PRESENTS

THE PATIENCE STONE

A FILM BY ATIQ RAHIMI
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SYNOPSIS:

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Somewhere, in Afghanistan or elsewhere, in a country torn apart by a war... A beautiful woman in her thirties watches over her husband in a decrepit room. He is reduced to a vegetative state because of a bullet in the neck, and not only is he abandoned by his companions of the Jihad, but also by his brothers. One day, the woman starts a solitary confession to her silent husband. She talks about her childhood, her suffering, her frustrations, her loneliness, her dreams, her desires... She touches him, kisses him, things she could never have done before, even though they have been married for the past 10 years. Therefore, this paralysed man unconsciously becomes ‘syngué sabour’, a magic stone which, according to Persian mythology, when placed in front of a person shields him from unhappiness, suffering, pains and miseries.

In this wait for her husband to come back to life, the woman struggles to survive and live. She finds refuge in her aunt’s place, who is a prostitute, and the only relative who understands her. The woman seeks to free herself from suffering through the words she delivers audaciously to her husband. But after weeks looking after him, she will actually reveal herself in the relationship she starts with a young soldier...

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION:

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I asked Jean-Claude Carrière to adapt my book Syngué sabour, he said: “What are you expecting from me?” - “Betray me!” I answered. It wasn’t said in provocation but with cinematographic vocation. Because what is exciting and challenging for a writer-director, is finding a way to exceed one’s own book to show and say in his film all the things he didn’t manage to write using words. The book’s central idea is the myth of Syngue Sabour, the patience stone, a stone on which you can shed your misfortunes, your complaints, your secrets until it’s so full it bursts. In this story, the stone is the husband, a warrior paralysed by a bullet in the neck. The woman, to bring him back to life, has to pray from morning till night for 99 days. But that prayer soon turns in to confession. She murmurs in to his ear all the things she has kept locked inside her for so many years.

Like in my previous books, the characters evolve in extreme circumstances and in a single decor. But our adaptation primarily consists in moving away from this theatrical situation, by deconstructing the Romanesque narrative to arrive at a purely cinematographic dramaturgy. We thus changed the narrative point-of-view. By following the woman’s point-
of-view, the camera permits itself to leave the bedroom, to follow the main character out of the house, in to the streets of Kabul, in to the heart of the war. The camera is mobile, light, wandering, like in Rosselini’s “Germany, year zero”, giving the impression of capturing situations on the spur of the moment. On the other hand, the interior scenes where sensuality, intimacy, dreams and phantasms, memories, regrets, remorse... prevail and haunt our heroine’s mind, the camera will harmonize itself to the rhythm of the characters emotions and very breaths. Supple, gracious, sensual, the camera slides through the bedroom, through the woman’s intimate world, like a confidante, an accomplice.

The contrast between the two worlds, outside/inside, social/intimate, war/love... will, in terms of lighting, be interpreted by contrasting images; the crude exteriors, and those, soft and veiled, of the interior where the woman is lit like a source of light and colour, as can be seen in the miniature Persian carpets. The film is also structured by passages leading from the present to the past, making the narration nonlinear. However, the woman’s memories are not depicted with systematic and arbitrary flash backs. It is always the elements and the situations from the present that introduce us in to the past.

Like, for example, the combat scene between the combat quails that the heroine perceives in the streets of Kabul, not only does this scene reflect what the character lived during her childhood, but progressively transforms itself in to her own memory. Just like the wedding party in the whorehouse that reincarnates our main character’s wedding... rendering these flash backs more poetical than technical. This is how characters in the book, that only exist through the memories and stories told by the woman, come to life. Like the aunt who is an initiating character in the life of our heroine, or her father, a breeder of combat quails.

**BIOGRAPHIES:**

**Atiq Rahimi – Director / Co-writer**

Atiq Rahimi was born in Kabul. He fled Afghanistan in 1984 after the Soviet Union invaded his country, and found political asylum in France, where he studied film at the Sorbonne. He adapted his debut feature, *Earth and Ashes* (04), from his bestselling novel of the same name. *The Patience Stone* (12) is his second feature.

He leapt to international prominence with the publication in 2002 of his book *Earth and Ashes*, which he adapted into a prize-winning film that screened at the Festival in 2004. Eight years later, he returns with *The Patience Stone*, adapted from his novel of the same name, which won the illustrious Prix Goncourt in 2008. Set in an unnamed Middle Eastern country beset by armed insurrection, Rahimi’s second film is a probing, poetic and politically charged allegory that employs a deceptively simple scenario to address the plight of modern-day Muslim women who are still ruled by archaic laws and traditions.

**Golshifteh Farahani – Lead Actress / Woman**

Golshifteh Farahani (born in Tehran) is an acclaimed Iranian actress. She is the daughter of actor/theatre director Behzad Farahani and sister of actress Shaghayegh Farahani. Golshifteh started studying music and playing the piano at the age of 5. At 12, she entered a music school in Tehran and after graduation, was accepted at the Vienna Conservatory. At the age of 14 she was cast as the lead in Dariush Mehrjui’s *The Pear Tree* for which she won
the Crystal Simorgh for Best Actress from the International Section of the 16th Fajr International Film Festival in Tehran.

The win contributed to her decision to stay in Iran and choose a career in film over music. She never boarded the plane to Vienna. Since then she has acted in 16 films, many of which have received international awards. For Boutique she won the Best Actress award from the 26th Nantes Three Continents Festival (France). In recent years she has acted in movies by some of Iran's best directors: Dariush Mehrjui's controversial film Santoori, Bahman Ghobadi's Half Moon (winner of the Golden Shell at the 2006 San Sebastian Film Festival) and the late Rasool Mollagholipoor's M for Mother (Iran's nominee for the 2008 Academy Awards for the Best Foreign Language Film category) for which she won the special prize of the jury for the Best Actress from the 37th Roshd International Film Festival.

CAST:

Woman: GOLSHIFTEH FARAHANI
Young Soldier: MASSI MOWRAT
Man: HAMID DJAVADAN
Aunt: HASSINA BURGAN

CREDITS:

Director: ATIQ RAHIMI
Writers: JEAN – CLAUDE CARRIERE
Production: ATIQ RAHIMI
Co-Production: THE FILM
Studio 37
CORNICHE GROUP
RAZOR FILM
ART FRANCE CINEMA
JAHAN-E-HONAR PRODUCTIONS
Producer: MICHAEL GENTILE
Executive Producer: HANI Farsi
Co-Producer: GERHARD MEIXNER & ROMAN PAUL
Associated Producer: LAURaine HEFTLER
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