

Review #08 : *Angel Face* (1952)

TRAILER

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBo5WvyBB14>

An emergency medical technician, Mitchum responds to a call at a mansion high up a hill. There a wealthy woman has almost asphyxiated from the gas in her unlit bedroom fireplace. Was it a suicide bid, or something more sinister? Her husband (**Herbert Marshall**), a burnt-out novelist she supports, can't explain it. Neither can his daughter by a previous marriage (**Jean Simmons**).

Mitchum finds Simmons quite the dish, but she finds in him something more than a passing fancy. She jumps into her sleek sportscar, follows the ambulance back down to the hospital and waylays Mitchum in a diner. Generous with his affections, Mitchum breaks a date with his steady girlfriend (Mona Freeman) in order to spend a perfectly 'innocent' evening of dining and dancing with Simmons.



But his experience with fractures and coronaries hasn't equipped him to deal with a dangerously scrambled psyche. Simmons first invites Freeman to lunch so she can humiliate her by spilling all the details of her 'innocent' rendez-vous with Mitchum. Then she arranges for him to take on the job of family chauffeur, installing him in a garage apartment. And she hits up her stepmother to lend Mitchum the money to start up his own business as a car mechanic. Telling himself that he's just looking out for Number One, Mitchum blithely lets her erase any boundaries between them.

When her father and stepmother perish in a spectacular freak accident, the heiress Simmons finds herself charged with murder. As does Mitchum – he had the expertise to sabotage the vehicle. Wily attorney Leon Ames sees the defendants' marriage as the path to acquittal, which leaves Mitchum with a Hobson's choice – risking either the gas chamber or the psychotic wrath of a woman he never loved...

Preminger has a subtle knack of keeping his audience off-balance, never quite sure in which direction the story might develop. The message is clear though: *'Never be the innocent bystander. That's the guy who always gets hurt.'* Opportunistic but lazy, Robert Mitchum's being the perfect disingenuous stooge. He's not quite as innocent as he pretends – but he still ends up getting hurt – while Jean Simmons quite fits the character of a duplicitous vixen scheming to get what she wants. The ending is a blast +++