

Monsters Vs. Aliens (2009)

Rated PG Our ratings: V- 2; L- 1; S/N-1 . Running time: 1 hour 32 min.

*May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor.*

Psalms 72:4

In this animated film theGinormica on the center screen defenders of the land are notof the President s command kings but a hand full ofcenter.

monsters that the US gov ernment2009 DreamWorks Animation has rounded up and kept for study and for emergencies—such as the present one in which a large robot lands on Earth. When President Hathaway (Stephen Colbert) tries to communicate via a music console (a delightful take off on Close Encounters of the 3rd Kind) and is unsuccessful, hostilities break out, with the US military sent reeling in defeat. The aliens are led by the evil overlord Gallaxhar (Rainn Wilson) who wants to seize the mysterious substance Quantonium that has transformed the various humans into monsters.

The monsters consist of Susan Murphy (Reese Witherspoon) who on her wedding day was infected by the debris from a meteorite that hit near the church, transforming her into a 50-foot high woman. (Her groom, quickly deciding that the “for better, for

worse" part of their vows is more than he can accept, abandons her!) She has been scooped up by the military and taken to the secret establishment under the command of General W. R. Monger (Kiefer Sutherland). There, renamed Ginormica, she meets her fellow monsters also incarcerated by the government: Dr. Cockroach (Hugh Laurie), the typically mad scientist who was changed into a roach-human hybrid when his experiment went awry; Bicarbonate Ostylezene Benzoate, better known as B.O.B. (Seth Rogen), product of another experiment gone wrong, who is a large blob-like creature; Insectosaurus, who at 350 feet is even taller than Ginormica; and The Missing Link (Will Arnett), who seems modeled after the 1950s Creature from the Black Lagoon. Now that the planet is in peril the government wants to use the "monsters" to combat what it perceives as a greater menace.

Part of the inducement to gain the captives' cooperation is President Hathaway (Stephen Colbert) promise to them of their freedom afterward. What follows is amusing and exciting, especially the spectacular confrontation on the Golden Gate Bridge. The film can be seen as one of female empowerment. Susan had lived in the shadow of her vain and ambitious fiancé, a TV weatherman who had taken little thought of her in his obsession with becoming an anchorman on a national network. Now, as Ginormica the fate of the planet rests on her and her fellow misfits. The film left me wondering how, with their new freedom, this group of outsiders will ever find a place where they can fit in, or will they have to withdraw, like other outsiders such as the X-Men, and find acceptance and support among themselves?

For Reflection/Discussion

1. What is a "monster" according to the society in this film? How is this reflective of real life, our tendency to fear and reject anyone that is out of the ordinary? You might watch

again with this in mind the grand-daddy of monster films, Frankenstein, and, of course, The X-Men 2. What familiar stereotypes do you see in the film?

3. The “monsters” have been rounded up by the US government and kept in an underground installation under the custody of the military: how is this similar to what we did with Japanese-Americans during WW 2? Also, many of the latter gained freedom by enlisting in the Army and serving with great distinction. (I know, this is taking this little film a bit too seriously!)

4. What do you think the relationship was between Susan and Derek before her transformation? How is her fate better than if the wedding had not been interrupted?