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Entrepotdok 66
1018 AD Amsterdam
t. 020 – 627 9501
www.cinemien.nl
info@cinemien.nl

ABC Film Distribution

Kaasstraat 4
2000 Antwerpen
t. 03 – 231 0931
www.abc-distribution.be
info@abc-distribution.be

presenteren / présente:

PERSONAL VELOCITY

een film van/ un film de Rebecca Miller

- Dramatic Competition Grand Jury Prize Award
- Excellence in Cinematography Award - Ellen Kuras
- Sundance Film Festival 2002



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PERSONAL VELOCITY - Synopsis (NL)

Personal Velocity is een drieluik dat drie prachtige vrouwelijke karakters neerzet op cruciale momenten in hun leven.

Delia (Kyra Sedgwick) realiseert zich in haar pubertijd dat ze haar lichaam kan gebruiken om mannen naar haar hand te zetten. Hoewel het haar een gevoel van macht geeft in haar verder problematische leventje, bezorgt het haar ook de naam van "class slut". Uiteindelijk trouwt ze klasgenoot Kurt (David Warshofsky). Nu is ze volwassen, heeft ze kinderen, en wordt ze door haar man mishandeld. Delia staat op het punt hem te verlaten.

Greta (Parker Posey) is de dochter van een succesvol advocaat, die haar moeder al vroeg heeft verlaten en die Greta meer kritiek dan liefde heeft meegegeven. Geplaagd door onzekerheid, verwaarloost Greta haar schrijverstalent met het het redactievoeren over kookboeken. Als een gerespecteerd en succesvol auteur (Joel de la Fuente) Greta vraagt hem te helpen bij zijn nieuwe boek, realiseert Greta zich door het plotselinge succes in haar leven hoe uitgekeken ze eigenlijk is op haar echtgenoot Lee (Tim Guinee).

Ook Paula (Fairuza Balk) is een jonge vrouw die is opgegroeid in een gebroken gezin. Weggelopen bij haar moeder is ze dakloos tot ze Vincent (Seth Gilliam) leert kennen, die haar in huis neemt en haar vriendje wordt. Nu een jaar later, is Paula niet zeker van haar gevoelens voor Vincent, van wie ze zwanger blijkt. Verward na het getuige zijn van een brutale moord stapt ze in haar auto en gaat er vandoor. Ze pikt een liftende tiener op, Kevin (Lou Taylor Pucci), die de littekens van een zware mishandeling voor haar probeert te verbergen.

Schrijver-regisseur Rebecca Miller (dochter van Arthur Miller) maakt van deze kleine verhalen een prachtige en betekenisvolle schets van het moderne leven. Alle drie actrices spelen glansrollen.

Het drieluik is gebaseerd op drie verhalen uit Rebecca Millers verhalenbundel met dezelfde titel, *Personal Velocity*, in Nederlandse vertaling uitgebracht door uitgeverij De Harmonie onder de titel 'Eigen Tempo'.



PERSONAL VELOCITY

86 min. / 35 mm / Kleur / Dolby Digital / Engelstalig / Verenigde Staten 2002

Theatrale uitbreng in Nederland: Cinemien

Theatrale uitbreng in België: ABC Distribution

Uitbreng op DVD: Homescreen



Grand Jury Prize & Cinematografie Award - Sundance 2002

Special Jury Prize & Audience Award - IFF Istanbul 2003

PERSONAL VELOCITY - Synopsis (FR)

"Personal Velocity", basé sur le roman de Rebecca Miller, raconte les histoires de trois femmes qui sont arrivées au tournant de leurs vies.

Delia (Kyra Sedgwick) est sur le point d'abandonner son mari. Elle est fille d'une famille disloquée; sa mère a abandonné la famille quand Delia n'était qu'un enfant, et son père (Brian Tarantina) était toxicomane qui ne sortait même pas du fauteuil. Devenue adolescente, Delia se réalisait du pouvoir de son corps afin d'obtenir des hommes qu'ils fassent tout ce qu'elle veut. Ca lui donnait non seulement un sentiment de puissance et de satisfaction, mais aussi la réputation d'être « la salope de l'école » et le résultat final est son mariage avec Kurt (David Warshofsky).

Greta (Parker Posey) est la fille d'un avocat renommé (Ron Leibman), abandonnée par sa mère qui lui donnait plus de critique que d'affection. Déchirée par des doutes sur soi-même, Greta dissipe ses talents littéraires dans l'édition de livres de cuisine. Un jour un jeune romancier renommé, Thavi (Joel de la Fuente), lui demande d'éditer son nouveau roman ce qui entraîne un bouleversement dans sa vie. Tout d'un coup elle se réalise de l'ennui dans son mariage.

