



Usually in a romance, there is a social barrier lovers must overcome, Romeo and Juliet being the prime example, who believe the only way to rescue their love is to leave the social mores that separate them. But when two misfits, already living on the fringes of society as outcasts, find "true love," it can make us question our own social values. There is a reveal in the film "Maudie," starring Sally Hawkins as Maud Lewis, a disabled castaway, and Ethan Hawke as Everett Lewis, a fish monger, that uncovers a painful emotional barrier created by society that could easily destroy everything Maud has learned about self-worth in her new life on the fringes.

I won't commit a spoiler here. But the barrier is not one between the lovers in this film; it is one perhaps the audience must overcome to accept their love, a word that these two characters never mention as though it was something forbidden or unknown in their world on the fringes.

Directed by Irish Director Aisling Walsh and written by Sherry White, the story follows the real life story of Maud as she walks out on her care-taking aunt Ida (Gabrielle Rose) and her salesman brother Charles Dowley (Zachary Bennett) who treat her like a totally helpless imbecile and a nuisance. As she heads out to make her own way in the world, her first and only attempt is to follow the fish pedlar home from the local store, snatching the ad he has posted for a live-in maid. Challenged by even his dogs and his chickens, she begins to find self-worth scrubbing his floors and cooking for him - all for \$.25/week. Then she picks up a brush in her painfully arthritic hands and discovers the mystery of life, painting images of nature on the dingy walls of Everett's shack, bringing life to herself as well as to this love deprived ignoramus.

Shot by Guy Godfree whose cinematography has made each heartbreaking dramatic moment poetically beautiful, the film is a break away success showing how a lead actress doesn't make it by her looks alone, but by an inner grace that seems foreign to Hollywood.

Sally Hawkins, an unrecognized star over the last decade whose only lead thus far has been as Poppy in Mike Leigh's Happy Go Lucky, for which she won Golden Globe and Silver Bear Awards, currently stars as a lead in two films this summer, the other being in Guillermo del Toro's The Shape of Water, where she plays a mute who has special communications with a Pan Labyrinthian like creature created in a science lab. One could hardly guess that Sally Hawkins used to compete in the butterfly stroke as a swimmer in high school. Known as an actress playing roles that show a shy, trembling totally insecure submissive woman (Happy Go Lucky, An Education, Blue Jasmine), it is a real pleasure to see how she takes the character of Maude from a submissive cripple, both physically and emotionally, to a woman who stands up to all the social taboos, male chauvinism and feminine snobbery, to make a place for herself in the global art world, albeit in light of an inevitable heartrending end. As Oscar season comes around next year, I will be curious to see how this film fares, as Sally Hawkins' performance is truly a thing of beauty.