

# Wild Tales (2014)

(Spanish with English subtitles)

Rated R. Running time: 2 hours 2 min.

Our content ratings (1-10): Violence 7; Language 5; Sex/Nudity 1.

Our star rating (1-5): 5

So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!

And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell.

James 3:4-6

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

Leviticus 19:18

Do not say, "I will do to others as they have done to me; I will pay them back for what they have done."

Proverbs 24:29

You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.

Matthew 5:38-41

See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.

### 1 Thessalonians 5:15

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." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

### Romans 12:

Argentinean writer/director Damian Szifron's Oscar nominated film would be a good one for therapists to use with patients coping with anger management. The six stories in the film are about different characters with one thing in common (beside their nationality)—the quick rise of anger when provoked and the giving in to the thirst for vengeance. In each case this results in disaster for both the enemy and the one who wants to get even. This is such a universal theme that I have provided more than the usual number of related Scriptural passages out of a desire that you watch this cautionary film, even though it is subtitled.

The first tale really is wild and seemed like a dark comedy—until a few days after I saw it and watched on TV the news report of the German copilot who apparently crashed his airliner on purpose in the French Alps. In the fictional story a woman and a man, while talking across the aisle of an airliner, discover that they both know a man who had sent them a free ticket. He had been the man's teacher and served on a jury that rejected his musical composition in a cruel way. She had been the man's lover, their relationship ending when she had cheated on him. Soon the other surprised passengers are speaking up, each confessing to have known and wronged the man. Then the pilot's voice is heard over the intercom. He is

the *man*, and they are not flying in friendly skies!

The second tale is smaller in scale but just as dark and deadly. A waitress at a roadside café recognizes a rude customer as the man indirectly responsible for her father's death years before. When she reveals this to the cook, the older woman takes from a cabinet a can of rat poison. The waitress doesn't want to put it into his food, but during the next few minutes the man is so obnoxious that she consents. Then the customer's teenaged son joins his father and eats some of the food from his plate. The waitress...

The third tale is also small in scale, but even more physically brutal and bloody when a man in an expensive car tries to pass a driver ahead of him, and the slow driver weaves back and forth to prevent him. When he finally is able to pull alongside to pass, he yells at the road hog and gives him the finger. This leads later to a deadly confrontation hard to watch, the very last frame of the ending reminding me of a grotesque image from *The Day of the Dead* or one of those cautionary Renaissance paintings with a skull reminding the view of our eventual fate.

The moral of the fourth story could be "Don't mess with a guy whose job is to demolish old buildings with dynamite. Given a ticket when he parks in an unmarked space while picking up a cake for his daughter's birthday, the man is enraged when the cold clerk at the traffic office will not listen to his protest that the space had not been marked by yellow paint. As the man's marriage and life falls apart and another visit to the municipality's office finds no one interested in his plea for justice, the man's rage drives him to an act of vengeance.

In the fifth story a wealthy man, assisted by his lawyer, haggles with a corrupt official investigating the spoiled son who has hit a pedestrian and did not stop. The overly indulgent father has persuaded his gardener to take the blame by offering him a large amount of money, so after a

complicated negotiation with the official and the greedy lawyer (each wants as much money as they can extract) everything seems set. They go out together to talk to the press gathered at the edge of the estate, but then...

The last story has to be one of the most bizarre wedding reception sequences ever filmed. Everything is going well for the loving couple until the bride spots a lovely woman from her husband's office. Suspicious of the way the woman is looking at them, she makes clever use of her husband's cell phone, discovering that the two have been carrying on an affair. She erupts like a volcano in front of everyone, there following a series of events that just when you think things might get completely out of hand, turns in another direction. A wild tale indeed!

Wild, unpredictable, funny in some cases, the tales are all parables that warn us about the tongue, our anger, and our desire to get even. They show that no enemy is able to harm us more than we harm ourselves by our stupidity and stubbornness. Old Shakespeare was right, "What fools these mortals be."

*The review with a set of discussion questions will be in the April Visual Parables.*