Paula (Fairuza Balk), aussi le produit d'une famille disloquée, s'est enfuie de sa mère et a vécu dans la rue jusqu'à la rencontre avec Vincent (Seth Gilliam), qui lui offrait la maison. Ils sont devenus amants mais un an plus tard, Paula n'est plus sûre de son amour pour lui. Elle est enceinte et complètement bouleversée après avoir été témoin d'un meurtre. Elle s'enfuit à nouveau et rencontre Kevin (Lou Taylor Pucci), un adolescent qui récemment a été victime d'un combat violent.

Par ces trois petites histoires, l'écrivain-réalisateur Rebecca Miller décrit la vie moderne d'une manière émouvante.

Personal Velocity: Three Portraits a gagné le Grand Jury Prize au 2002 Sundance Film Festival.

86 min. / 35 mm / Couleur / Dolby Digital / dialogues en anglais / Etats-Unis 2002

**Grand Jury Prize & Cinematografie Award - Sundance 2002,
Special Jury Prize & Audience Award - IFF Istanbul 2003**

Sortie théâtrale en les Pays-Bas: Cinemien www.cinemien.nl
Sortie théâtrale en Belgique : ABC Distribution www.abc-distribution.be
Sortie sur DVD : Homescreen www.homescreen.be

PERSONAL VELOCITY - Crew

Regie / Réalisation : Rebecca Miller
Scenario / Scénario : Rebecca Miller
Productie / Production : Lemore Syvan, Gary Winick & Alexis Alexanian
Executive producers : Jonathan Sehring, Caroline Kaplan & John Sloss
Camera / Caméra : Ellen Kuras
Muziek / Musique : Michael Rohatyn
Production Design : Judy Becker
Montage : Sabine Hoffman



PERSONAL VELOCITY - Cast

Delia : Kyra Sedgwick
Greta : Parker Posey
Paula : Fairuza Balk
Vincent : Seth Gilliam
Kurt : David Warshofsky
Lee : Tim Guinee
Thavi : Joel de la Fuente
Kevin : Lou Taylor Pucci

PERSONAL VELOCITY - regisseur/ réalisateur Rebecca Miller

Rebecca Miller (1962) is schrijver, regisseur en actrice, en de dochter van de bekende toneelschrijver Arthur Miller en fotograaf Inge Morath. Als tiener schreef ze korte verhalen en na haar studie kunstgeschiedenis aan Yale vestigde zich in New York. Daar studeerde ze filmwetenschappen. Via de agent van haar vader kon ze aan de slag als actrice. Ze kreeg kleine rollen in verschillende films. Miller werd echter meer aangetrokken tot het schrijven van filmscripts en in 1991 schreef en regisseerde ze de korte film *Florence*. *Florence* werd opgemerkt door het Cincinnati Ensemble Theater, die haar uitnodigde een toneelstuk te regisseren. Via de contacten die zij daar legde wist ze genoeg interesse bij investeerders te wekken voor haar nieuwe script *Angela*, en deze film werd wederom door Miller zelf geregisseerd. *Angela* werd bekroond met onder meer de Filmmakers Trophy en de Cinematography Award. Miller bleef filmscripts schrijven die het goed deden op allerlei internationale filmfestivals, maar investeerders bleken niet genoeg geïnteresseerd en een echt commercieel succes in Hollywood bleef uit. Miller heeft zich vervolgens toegelegd op het schrijven van fictie. Dit resulteerde in haar debuut, de verhalenbundel *Personal Velocity*. *Personal Velocity* beschrijft de zeven levens van zeven vrouwen uit verschillende lagen van de maatschappij en variërend in leeftijd. Drie van de zeven verhalen zijn door Rebecca Miller verfilmt in de speelfilm *Personal Velocity*. Rebecca Miller is getrouwd met acteur Daniel Day-Lewis. Ze hebben samen een zoon.

