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The Weekend Warrior: August 26 - 28

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Circumstance (Roadside Attractions)

Starring Nikohl Boosheri, Sarah Kazemy, Reza Sixo Safai, Soheil Parsa, Nasrin Pakkho, Sina Amedson, Keon Mohajeri

Written and directed by Maryam Keshavarz (debut)

Genre: Drama

Rated R

Tagline: "Let No Love Fall Victim To..."

Plot Summary: Two 16-year-old girls from different social classes in Iran—Atafeh and Shireen—have fallen hopelessly in love with each other as they traverse the underground youth culture of parties, sex and drugs, but the way things are in the city, it's only so long before they're forced apart.

This is another movie I saw at this year's Sundance Film Festival—in fact it was the very last movie I saw before leaving Park City this year. It was a film that really blew me away, not just because it was a directorial debut of a new woman filmmaker who clearly has a lot of talent, but also because it's an incredibly original take on a typical teen drama mainly due to its locale.

It's a film that starts out at a fairly slow but deliberate pace as it introduces two teen friends who seem just like other girls, although they come from different class systems in Iran, where the divide between



wealthy and the poor is far more prominent than elsewhere. Like most girls their age, they just want to be able to go out and have fun, drinking and dancing with their friends but they live in a society where women are forced into subservient roles where they're forced to shroud themselves in a burka. Women are marginalized and forced to live as inferiors to men while constantly under the gaze of the morality police. There's also more to the two girls' relationship as we'll find out later, but Atafeh's older brother Mehran has his own problem with drugs, so he chooses to exorcise his demons by throwing himself into his worship of Allah and becoming an informant for the police, essentially spying on his own family. He eventually saves Shireen from being

jailed for "immorality" by strong-arming her into marrying him, something that causes a bigger rift between the two friends.

Maryam Keshavarz works within the confines of a fairly small cast to tell a fairly expansive story about Iranian society as a whole, her film simultaneously exploring the relationship between daughter and father, sister and brother and the relationship between two close friends and eventually lovers. The performances are solid all around but the two young actresses, both making their debut, are especially fantastic, having an incredible chemistry that makes their relationship believable as it evolves with the hurdles thrown their way.

Keshavarz's debut is incredibly cinematic with many moments that are made more haunting by the way its filmed and her choice in music. The results are an incredibly unique look at Iran through the eyes of two young women trapped in a society that doesn't allow them to express their individuality as we see what they must go through in order to gain their freedom.

Circumstance shows an incredibly strong capability for storytelling normally seen only from filmmakers far more experienced than Keshavarz; one can only imagine that whatever she does next will have an equally impressive impact.

Rating: 8/10