

Revenge is bittersweet in *Nocturnal Animals*



By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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Writer-director Tom Ford spins his magic in the provocative mindbender *Nocturnal Animals*, a captivating narrative of a story-within-a story where two different worlds and disparate lives collide head-on, where nothing seems to be what it is, and everything becomes twisted.

Ford adapted Austin Wright's 1993 book *Tony and Susan*, telling the intriguing story of one woman caught between her past and her present, while she consumes and is consumed by a story in the here and now.

Amy Adams is ideally cast as a cold and calculated woman whose world is painted in money. When she leaves a passionate but poor young writer for greener pastures, she soon discovers that money cannot buy love and happiness. When the writer re-enters her life in the form of a book he wrote and dedicated to her, she reluctantly reads it and falls in love with the man she thought she knew.



In the novel, a man tragically loses his wife and daughter to lustful psychopaths, and seeks to solve the mystery. As we delve deeper into the mystery, we also dig deeper into the fragile disposition of a lonely woman.

Jake Gyllenhaal is sensational, delivering another powerful performance in the dual role of a young, impassioned writer and his fervent fictional alter-ego who suffers an equally devastating loss.

Love spurting from an imagined scenario in *Nocturnal Animals* is more lethal than the real world, it is this potent combination of both extremes that strikes a mean blow and leaves lovers battle-scarred.

Ford skillfully manipulates our emotions through the severe actions of the characters in both narratives. We experience their agony and ecstasy, and live our own truth through their respective destinies.



Ford's cautionary tale about "coming to terms with the choices that we make as we move through life and of the consequences that our decisions may have", is relevant in our increasingly disposable culture where everything, including our relationships, can be so easily tossed away.

Ford is a great observer. His direction is never intrusive, he allows the stories to speak for themselves and the actors to spontaneously breathe life into their characters.

Sometimes we hurt those we love the most, and with *Nocturnal Animals*, the cruel intentions of a scorned lover results in ultimate revenge.

Nocturnal Animals shows us how easy it is to hurt someone we love without even seeing them, probing their intimate thoughts and seducing their fragile emotions, abusing them when they are at their most vulnerable, then twisting the fantasy of love and awe into a warped and hurtful reality.



Although the hurt inflicted in the fictional reality of Ford's dual-tale, it is the torment in the real-life story that cuts the

deepest. Yes, love hurts in *Nocturnal Animals*, but Ford also shows us the healing power of love, when love is real, and not corrupted by pretentious fabrication.

As Ford states: "This is a story of loyalty, dedication and of love. It is a story of the isolation that we all feel, and of the importance of valuing the personal connections in life that sustain us."

Nocturnal Animals will most definitely alert your senses when love comes knocking on your door, knowing that love is not a toy, but a force to be reckoned with. If you are looking for discerning entertainment with bite, filled with suspense, intrigue and mystery, *Nocturnal Animals* will definitely not disappoint.

Read more about the film: www.writingstudio.co.za

ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Derksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit www.writingstudio.co.za

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