Filmografie:

2004 **Proof** (in productie, scenario)
2004 **Rose and the Snake** (regie)
2002 **Personal Velocity** (regie & scenario)
1995 **Angela** (regie)
1992 **Wind** (actrice)
1992 **Consenting Adults** (actrice)
1991 **Florence** (regie & scenario)



Rebecca Miller est auteur, réalisateur et actrice. Elle est la fille d'Arthur Miller, écrivain de pièces de théâtre et d'Inge Morath, photographe. Comme adolescente elle écrivait des nouvelles et après ses études d'histoire de l'art à Yale, elle s'est installée à New York où son travail a été exposé plusieurs fois. Après elle commençait une brève carrière comme actrice. Elle a joué plusieurs rôles, mais elle se sentait attirée à l'écriture de scénarios et elle a réalisé la nouvelle 'Florence' en 1991. Le Cincinnati Ensemble Theatre a remarqué 'Florence' et le talent de Miller et l'a invité à réaliser une pièce de théâtre. En 1995, grâce aux contacts dans le monde du cinéma, elle écrivait le scénario pour son premier film, 'Angela', qu'elle a réalisé elle-même. 'Angela' a reçu plusieurs prix. Miller a continué à écrire des scénarios qui ont eu beaucoup de succès sur les festivals internationaux. Quand même les grands investisseurs n'étaient pas intéressés, de sorte qu'elle n'as pas pu réaliser un succès commercial à Hollywood. Alors Rebecca Miller s'est dédiée à l'écriture de fiction. Son début consistait en le recueil d'histoires *Personal Velocity*. *Personal Velocity* décrit les vies de sept femmes de différents âges qui vivent dans des environnements sociaux bien différents. En 2002, trois de ces histoires ont été portées à l'écran par l'écrivaine elle-même. Rebecca Miller est marié avec l'acteur Daniel Day-Lewis. Ils ont un fils.

PERSONAL VELOCITY - over de cast

PARKER POSEY (Greta), tot "Queen of Indies" benoemd door Time Magazine, heeft de afgelopen 7 jaar in ruim 30 films gespeeld, waaronder "The House of Yes" (Special Jury Prize 1997 Sundance Film Festival, regisseur Mark Waters), "SubUrbia" (regisseur Richard Linklater), "Waiting For Guffman" (regisseur Christopher Guest), "The Daytrippers" (regisseur Greg Mottola), "Dazed and Confused" (regisseur Richard Linklater), "You've Got Mail" (regisseur Nora Ephron), "Best in Show" (regisseur Christopher Guest) en drie films van Hal Hartley; "Amateur", "Flirt" en "Henry Fool."



KYRA SEDGWICK (Delia) heeft tot nu toe grote successen geboekt in het theater en is tweemaal genomineerd voor een Golden Globe voor haar rollen in "Something To Talk About" en "Miss Rose White". Ze won een Theater Award voor haar rol in "Ah Wilderness!" en de Los Angeles Drama Desk Critics Circle Award en een Dramalogue Award, beiden voor haar rol in David Mamet's "Oleanna". Ze speelde met Keifer Sutherland in de speelfilm "Red Door" en verder in o.a. Fisher Stevens' "Just A Kiss," met Ron Eldard en Marley Shelton, in "What's Cooking" en in Sydney Lumet's "Critical Care," met James Spader en Albert Brooks.



Hoewel nog jong heeft **FAIRUZA BALK** (Paula) al in 39 films gespeeld, waarvoor ze veelvuldig met prijzen is bekroond. Ze speelde o.a. in "Deuces Wild" met Stephen Dorff en Brad Renfro, in Cameron Crowe's "Almost Famous", in "The Craft" en "American History X" met Edward Norton en in "Waterboy." Eerdere rollen speelde ze in films als Milos Forman's "Valmont", Allison Anders' "Gas Food Lodging", "Imaginary Crimes", "Tollbooth" en "The Island Of Doctor Moreau" samen met Marlon Brando en Val Kilmer. Ook speelde ze in "American Perfekt" met Amanda Plummer, in "Great Sex" en "Things To Do In Denver When You're Dead," met Christopher Walken, Andy Garcia, Steve Buscemi en Christopher Lloyd.



PERSONAL VELOCITY - production notes

About the Production

After Rebecca Miller made her award-winning first feature film "Angela," she continued to write screenplays and fiction. She was writing a book of short stories, which became Personal Velocity, when she ran into her friend Gary Winick. Supported by IFC, Gary was putting together InDigEnt-a slate of low budget digital feature film projects done as a collaborative effort where the filmmakers own a piece of the film. "It gives filmmakers a chance to make movies that otherwise would have not been able to be made," says Winick.

