

Terminator: Dark Fate (2019)

Reviewed by Markus Watson



Terminator: Dark Fate is the sixth film in the *Terminator* franchise. Unfortunately, the *Terminator* movies seem to have gotten more and more forgettable over the years. In fact, I quite literally had forgotten about the most recent movie, *Terminator: Genisys*, until I googled it for this review! This sixth installment, however, made me feel like there was hope once again for this movie franchise. Which is good news, as this is meant to be the first in a new *Terminator* trilogy.

Sarah Connor is back for this movie, portrayed for the first time since 1991 by Linda Hamilton. Now an angry older woman, Sarah wants revenge for the death of her son John Connor.

The story begins with a flashback to 1998. Having changed the future, Sarah and John are enjoying a vacation in Mexico. Even so, a leftover Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenegger) finds them and shoots John in the chest, killing him.

Fast forward to Mexico, 2019, and we meet what seems to be a female Terminator (Mackenzie Davis) sent from the future. It turns out however, that she is not a Terminator at all; she is

an enhanced human named Grace sent back in time from 2042 to protect Dani Ramos (Natalia Reyes), who is being hunted by a Rev-9 Terminator (Gabriel Luna), also sent back from 2042.

The Rev-9 nearly kills Dani and Grace until—*deus ex machina!*—Sarah Connor appears out of nowhere and blasts the Rev-9 nearly to oblivion. After saving Grace and Dani from the Rev-9, Sarah reveals that she has been receiving texts with a time and location revealing when and where a Terminator will show up. For the past twenty years, Sarah has been following these messages and killing Terminators.

But something doesn't add up. If Sarah and John Connor changed the future, if they ended Skynet—the corporation whose artificial intelligence software became the Terminators we know from the earlier movies—why is Dani now being hunted by a Terminator from 2042? Grace reveals that even though Skynet never happened, a different corporation named Legion (no doubt a nod to the demonic Legion in Mark 5:9 and Luke 8:30) came to power and it is their Terminators that are hunting Dani.

It seems even though Sarah and John changed the future, the world's fate hadn't changed at all.

This is where the film's thematic tension comes into play. To what extent is our fate locked in and to what extent can we change it?

The Rev-9 seems to be indestructible and unstoppable. So they make their way to the source of the texts Sarah has been receiving. That source turns out to be the very Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenegger) who killed her son John. He no longer calls himself a Terminator; now he goes by Carl. He is an old man with a wife and adopted son, and he owns a drapery business. He seems so different now. But can they trust him? Why has he been helping Sarah kill Terminators all these years? Has he truly changed?

Carl says that he *has* changed. After killing John, he no

longer had a purpose. Having no way to get back to his time in the future—a future that, in fact, no longer existed—Carl made a new life. Over time, he realized what he had done. And to the degree that a machine can feel remorse, Carl felt that. Now he wanted to help.

As you might imagine, the team has a big showdown with the Rev-9 Terminator and—you guessed it—the good guys win!

But what do we do with the question of fate? Is our fate locked in? Is change truly possible? Maybe the future can't be changed—or can it? What about individuals? Can we, like Carl, become something new?

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