

Home of the Brave

von Rebecca Tan

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Home of the Brave, USA 2006

Regie: Irwin Winkler

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Hamburg, 14.02.2007

The “brave” in this case are four U.S. soldiers in Baghdad, who are counting the few days left to return home. They have one last mission, namely, taking medical supplies to Iraqis, and—surprise, surprise—they are ambushed. Cut to Spokane, Washington where they have returned, the worse for wear. Vanessa has lost a hand; Jamal runs amok because he had to shoot an Iraqi woman and his girl friend rejects him; Tommy saw his best friend die, and Dr. Will Marsh’s wife and teen-aged son do not understand him or his nightmares. The traumatized new civilians seek help from each other and from army psychologists. In the end, one sort of settles down, one falls in love, one is dead, and Tommy nobly returns to Iraq because he “keeps thinking of the men over there and can’t leave them to do the job alone.”

This film by Irwin Winkler with Samuel L. Jackson, Jessica Biel, Curtis “50 Cent” Jackson and Christina Ricci in a cameo role could be called Flag-of-our-Fathers-light. It is a potpourri of every coming-home, war-film cliché imaginable. People ask, “How was it? Did you shoot anybody? Did you kill anybody?” Vanessa’s love interest says, “It only takes one good hand to push people away.” Others say, “I am doing my job and am damn good at it.” “Nothing makes sense any more.” “Don’t give me tranquillizers; everyone is trying to drug me.” The ending leaves the unfortunate impression that war is a worthy goal and we should be impressed with Tommy’s decision to return to the battlefield, when in fact he failed to adjust to a stateside job, leaving the army his only option. Perhaps the film could be successful as a series on U.S. television, soap-opera style, for conservative Americans. Otherwise, except for a three-minute segment where Dr. Marsh supports his son for wearing a t-shirt that says Buck Push, against school rules, the film is completely superfluous, if not a subversive propaganda film for war.