"I was in the process of writing and I sent Gary two of the short stories-"Delia" and "Greta"-which I had written for the book," Miller recalls. At the same time Miller gave the short stories to her long time friend and Producer Lemoire Syvan, who produced her first film "Angela." They soon came up with the idea of doing a trilogy feature film of the short stories. "I needed another short story for the book, and then wrote "Paula," the only story for which I had both the film and book in mind," says Miller. Once Winick read the third story, he was immediately enthusiastic as were his InDigEnt executive producers, Jonathan Sehring and Caroline Kaplan of IFC and Cinetic's John Sloss, and they all agreed to go forward on the project.

Before Rebecca started work on the screenplay adaptation, she and Lemoire worked out a game plan that would work within the very small budget parameters. "I wanted Rebecca to be totally free of logistical worries and so we talked about the stories, the characters, their lives and the environment she wanted to bring to the screen. New York City and upstate New York lent themselves perfectly to the material so, while she went to work on the script I was able to start thinking and planning the production because I knew the stories and the characters so well from the short stories."

Miller began working on the screenplay while she completed the book. "I am glad that I didn't have the chance to stop and walk away from the material. The energy for making this film was the same as for the book, and the characters were still very fresh in my mind," says Miller. "I had real freedom with the screenplay," Rebecca says. "It is part of the joy for Gary to tell the filmmakers that they can have the creative freedom, within very strict financial parameters."

The screenplay is a trilogy about three women making crucial decisions in their lives and how those decisions come about. Miller describes it as, "A kind of cocktail of personal choice and destiny, which is personal velocity-the thing that hurls us through life or we hurl ourselves. The combination of choice and other elements-history, family, or a mystical element, that unseen hand that moves us along. Whatever it is, I don't really attempt to answer these questions, I just ask them. What clustered these three particular stories for me is personal velocity being a sub-theme for the film." Each of the women are fleeing their situation and entering another one. They are both entering and fleeing at the same time. In a way it is about leaving. Although one actually returns, so there is a re-entering."

Having the right actors was crucial to realizing the project. Miller turned to casting director Cindy Tolan, who also cast "Angela."

The role of Greta, played by Parker Posey, was of particular concern to Miller because of her conflicting character. Greta is intellectual and emotional, a compulsive editor, she edits people out

of her life. When she reads, she can't help seeing the unnecessary words of a text. That compulsion defines her character and ultimately her fate, which is one of the major themes of the film-that character is fate. On one hand she is bumbling, on the other, she is a bit of a climber. She is both charmingly and girlishly awkward at times, but also has an intellect that cuts like a knife. All of these things have to be operating at once. Posey was cast for the role because Miller felt that she was one of the few actors that could pull it off.

"I loved the script when I first read it, says Posey. I was really moved by it. It's great to read something you can relate to. I remember that journey from my late 20's to my early 30's, which is Greta's time. It is a period in your life when you are still not very conscious of what you are doing. Greta is complicated because of how many contradictory signals she has to give off. She is often in conflict with herself."

For the role of Delia, Miller was struck by actress Kyra Sedgwick's role in "Something to Talk About." "I was particularly overcome by her directness. Delia has to be physically very attractive, but also very tough. Kyra was perfect," says Miller.

"Delia is a character that I've never played before," says Sedgwick, "a woman who has been beaten by her husband for the last 12 years and, after the last fight makes a decision to leave and take her three kids with her. She is a woman who has lost everything, but mostly her power. I don't know anyone that is in the same place where Delia is, but I've seen a lot of documentaries and read a lot of books on women who find themselves in similar situations, why they stay and what that is all about. Having grown up in New York, I am aware of my surroundings and people that lead a very different life than I do."

For the third story, Miller and Tolan cast actress Fairuza Balk for the role of Paula. "Balk has a very special quality that is difficult to pinpoint. She is very real-rock solid. You can impose the most poetic material on her and she won't let go of her reality," says Miller. Paula's character is the most poetic and has the least dialogue of the three. "The meaning just sort of radiates out of her. She has an almost surreal quality about her."

"My character is a young woman who is thrust into total crisis-everything that can go wrong does," says Balk. "She feels that everything around her is a sign and it all has some kind of meaning. Throughout the story, Paula struggles to figure out how it all comes together and what it all means. I found the role very challenging because Paula is extremely internal. It was even shot like a dream sequence."

To get the look of the film Miller envisioned, she teamed with director of photography Ellen Kuras ("I Shot Andy Warhol," "Summer of Sam"), who was also the cinematographer on "Angela." "We wanted the styles of the stories to reflect the inner reality of the characters," says Miller. "Ellen and I have a connection where I can start a sentence and she can finish it. Knowing what you want with a film like this is key, because there is not time to try different things. Ellen possesses something very unique in that her camera is alive and is emotionally attuned to what is happening. I can feel where the emotional center of a scene is moving and she will actually move there."

