

“Our Souls at Night”

Louis (Robert Redford) is a retired teacher and longtime resident of a small town in Colorado. He has lost his wife and just watching him sit down to a lonely dinner speaks volumes about his life as a solitary man. But one night there is knock on his door. Standing in the doorway is Addie (Jane Fonda), a widow and long-time neighbor. She has an unusual request. Sleep does not come easily and the nights are long. Would he consider sharing her bed? It is not about sex she hastens to add, just the comfort of being next to someone “nice” she can talk to. Louis is understandably nonplused but ultimately decides to take her up on her offer.

Both Louis and Addie live with regrets over past mistakes which have shadowed their lives to this day. Louis was not an ideal husband and Addie is haunted by a past memory. She also has a son, Dorian (Bruce Dern), who bears a simmering resentment towards her. One day he shows up unannounced with her young grandson Jaime (Iain Armitage) in tow. He needs her to take care of Jaime until he can get his own messy life in order. She happily agrees.

Jamie is an isolated soul who spends most of his time hunched over his iPad immersed in virtual reality. Louis takes it upon himself to wean him away from the electronic world and set him on a path to the kind of childhood he so fondly remembers. He has an old model train set which has been boxed up for years. He has Jaime help him unpack it and before long Jamie is hard at work putting the cars together and setting up the village the train runs through. He begins to reap the joys of the world of imagination. More old fashioned youthful experiences await him as he learns the simple joys of playing catch and the adventure of going camping in the mountains.

Along with Jaime’s new lease on life, Louis and Addie ever so slowly move beyond their platonic relationship, demonstrating that romance is not just the prerogative of the young. But just as their lives have blossomed anew something happens which forces Addie to make an agonizing choice. As happens so frequently in real life there are no good answers and she struggles with her decision. While the result of that choice is bittersweet, the last scene in the film contains the seeds of wistful hopefulness.

Many films are come with the warning “For Mature Audiences Only” - the euphemism for sex, profanity and violence. “Our Souls at Night” is designed for actual mature audiences, those of us who are older, who have experienced the ups and downs of life and appreciate the kind of quiet and reflective film which celebrates family and the ordinary moments of life. Restrained in tone, beautifully acted, devoid of counterfeit sentimentality and clearly a labor of love, “Our Souls at Night” will resonate in your mind long after the final scene.

(Netflix).