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Films & Schedules

SP

**Cairo Time**

**Ruba Nadda**

**Description**

With her latest feature, Ruba Nadda delves into the emotionally fraught territory of the fleeting affair. In a tremendous performance, Patricia Clarkson plays Juliette, a magazine editor. Vaguely dissatisfied with her job, Juliette follows her Canadian diplomat husband, Mark (Tom McCamus), to Cairo. When she arrives, however, she learns that he's been held up in the Palestinian territories due to escalating tensions in the region. Left to wait, Juliette soon discovers that the streets of Cairo can be tough terrain for a woman on her own.

Enter Tareq (Alexander Siddig), an old friend of Mark's who becomes Juliette's companion and guide, introducing her to various Egyptian customs. The city's grandeur comes alive as he leads her through the beguiling streets of Cairo. While they wander side by side, Juliette senses an alluring kindness and charm in Tareq, and he is equally taken with her. As she waits for word on her husband's imminent arrival, the two struggle to control their obvious mutual attraction. The pyramids beckon, offering a gentle reflection of the epic desire building between the tourist and her guide. Their bond becomes increasingly complex as it evolves: is this a profound friendship or something else? Adding to the discomfort is the obvious loyalty they both feel to the man they have in common – Juliette's husband and Tareq's friend – who is physically absent but still present in their minds.

Nadda directs her own screenplay, managing to avoid the stereotypical pitfalls such an undertaking could have easily delivered. And Clarkson so owns her role that it's difficult to imagine another actor having taken it on. Even if you've never been to Egypt, *Cairo Time* will have a ring of familiarity; the film evocatively serves as an analogy for the intricacies of passionate romances that, for practical reasons, can never be realized. Like a sensuous vacation, *Cairo Time's* sweet melancholia will linger long after the final credits roll.

**By Matthew Hays**



**Ruba Nadda** was born in Montreal and studied English at York University and film production at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. She made several award-winning short films, including *Lost Woman Story* (97), *Interstate Love Story* (97), *So Far Gone* (98) *Damascus Nights* (98), *Laila* (99), *I Would Suffer Cold Hands for You* (99), *Black September* (99) and *Aadan* (04), before writing and directing the features *I Always Come to You* (00), *Unsettled* (01), *Sabah* (05) and *Cairo Time* (09).