"Personal Velocity" was like a family reunion. Ellen Kuras, Cindy Tolan, Gaffer John Nadeau and myself all worked on "Angela" with Rebecca," says Lemore Syvan. "We were all so thrilled to get back together and make a movie, and most importantly, it gave Rebecca a huge level of comfort."

We spent a lot of time preparing for filming and casting which was my answer to the limited resources we had. With no money but with time on our hands, we were able to work out difficult issues from locations to art design to casting. I am very proud to say that we did not make one compromise and shot a film in 16 days with almost 40 locations. I must say our inspiration began and ended with Rebecca's strong vision and leadership."

"Personal Velocity" could have been shot on film, yet Miller believes that shooting on DV enormously enhanced the performances. Allowing the actors the freedom to shoot much longer takes helped the complicated performances. Winick describes DV as un-intimidating-"It is very free and liberating to have the intimacy of a small crew and a camera that can fit into your hand. Both psychologically and practically, actors are able to feel more vulnerable and open quicker."

Syvan adds: "As a shooting crew, we were able to move very quickly. The equipment is light and small, which sometimes enabled us to be at two places at the same time, with two cameras and the small two person crew that is needed for each. Getting into cars and small places was quick and easy-it makes you feel like you can do anything. Given our very tight schedule, it was great for the actors. It was all about them and Rebecca, not about setting up for hours and getting them in there in the last minute for their scenes."

Winick believes there are many reasons why high profile actors are drawn to these types of film projects that are so scaled down and low budget. One reason is that they enjoy creative freedom without many technical restraints. The other reason is the material-the story, characters and director attached to each project play a very important role. On a practical level, it is also the relatively short period of time it takes to shoot these films. Lastly, the fact that these projects are a collaborative effort, actors can feel that they are a part of something with no hierarchy. "It comes down to the story and the love of storytelling, which overrides all of the technical challenges DV can pose." "DV definitely looks different," Winick says. "People who use water colors do not want it to look like oil paints. I feel that you have to approach filmmaking in that same context. You are telling a story that suits the DV medium. There's obviously an economic advantage, but there can also be an artistic advantage where it works best for the story, where filming on DV can enhance in the way the story is told."

The three actors agreed about shooting digital video vs. film. Posey, who has done several DV films in the past, says, "DV is nice because it gives an actor a lot more freedom to work with and you get to work in a condensed period of time, which helps you concentrate and focus. The crew is also much smaller and it becomes a much more intimate setting, which works perfectly with the nature of this film."

Balk agrees, "The film was shot very intimately, as though the audience is living with these characters." Sedgwick says "shooting on DV is much faster-the lights, the set-up time. There isn't that big tension between 'action' and 'cut.' It makes it easier for the actor to be spontaneous and real because you know that technically they will get the shot they need."

Another interesting aspect to this production was that the film was about women and primarily made by women. Parker says, "being a woman herself, and telling such an intimate story about these three women's lives and what they go through, I believe Rebecca really understands the

emotional aspects. It's very caring and nurturing having a woman director. It makes a difference when the storyteller is right there in front of you. It just feels more intimate. There was no rewriting on the script." Sedgwick put it best when describing what it was like working with Miller. "I think Rebecca is great because she wrote it and has a real vision for the material, yet she'll let you bring what you want to it and not at all be rigid. Rebecca also sees things with all of her senses. I get the impression she doesn't just hear a line, but rather uses all of her senses - her smell, her taste, her touch, its all very sensory. As an actor, that's a great feeling because we come to it with so much sensory work and sensory perception. It is so rare that a director will see those dimensions and I think she does."

Since each story was shot separately, the three lead actors never actually had any scenes together. As the film portrays a glimpse into each life, there are moments where they serendipitously crossover. The three separate stories share a theme and are interconnected by a device, an accident, which is heard in the beginning, middle, and end-a kind of a thread that goes through the three. "Each story will reflect on the other and I hope that the audience will make connections themselves later, Miller explains.

It is left for the viewer to find the connections," Miller explains. "Ultimately, I hope audiences will have a feast of character and can enjoy the fact that you explore these very different women very intimately in a very short period of time,' says Miller. "A lot of people will see themselves in these characters. I also experiment a lot with tone shifts. Delia is a more tragic and heroic tale, Greta is more comical, while Paula has a more poetic and lyrical quality. If you are able to embrace these differences in tone and style, I hope people will be moved and entertained."



