

Parents fight to retrieve adopted child in thriller

Russell Clifton (Vincent Spano) and his wife Dana (Mira Kelly) appear to have the perfect life. They're an attractive, successful couple in their 30s with a stable and loving relationship. But one thing's missing—a child with whom to share their love.

Unable to conceive a baby of their own, they visit an adoption agency and are immediately bewitched by the beautiful and

mysterious young Janie (Julia Devin). It is as though this adorable child chooses them, and they are completely enamored of the shy 6-year-old girl.

But the truth is Janie already has a set of parents: the Netherwoods, Leann (Dary Hannah) and John (Keith Carradine), who are drifters and dangerous criminals. After a burglary went awry, John and Leann were forced to

take flight and leave their daughter behind.

Now, as Russell and Dana welcome Janie into their home, the new family's happiness is threatened by the specter of the child's biological parents.

Just as an semblance of domesticity begins to form at the Cliftons, the Netherwoods reappear to claim what is theirs. Having vowed to find their daughter, John and Leann will stop at nothing—including murder. And now Russell and Dana are forced to fight for their lives to protect their daughter. In Hollywood Pictures' suspense drama "The Tie That Binds," now playing at metro Detroit movie theaters.

Inspired by several celebrated cases in which adopted children were removed from happy homes

and returned to biological parents, screenwriter Michael Auerbach recalled "The Tie That Binds."

"It started with news stories about the Baby Jessica case," Auerbach recalls. "Then I read an article in 'Atlantic Monthly' magazine called 'Problems Adoptions,' which outlined the problems associated with adopting older children—the psychological adjustment that parents and children have to go through. From those two sources, the scenario for this movie evolved."

The screenplay that developed from Auerbach's initial agenda to "write a scary little thriller" was a

script that also probed important issues about adoption and birth rights.

At the same time—through the horror of events that unfold in the screenplay—it explores some of the issues of the nature of what a family is, and what makes a good parent. Can a mother and father who aren't socially acceptable, or who live outside the law, still be responsible parents?

The writer of such popular thrillers as "Wolf" and "Cape Fear" Wesley Strick was considering a number of projects with which to make his feature film directing debut.

He selected "The Tie That Binds" because "the script dealt with issues of loyalty to one's child, and the idea that this loyal-

ty transcends any barrier, which is something I think all parents can identify with."

"I'm interested in the darkness of human behavior as well as redemption," he continues. "To my mind, there's no hero who isn't in some way villainous or capable of villainy when driven to it. And likewise, there's no villain who doesn't have his reasons. The idea that decency is always tinged with amorality and darkness, and that darkness always has some component of light and the possibility of redemption to it, is fascinating. Even the so-called 'good couple' in the film is forced to descend to a certain level of savagery. They must strike back in the most violent way they can in order to survive."

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