



Sean Young plays twin sisters, one murdered by Matt Dillon and the other bent on proving it, in "A Kiss Before Dying."

Script is a kiss of death for 'A Kiss Before Dying'

What do you get when you mix good actors with a thin script, weak direction and a thriller without tension? Writer-director James Dearden's deservedly little seen 1991 film "A Kiss Before Dying."

Matt Dillon plays a young man from the wrong side of the tracks, literally. We see him as a small boy staring out the window of his modest home as the trains rumble by. The story flashes forward to find him as a preppy looking student on the University of Pennsylvania campus.

It would seem things are going well for Dillon, he has a stylish blonde fiancée, played by Sean Young, the daughter of a wealthy industrialist. But he seems obsessed with keeping their relationship a secret, reminding Young that her father used a private investigator to check into her last boyfriend.

Young, who leaves him waiting while she stops to buy news shoes that better match her outfit, makes it clear that part of what attracts her to Dillon is that marrying him will aggravate her father.

Well, Dillon certainly doesn't want to aggravate his future father-in-law and he really doesn't want to marry a disinterested heiress. Break off the engagement or try to smooth things over with dad? Nah. Dillon uses a rooftop terrace at a high rise, deserted for lunch hour, to resolve his romantic entanglement.



pass the popcorn

LeAnne Rogers

THE ILL-FATED heiress has a twin sister, played by a dark-haired Sean Young, who doesn't agree with the police conclusion that her sister committed suicide. I mean really, who buys brand new shoes on the way to kill herself.

Young starts trying to prove that her sister was murdered: Her prime lead ends up dead while she waits for him in his car. End of story and Young goes back to her life as a social worker in New York.

Dillon also turns up in New York, with a new identity and Young as his new girlfriend. You never see how this relationship came about but apparently they worked together. Unlike her twin, this sister wants a man with social conscience and commitments so that's what Dillon is offering this time.

After three murders, Young starts thinking that there is something fishy with her new husband but nobody else seems to see a pattern. That's probably because there is no real threat or menace even implied in Dillon's character. He's

kind of smarmy and definitely a liar, which also goes pretty much unnoticed.

Even as he is dispatching people who could tie him to the first murder, you don't get any idea there's a chance he'll get caught. The police aren't looking for any suspects, leaving only Young's half-hearted investigation efforts.

DIRECTOR Dearden can't handle even the most heavily used tension builders. During one of his crimes, a hotel bellman passes the door without even a suggestion that he might interrupt the murder.

Beyond its lack of suspense, "A Kiss Before Dying" is also incredibly shallow. There is no effort to provide any more than the flimsiest development for the characters or their motivations.

The cast, which also includes Max Von Sydow as Young's father and Diane Ladd as Dillon's mother, use their own skills to create what hints of characterization exist in the film.

STREET SENSE

Therapy can expose reality

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I am interested in your answers to these questions and hope I haven't insulted you by poo-pooing therapy. I just feel that for too much emphasis is put on it.

Thank you.

B.

Dear B,
Thank you for writing this letter. You have brought up many fascinating issues. I welcome the opportunity to discuss them.

First, these are terrible tragedies you have lived through. Your response is courageous.
Second, I want to address your observations and questions about therapy. It is with good reason that many people believe, as you do, that therapy is a place where people who make excuses for their feelings are supported and babied. Too often therapy is done this way albeit by well-intentioned, good-hearted therapists.

Your comments make me think that you know people who have been pandered to in therapy, and that you do not know the others, those whose eyes have been opened so they can no longer lie to themselves. At its best, therapy allows truth and reality to surface. It does not give safe haven to lies, rationalizations and excuses.

That does not mean that therapy is for everyone. Many people are adequately reality-bound and invigorated to cope without professional help. Often it is the support from friends and family that makes this possible. But for others, there are deficient coping skills and/or so horrible a reality that feelings of peace are not possible.