THE WASHINGTON POST:

The Quiet, Dynamic Force Of 'Velocity'

By Stephen Hunter

Washington Post Staff Writer

Friday, December 6, 2002; Page C01

"'Personal Velocity' is an indie that watches as three women (Kyra Sedgwick, Parker Posey and Fairuza Balk) escape from evil men who oppress them," wrote an idiot in a great newspaper some weeks ago in one of those awful season preview pieces. It just shows the dangers of too much attitude and too few facts.

"Personal Velocity" is as far as possible from the kind of rigid feminist dogma that our correspondent (*moi*) presumed would inform the work. Instead of embracing agitprop about the generalized virtue of women and the generalized evil of men, it embraces reality, humanity and compassion, as leavened by wisdom and wit. It is, in short, a terrific film, maybe two-thirds of the best film of the year.

Writer-director Rebecca Miller, using digital video technology, works from three of her own short stories, and one sees immediately that she's a master of the form. She understands that a short story is not a novel. It's a brief illumination in which an entire life or a phase of life is encapsulated in a single moment. It helps if, while evoking the moment, she evokes as well the life, in all its gnarled, sputtery, incandescent awfulness and grace. And it's even better if she can do this without sermonizing or propagandizing. Better still if she can do it quickly.

But Miller demonstrates yet another great attribute, which is range. In these three tales, she evokes three worlds, and they couldn't be further apart, though they are united in time (now) and place (in and around New York). And all happen immediately after a weird traffic accident, which is reported on the radio in two of the stories and experienced in the last. Maybe that's too clever. What is important is that in each case, one immediately feels the author's comfort, the authenticity of gesture and word and even the accuracy in small stuff like furniture and shoes.

The movie is really about people more or less understanding who they are and why they must be that person. Such intimate psychological dramas rarely make it to a screen filled with explosions and bad comedy. "Personal Velocity" is the rare exception.

PERSONAL VELOCITY - recensie

LOS ANGELES TIMES:

'Personal' portraits ring true

Rebecca Miller's strength is in her ability to push past ideology and get right down to the nitty-gritty of desire.

By Manohla Dargis, Times Staff Writer

Rebecca Miller's "Personal Velocity" sneaks up on you. The film and its title originate with a slim collection of stories Miller published last year that was politely received in reviews that often seemed to miss the point. On the face of it, the book and the feature Miller has made out of three of its stories involve women who, for various good reasons, are running from the men in their lives. That's common enough, even at the movies where interesting female characters are as rare as albino tigers, but what gives Miller's characters a jolt of truth is that they're also running from the women they have become.

Miller is the daughter of playwright Arthur Miller, and it's likely that she knows something about being brought up in privilege and the need to escape from under a shadow. In the voice-over narration that weaves through the film, an unidentified male voice (John Ventimiglia) explains that Greta's father, Avram, is an influential lawyer who often appears on television standing on courtroom steps while declaring that "this decision is a victory for justice in this country." It's a gently mocking characterization -- Daddy Dearest as the very personification of the law -- but it also gets at why for much of her early life Greta pulled toward her charismatic father and away from her mother, a Polish refugee born just days before the liberation of Auschwitz.

In the first story, Delia (Kyra Sedgwick) packs up her children and leaves the husband who's been slapping her around. One of those women whose cloistered marriage has left her without friends, Delia escapes under the cover of night, eventually moving into the garage of a woman, Fay (Mara Hobel), for whom she had once done a small kindness. One day in high school, Delia had beaten off some boys who had pulled down Fay's pants, exposing her overstuffed flesh to ridicule. Delia had been the school's nymphet and Fay its sacrificial lamb, and some 20 years later all that binds them is their respective shame, which floats between them like an accusation.

The envy and old resentments that waft around these two are only part of a larger story about a woman whose identity is bound up with her sexual attractiveness to men and only part of a larger story about women who, having learned to live with men -- fathers and husband alike -- sometimes need to live apart from them. One of the gutsiest images I've seen in a movie this year is the sight of Delia sobbing alone in the middle of the night, away from her sleeping children and missing the man who had once bloodied her face. That isn't what women are supposed to do when they leave, either through the front door or out the back. Miller's strength in her stories and in the film is in her ability to push past ideology and get right down to the nitty-gritty of desire.