



The consequences of sexual dalliance go far in this new release from Iranian director Asghar Farhadi.

FILM

About Elly

directed by **Asghar Farhadi** (118 minutes)

About Elly is a film of two halves – one, the gentle and intriguing observation of an engineered budding romance; the other, intense and headlong, as the fateful consequences of deception unravel.

It all revolves around Sepideh, who invites Elly, her children's young primary school teacher, to join her family and a group of ex-university friends, with their young children, on a weekend away at the seaside. Sepideh, though, has designs – to hitch up Elly with her old chum Ahmad. The plot is a little convoluted and seems to be setting us up for a predictable romcom. This, though, isn't Britain, or the US, or France: it's Iran, and the dénouement

is neither romantic nor comedic.

When one of the children disappears, and then one of the adults, they have to involve family networks and call in the police. The consequences of sexual dalliance go far beyond the couple involved; Sepideh's husband warns her, 'They will kill you!'

Farhadi's drama, made before his Oscar-winning, *A Separation*, but released only on the back of it, reveals the faultlines threatening a seemingly comfortable middle-class existence. It's impressive, convincing, often shockingly real, never less than gripping, and shows the political can be terrifying personal.

★★★★ ML



Startling declaration:
this woman killed eight
unwanted baby daughters.

I just strangled it soon after it was born.

It's a Girl

directed by **Evan Grae Davis** (103 minutes)

'Women have the power to give life and... take it away,' is the startling declaration made by one woman who admits to having killed eight unwanted baby daughters.

Filmed on location in India and China, **It's a Girl** takes an unflinching look at the global tragedy of gendercide. According to the UN, 200 million girls have 'disappeared' – either killed, abandoned or (often forcibly) aborted simply because they are girls. This film tells the human stories behind these shocking statistics. Woven between the interviews with activists and smart info-graphics are heart-rending accounts of the pressures imposed on mothers and would-be mothers. Misogyny, poverty and antiquated cultural practices combine to make gendercide a complex issue to tackle. Yet **It's a Girl** is an assured piece of filmmaking that resoundingly succeeds in its aim to inform. A *tour de force* and a useful campaigning tool.

★★★★ RM

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