



The Teacher's Lounge

94 min

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Leonie Benesch stars as Carla, a teacher fresh out of university who's dedicated to doing her very best for her students. In class, this means showing patience and putting down bullying. But outside of class, she's forced over and over to defend her students as petty thefts turn other teachers into amateur detectives, keen to interrogate, racially profile, frisk, and intimidate the children. Carla hopes to bring a quick and quiet end to all this drama - including its related abuses of power. Instead, she is pulled into a quagmire of accusations, suspicion, and betrayal that reaches across the faculty, student body, and beyond. Writer-director, Ilker Çatak and co-writer Johannes Duncker offer a deceptively simple narrative. There's no shattering plot twist here. Instead, it's a cascade of minor calamity. An outburst sparks debate. A rumor sparks a panic. A selfish concern spawns sprawling paranoia. As the institution around her quakes with emotion and grown-ups wage war with children, Carla fights for truth, justice, and the student who has been unfairly dragged into the middle. Benesch shoulders the film remarkably. Carla is a heroine who is very aware that all eyes are on her and she is precise in her chosen words. But Benesch's eyes, full of fury and pain, express the rage she holds within. Her voice switches from composed to clipped when she's caught off-guard by students, who play bait-and-switch with a school paper interview turned uneven exposé. Carla is being torn apart by the pressure of not only being a defender of her students, but also living up to her high standards for herself. While the stakes seem low, *The Teachers' Lounge* expertly reveals how severe the consequences can be for a minor transgression. The film urges audiences to question the wider political meaning of this teacher's struggle - to not only understand her plight, but also that of the students who most voraciously oppose her. *The Teachers' Lounge* is uniquely thrilling, sophisticatedly entrancing, and ultimately haunting. This Oscar nominated film drives home the horror that on any given day, the spiraling nightmare could be your own.

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