. When she turns over, Hitchcock turns the camera with her, and the man in the doorway swings slowly upright out of a sideways room. He has made her a drink she doesn't want, but she drinks it anyway. Then he unwraps a phonograph record, sets the needle, and she hears her own voice arguing with her father. "We've had your bungalow wired for three months," says Devlin.

The surveillance, ultimately, was a job interview. The record proves she's loyal — "I hate you all, and I love this country," she tells the convicted Nazi who raised her — and loyalty is only half the job. The other half is a talent the men discuss with lowered eyes: "the young lady knows how to make friends with gentlemen." Her father's old associates are in Rio, and Uncle Sam wants to settle unfinished business. She has the name, the manners, the reputation... why waste a woman everyone already assumes is ruined? Whatever the job costs her, she was notorious before they found her.

The shooting script's revision pages are dated January 22, 1946 — the same day Harry Truman signed the directive creating the Central Intelligence Group, forerunner of the CIA. Hitchcock had settled on uranium for his MacGuffin months before Hiroshima, and when he and Ben Hecht asked a Caltech physicist how big an atomic bomb might be, the FBI, by Hitchcock's telling, spent the next several weeks with a keen interest in them. Notorious was written in the same months the permanent secret state came into being, and it understood the terms at once.

The terms are these: their secrets are classified; yours are evidence. Alicia is the most thoroughly documented person in the film and the least informed. Devlin, who has heard the record, tells her nothing, and when she all but begs him to forbid the assignment he fires back with the most Hitchcockian line ever filmed: "A man doesn't tell a woman what to do. A woman tells herself." He's read her file, manipulated circumstance, and delivered her to the door of another man's house; the only thing left for her to decide is whether to walk through it, and that part, he assures her, is entirely hers. And it's a bald-faced lie.

But Hitchcock makes it delicious. At the Sebastians' party the camera starts high above the staircase and floats down through the guests to the key hidden in Bergman's fist, and before anyone in the room, we know. Even the famous balcony kiss — two and a half minutes of Grant and Bergman refusing to let go, broken into pieces to slip past the Production Code's three-second rule — plays like something we're overhearing. We, the audience, are the best-informed agents in Rio. But every glance was placed for us, every secret timed to arrive when Hitch wanted it, and the one thing he's careful to leave us is the feeling that we chose where to look.

We think we're Devlin but really, we're Alicia.