

Winter's Bone

by Sister Lorie - Wednesday, August 18, 2010

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I was curious when scanning the local theater offerings to find a movie that was not on my radar. Reading the first few lines of the synopsis, I became curiouiser and curiouiser. The film was shot in Southwest Missouri, directed by a woman and winner at Sundance. My hubby, being of a good nature, often lets me drag him to the latest movie that I want to see. But he does tend to like little known, artsy and foreign films. We have an agreement that certain percentage of rentals must be in English.

It's sometimes a fluid agreement depending on who was on the Blockbuster site last.

Trundling the mega combo to our seats, the film opens in winter in the Ozarks. Now, this is the largest hardwood forest in North America, so one would think that it's lush green and inviting. True in the spring summer, not true in winter. Winter in the Ozarks displays all the monochromatic harshness of a moonscape. Here is where we meet our 'might be' girl, Ree. You know the type. You see a young girl that might be pretty if she was 'fixed up'. She might be somebody if she can escape her surroundings.

The Sheriff comes to talk to Ree's mother, who is medicated and nearly catatonic. Mom is not much on conversation, so he gives Ree the news. Dad has failed to appear in court. Dad put up the family place as bail and they will be homeless in a week. Not only does the 17 year old Ree have her mother to take care of, but two younger siblings as well.

Ree is determined to keep her family together. To accomplish this, she must she must find her father or his remains. Her family has a marginal existence at best. Dad cooks crank as do most of the folks around. She starts her journey navigating the labyrinth of relations, junkies and dregs of backwoods forgotten society.

While the tale of young girl setting out in the world to save the family is not new (True Grit comes to mind), this is a unflinching, unapologetic view of a subculture that most of us have little or no contact with. The adults have the visage of the carved apple doll heads and the kindness of a scorpion.

The direction is solid and no frills. The story is good. There isn't a happy ending, no one wins the Lotto and moves to Beverly Hills. If you find this showing in your area, it's worth the price of the ticket.

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