

# 10 Cloverfield Lane (2016)

Rated PG-13. Running time: 1 hour 43 min.

Our content ratings: Violence 4; Language 2; Sex/Nudity 1.

Our star rating (1-5): 3.5

*Put no trust in a friend, have no confidence in a loved one;*

*Micah 7:5a*

I went to director Dan Trachtenberg's film because I could not get into my preferred one, but now am glad I saw it. Not being a fan of the "found footage" style of filmmaking, I thought this would be just another horror like the first very forgettable [Cloverfield](#). Not so, the new director abandoning the abominable "found footage" format. The film works well as an apocalyptic survival story, something like *War of the Worlds*, but much more suspenseful and scary so that it is of the horror genre rather than the thriller.

Having broken up with her boyfriend, Michelle (Mary Elizabeth Winstead) has hastily packed her bags and set forth in her car, soon leaving the city far behind. Suddenly there is a loud bang, and her car is rolling over after being hit in the side by another vehicle. She wakes up to find her injured knee in a padded brace and her leg chained to the wall. No amount of tugging can free her.

Howard (John Goodman) appears and assures her everything will be all right. He has rescued her and brought her to this shelter to escape the catastrophe that has killed most others. Because she is skeptical he says, "I saved your life, you know! I couldn't just leave you there." She can see stacks of supplies and food, but still does not believe his seemingly crazy story of a poisoned atmosphere. She tries to escape at one point, the pursuing Howard pleading with her that if she

opens the outer door of the airlock, they will all die.

At one point a desperate woman outside pounds on the door to be let in. Part of her face begins to dissolve, this event convincing Michelle that part of what Howard has been telling her is true. Still, he seems creepy to her.

Soon she meets Emmett (John Gallagher Jr.), the handyman who helped Howard build his airtight shelter. He is not too specific about the cause of the outside damage, "Could have been the Russians, aliens, maybe the South Koreans..." "You mean North Koreans?" Michelle asks. "Is that the crazy one? Then yeah."

For a while the three settle down to live the kind of family life that Howard desires. They play board games and help prepare meals from his food stockpile. It is no spoiler to reveal that this does not last long. The suspenseful conclusion of the film's middle section devolves into a thriller of a last act that made me think of the science fiction film based on H. G. Wells tale. The bruised and battered Michelle is one of the pluckiest and inventive heroines to come along since Brie Larson's Ma of *Room*.

There is little hint of faith, either that of the filmmakers or of the three characters. Indeed, there is little character development at all. What we have is a story stripped down to the basics, three very scared people desperately trying to survive in a trying world in which it is just as dangerous in the shelter as it is on the outside. This suspenseful film is best seen in the company of at least one other person, preferably one calmer than yourself.

*This review will be in the April 2016 issue of VP with a set of discussion questions.*