

CAIRO TIME

Director: Ruba Nadda

Cast: Patricia Clarkson, Alexander Siddig, Tom McCamus 90 minutes NR

Ruba Nadda's 2005 film, *Sabah*, was an elegantly wrought and heartwarming tale of cross-cultural love that proved to be a big Film Circuit hit upon its release. Fans of her cinematic sensibility – and there are many – will eagerly anticipate her newest film, the lovely and engaging *Cairo Time*.

While the star-crossed lovers of *Sabah* found their magic on Canadian soil, *Cairo Time* takes us to the capital of Egypt, where magazine editor Juliette (Patricia Clarkson, *Lars and the Real Girl*, *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*) has just landed for an indefinite visit. She was supposed to meet her diplomat husband, Mark (Tom McCamus, *Heyday!*, *Shake Hands with the Devil*), but arrives at her hotel to discover he is not there.

That's when she meets Tareq (Alexander Siddig, *Syriana*, *Kingdom of Heaven*), an old friend of Mark's and a retired local police officer. He tells her that Mark has been sent to the Palestinian refugee camps and it is uncertain when he'll be back.

Completely out of her element, Juliette is happy to have the companionship of Tareq, who now owns a coffeeshop and who slowly becomes Juliette's guide to the city. Between intermittent and rushed phone conversations with her husband, Juliette finds she is enjoying Tareq's company, and before long, the two of them begin having feelings for one another that cannot be ignored. Patricia Clarkson is radiant as the heart and soul of a film that evocatively renders a middle-aged woman's search for herself when her children have just left the nest and she is embarking on a new phase in life. Most new beginnings do not happen in locales as exotic as Cairo (a prescient subplot develops around Tareq's views on an article about child poverty that Juliette considers writing), but Juliette's alienation from her environment perfectly reflects the emotional isolation she feels within her marriage and most areas of her life. Stunningly shot, this film flows like a distant dream in which a way forward is possible despite the sadness over what is being left behind.

