

## Alfred Hitchcock

Saturday, 1st July 2000

Today I turned sixty and started the latest chapter of my story in this belated and unexpected diary. A chapter devoted entirely to Starr – because nothing else matters any more and a world without her has become unimaginable. Starr Mortenson – my star, just as Dietrich was the star of von Sternberg or Harlow was the star of Capra. Now that I am starting retirement, a time of turmoil has dawned and I can finally give expression, without hesitation or shame, to my most secret dreams. I have always behaved as a docile, patient man, lost among the anonymous spectators of my countless theatres. All my life I have fed on the dreams of others. A kiss was nothing but four lips six feet wide barely touching in close-up, or two gigantic mouths intertwined on a screen in the night. But from today I choose life over the imitation of life. Because from today I consider my life to be the film in which I immortalize, for myself, the fleeting beauty of her thousand faces. With the same passion, the same undisguised desire, the same complicity that Chaplin shows when he takes Paulette Godard by the hand at the end of *Modern Times* and, on a country lane leading to nowhere, turns

his back on what has passed. The infatuation of Rossellini for Ingrid Bergman in *Stromboli*, of Orson Welles for Rita Hayworth in *The Lady of Shanghai* or of Cassavetes for Gena Rowlands in *Love Streams*.

The entire faculty has gathered in the ballet room of the Institute to celebrate Victor Cox's departure and birthday. In his valedictory address, the director did not only talk about his exemplary career. He also praised the professor for the courage and steadfastness he had shown after the dramatic disappearance of his wife. And he ended on a humorous note, mentioning his friendship with Starr, who he said would undoubtedly stay and look after him like a grateful daughter, at which the company burst into hearty, liberating laughter. The Councillor for Culture handed him the medal of the City of Antwerp and a book about Hitchcock, which he had already had on his shelves for ten years.

"As you are retiring," whispers Starr, who is accompanying him at the ceremony, "so will I. You don't think I'm coming back to this crappy school in September if you're not here to lecture."

"OK, but then stay with me for the vacation."

"That's what I was planning. A lifelong vacation without end. Happy birthday, Old Vic!"

Afterwards they toast Victor with sparkling wine, a blanquette de Limoux that Starr refuses to drink, and his colleagues come up one by one to say goodbye. The same way you greet the family after a funeral.

The director: "We'll miss you, Victor. You're irreplaceable."

The professor of theatre studies: "I hope you'll come and see us now and then. If your girlfriend gives her permission!"

The sports teacher: "So what are your plans, old man? Or should I ask Miss Mortenson?"

The elocution teachers: "Life begins at sixty. But I don't need to tell *you* that, it seems."