



The Source

Autumn
Season
2013

Release: 2012

Cert (UK): 15

Runtime: 135mins

Directors: Radu Mihaileanu

Cast: Leïla Bekhti, Hafsia Herzi and Biyouna



The director won many awards with *Live and Become* and *The Concert* and the cast brings together several actresses from other acclaimed films: the main actress, Leïla Bekhti, starred in *A Prophet*, Hafsia Herzi in *The Secret of the Grain*, and Hiam Abbass is probably best known for her roles in *The Visitor* and *Lemon Tree*. However, it is Algerian legend Biyouna who steals the show as the redoubtable Madame Rifle.

It is a story set in a remote North African village (the country is not named in the film). The village depends on income from visiting tourists and there is little work for men there, unless they move to the city. This poverty also means that the village does not have a central water supply. Instead, they rely on a water source atop a steep hill, the fetching of which is seen solely as women's work, despite the fact that women have injured themselves and suffered miscarriages due to having to carry such heavy burdens.

The Source manages to tackle the story with great wit and humour. It has well-rounded characters, female and male, whose actions the plot allows you to understand, even if you don't always sympathise with them. Whilst it would be easy to have the men as lazy, two-dimensional chauvinists they are instead given time to speak and provide an insight into their behaviour. Likewise, the film shows religion as being both a tool of oppression, with the men suggesting taking other wives to punish the women; and liberation, with the women turning to the Qur'an to put their case forward. In a cinematic world that tends to either have Islam the marvellous or Islam the terrible and Muslim women as either oppressed victims or saintly angels of the homestead, it is incredibly refreshing to see both sides interacting in a manner that many Muslim women watching will be able to relate to.

The film is impressive to look at – shots are wonderfully composed without ever looking contrived and the singing featured throughout the film manages to be beautiful and often very funny.