In your situation, the reality is so traumatic that it is expected that help would be required. If you suffered a physical trauma, you would

not hesitate to seek medical help even though you are well educated and self-sufficient.

You have partially answered your first question yourself. You cannot remember the murder scene because the memories are traumatic. They are so traumatic that you fear the feelings they might cause. By blocking out the memories you are able to avoid these feelings. But the mind works in such a way that it also keeps trying to solve problems.

Thus the memories threaten to emerge so that they can be resolved, and at the same time, your mind defends against them (and the feelings they would cause) by forgetting. This is one of the paradoxes all of us must live with. You cannot feel relief until you can fully recover these memories and resolve the feelings they will cause.

I understand your negative attitude regarding therapy. Many people begin therapy with such an attitude, but as time goes on and when they find someone they can trust, then that attitude vanishes as they are coping better with life. Therapy provides a safe place where the frightening feelings I have been talking about can surface. When this happens, people find welcome relief. As friends see them, functioning more effectively, they want that relief.

Your belief that people can find the answers they need if they will expend adequate effort is inaccurate. No one of us possesses the objectivity required to accomplish this task. No matter what you think to yourself, until you speak it to another, it is not reality. As I have said, sometimes a friend can provide this, but in your case, the trauma requires a well-trained professional. You and your therapist would not be strangers to each other for long.

You are right not to lie to your



Barbara Schiff

daughter. If you can come to a resolution with this, then she will, too. She will process the information as you do.

Again, I understand how you feel, how frightening it must be to you to understand a part of your experience that have been so tragic. I sincerely wish that you could do it yourself, but just like the Vietnam War veterans who suffer from post-traumatic shock disorder, you need help facing these horrid memories.

Thank you for having the courage to express how you feel in your letter. I am not insulted that you have expressed misgivings about therapy but rather I appreciate your honesty. I look forward to some later communication from you to help our readers work through their own problems, with help when necessary.

Barbara

If you have a question or comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained therapist and experienced counselor, send it to Street Sense at 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

Smirnoff readies for trip to CIS

Russian emigre-comedian Yakov Smirnoff, will be returning to his homeland, and the heart of the U.S. State Department, but not before a two-night engagement at the Mainstreet Comedy Showcase in Ann Arbor, Thursday and Friday.

Smirnoff will act as a goodwill ambassador, escorting a shipment of food and supplies to the Commonwealth of Independent States at month's end.

Because of the problems in properly distributing the supplies, Smirnoff's goal is to organize Russian youth to help make sure items intended for hospitals and facilities for children end up there rather than on the black market.

The disarray in distribution and widespread corruption has necessitated providing observers like Smirnoff to escort donations from private

and U.S. government relief organizations all the way to the intended users.

This will mark the second time Smirnoff has returned to his homeland since leaving with his parents in 1978.

A native of Odessa, Ukraine, Smirnoff made a comedic name for himself in what was then the Soviet Union working on Black Sea cruise ships and in concerts throughout the country. But with his success came government attention, and he jokes that his material had to be "scrutinized annually by the Department of Jokes."

Naturalized a U.S. citizen in 1986 during the re-dedication ceremonies for the Statue of Liberty, Smirnoff broke into comedy in the U.S. when he performed at open-microphone night at the Comedy Store in Los Angeles in 1979.

By 1984, he was appearing at major comedy clubs throughout the U.S. and showing up in commercials for Best Western Hotels and Miller Lite. He also had a co-starring role in the syndicated comedy series "What a Country!" and appeared with Robin Williams in the film "Moscow on the Hudson."

He didn't return to his homeland until 1991 when he kicked off his "Moscow to Moscow (Idaho)" world tour. The trip included performances in several European countries and resulted in a one-hour Showtime special, "Yakov Smirnoff from Moscow to Idaho."

Smirnoff will be performing at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m. both nights at the Mainstreet Comedy Showcase, 314 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Reserve tickets are \$22.50 each and are available by calling 996-9080.



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