

The Salesman (2016)

Rated PG-13. Running time: 2 hours min.

Our content ratings: Violence 3; Language 2; Sex/Nudity 2.

Our star rating (1-5): 5

The righteous will rejoice when they see vengeance done;
they will bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked.

Psalm 58:10

*Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the
wrath of God;*

*for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the
Lord.'*

Romans 12:19

It is unfortunate that Iranian director/writer Asghar Farhadi, who in 2011 gave us *A Separation*, was prevented by international politics from accepting his Oscar for *The Salesman*. At least he was able to receive in person the Oscar for his 2011 film. His new film, paying tribute to the American drama *Death of a Salesman*, is a powerful study of vengeance and its effects on a group of residents of present day Tehran.

The married Emad (Shahab Hosseini) and Rana (Taraneh Alidoosti) Etesami hastily leave their apartment when it appears that the building is close to collapsing. Their friend offers them another apartment but fails to inform them that its former occupant was forced to leave because she practiced the "world's oldest profession." She has left behind many of her possessions in a storage closet, but has refused to come and remove them. The couple, members of an amateur drama

troupe, have been rehearsing a scene from Arthur Miller's 1949 Pulitzer Prize-winner, the husband playing Willy Loman, and his wife playing Linda.

The play recedes in importance when a former client of the woman sneaks into the apartment one night while Amad is away and Rana is taking a shower—she had pressed the admittance buzzer believing that it was her husband. The stranger sexually assaults her, but she fights back, injuring his foot in the process. He flees, leaving splotches of his blood behind. The enraged Rana wants to call the police, but Rana is so traumatized that she cannot bare to go through the humiliating interrogation process.

Amad is a high teacher, well-liked by his students, but Rana is now so fearful that she does not want him to leave her alone in the apartment. Feeling guilt that he had not been able to protect her, he goes back to their old apartment, where he finds some clues that will set him forth on an obsessive search for the rapist. This leads to a third act that is as powerful as any that I have seen regarding the passionate desire to extract vengeance and a plea to “let it go.” Little wonder that Shahab Hosseini has won acting awards in Europe for his portrayal of the aggrieved husband, and the film so many awards. We see the opposing sentiments of the two Scriptures quoted above embodied in both the husband and the wife in this memorable film. Do not let the subtitles keep you from seeking out this striking film.

This review with a set of questions will be in the Nov. 2016 issue of VP.

Amazon Studios

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1967614/?ref_=nv_sr_1