



Cameo

Peter Jackson appears in the film for one scene in a pharmacy. Can you spot him?

14 year old Susie Salmon is trapped in the in-between, sent there by a man in her neighborhood who had coaxed her to a secret place and murdered her. Based on the novel by Alice Sebold and directed by Peter Jackson The Lovely Bones is the tale of life and death, consequence, and love.

As someone who had never read Alice Sebold's The Lovely Bones novel I can only assume that the book is far greater than the film which is slow, often times frustrating, and in some moments seemingly pointless. At the start of the film there is promise as subtly plays a background lingering role; where is the killer amongst the thrall of mall shoppers, the somewhat vivid in-between world and its odd shapes of significance, extremely subtle moments of foreshadowing. The promise is there that Jackson's vision will be a deep thought provoking one which unfortunately unravels fast.

As in all films, especially this one, there is some need for character development which is stunted here. Jackson attempts to create more of a realist feel to the film by making Mark Wahlberg and Rachel Weisz, Susie's parents, despicably vulnerable and incompatible after her death. The inclusion of Susan Sarandon as the comic relief is utterly pointless and Saoirse Ronan, whose shoulder carry half of the film's weight is flat and uninvolved. The only real life in the film is that of Stanley Tucci's George Harvey. Tucci creates a methodical monster who is given no shelter in which to hide his guilt and as such you can only be frustrated to great lengths by his ability to play the part where his actions manifest great care in hiding his dark side. Again the unfortunate design in which Jackson creates his vision is mostly that of reflection and very little character development which leaves only human sympathy for the obvious and no room for personal investment.

Aside from story the trailers elude to a world unlike ours. A place somewhat like a heaven where Susie is confined and imagination seems to point us in the direction of such artistic vision as Tarsem Singh's The Fall or Vincent Ward's What Dreams May Come. The disappointment is the similarities to that of Ward's What Dreams May Come; bright colors, the likeness in symbolisms such as worldly objects given otherworldly qualities and working as ties between the real world and the in-between and tree's holding metaphorical meanings. The in-between seems to borrow an awfully lot in order to exist but while Ward managed to create a beautiful world fleshed out to co-exist with the boundaries of our imaginations Jackson's in-between is ugly and unrealistic given its green screen CGI qualities. Susie's definition runs in contrast with the world looking at times as if she has been superimposed in the scene rather than offering a fluid take on her existence there. In the end I was simply disappointed. Too many long drawn out overdramatic sequences, not enough substance, and the film's conclusion a given rather than a fruitful reward for having spent those frustratingly horrific two plus hours in the theater trying to find a silver lining in a film lacking depth and finesse. As always final judgment is yours.

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