

# When We Leave



**MOTHER AND CHILD**  
Schiller and Kekilli  
share a tender moment.



**Dir. Feo Aladag.** 2010. N/R.  
119mins. In German and Turkish,  
with subtitles. Sibel Kekilli, Nizam  
Schiller, Derya Alabora.

Moments after we're introduced to Umay (Kekilli), a strong-willed young Turkish woman, she has a gun pointed at her head, secretly procures an abortion and has a passionless bout of sex with her scurrilous spouse. It's a cavalcade of misery and there's more to come in Feo Aladag's punishing debut feature. Leaving her abusive husband to forge a new life with son Cem (Schiller) in Berlin, Umay at first moves back in with her mother, father and siblings. Her uncompromising independence makes them pariahs in their community, and the family's

resultant disdain grows until Umay and Cem are forced to go off on their own. She believes her family will one day come around, but she doesn't realize the depths of their hatred.

Aladag was inspired to make *When We Leave* by the real-life honor-killing of a Muslim woman by her disgraced family. The film has the look of unflinching truth, yet it too often feels like a calculated ploy to stoke viewers' liberal-guilty consciences. A large number of histrionic, on-the-nose sequences—one doozy in particular wouldn't pass muster in a Paul Haggis script—counteract some very real virtues, chief among which is Kekilli. Her impassioned performance often makes you forget you're watching a screed that, sympathetic as its perspective is, still seems rigged for maximum choir preach. (Opens Fri.)—*Keith Uhlich*