

## Avenging Pursuit Motivates Amanda Seyfried in ‘Gone’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 24, 2012 - 10:42pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – The premise of “Gone” is a beguiling notion. What if the victim of a traumatic crime can’t get authorities to believe her? The evidence doesn’t add up, there are no physical signs of struggle and no crime scene is found. Amanda Seyfried plays such a victim, and her very sanity is questioned.

The film is fast-paced, with a probable improbability that works because the screenplay and direction is tight as a drum. Whether or not Seyfried’s character is to be believed, there is a rooting interest in her, simply because she has an obsession for justice that is more fiery than the all other “protection” institutions. There is also a larger symbolic nature to the crime and punishment, as the males in the film are hapless or skeptical, while the main character gets better results fending for herself.

Seyfried portrays Jill, a tense resident of Portland, Oregon. She lives with her sister Molly (Emily Wickersham) in a residential neighborhood. Jill is obsessed with a dark incident that is alluded to in flashbacks. She remembers a nighttime abduction, a journey to a nearby forest reserve, where hikers found her dirty and disheveled. The police conducted a futile search, and Jill’s unreasonable insistence that the crime occurred gets her some mental institution time, as well as a prescription for psychotropic meds.



On the Run: Amanda Seyfried (Jill) in ‘Gone’  
Photo credit: Saeed Adyani for Summit Entertainment

Her paranoia goes to a new level when sister Molly turns up missing, and Portland police detectives Bozeman (Michael Paré) and Powers (Daniel Sunjata) won’t kowtow to her pleas for investigation. Molly’s boyfriend Billy (Sebastian Stan) and police insider Hood (Wes Bentley)

could help or hinder the cold case, so Jill strikes out on her own. She has one day of daylight to figure the identity of her assumed abductor and save her own sister.

Amanda Seyfried certainly has taken some risky roles ("Chloe," "Red Riding Hood"), and this film rises through her performance. She is a flurry of obsessions, Nancy Drew in a psychodrama. Her character develops an interesting survival instinct, which is to use emotional lies to get information. The pursuit of her sister is personal, and she basically will say or do anything to keep the trail hot. Her ability to fit the "roles" of the lies are remarkable, and the film doesn't shy away from the implication that because she is an attractive woman, these lies are easier to pull off.

This is also a twist on "The Fugitive," where the victim becomes the pursued, but instead of being wrongly accused, Jill is a victim of her own history of delusions. She has a alarm on her phone that reminds her to take the medication, which continues the guessing game on whether her story is legit. There are direct allusions to possible other suspects, sprinkled throughout her journey. The literate screenplay (by Allison Burnett, who's a dude) is tight and taut enough to overcome the convenience of Jill's discoveries, simply by putting her at the right place and right time, with a narrative that covers all the coincidences.

Intentional or not, the film also felt like a metaphor for the powerlessness of male "protection" in the film, as the gender has bouts with irrational anger, misogyny and clouded perspectives in the presence of Jill. Mental illness is also taken on, as the over-prescribed drugs are ever present, and the solution to Jill's behavior is institutionalization. The symbol of her as an unintended victim, facing both predators and accusers, has an effective Kafka-esque feel to it.



Amanda Seyfried and Emily Wickersham (Molly) in 'Gone'  
Photo credit: Saeed Adyani for Summit Entertainment

Director Heitor Dhalia has a good eye toward keeping the atmosphere tense in this film, with the is-she-or-isn't-she journey literally coming to a fork in the road. He makes exceptional use of the Portland setting, including the atmosphere of the dark forest preserve and frequent rain. It turns out to be the perfect city for an adventure like this one.

But it is Amanda Seyfried who ultimately makes the film work, her fulfilling performance creates believers, and it's her strong, unyielding character that follows through on the old Yogi Berra saying, "when you come to a fork in the road, take it."

*"Gone" opens everywhere February 24th. Featuring Amanda Seyfried, Daniel Sunjata, Emily Wickersham, Wes Bentley, Jennifer Carpenter, Sebastian Stan and Michael Paré. Screenplay by Allison Burnett. Directed by Heitor Dhalia. Rated "PG-13"*



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