

Mulholland Drive Film Summary

Mulholland Drive by David Lynch

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Context

David Lynch has created some of the strangest and most challenging movies of our time. He is known for his ability to put together films that contain many disparate parts and yet, by the end, viewers have a somewhat full understanding of the film. Because of the complexity of Lynch's films, viewers usually need to watch them at least twice to understand what is going on. Lynch follows this same pattern in *Mulholland Drive*.

Mulholland Drive is the strange story of four overlapping characters: Betty/Diane and Rita/Camilla. In the beginning of the film, we meet Betty and Rita. Rita has amnesia resulting from a terrible accident, and she breaks into Betty's aunt's apartment to hide. Betty and Rita become fast friends and eventually lovers as they try to figure out the truth behind Rita's identity and accident.

One hour and fifty-six minutes into the film, the plot line suddenly changes completely. A mysterious blue box falls open and Betty becomes Diane, while Rita becomes an actress named Camilla. In this way, we learn the true story of Diane and Camilla, eventually realizing that the preceding part of the film was actually Diane's fantasy of what might have been. The truth is that Diane had put out a hit on Camilla as retribution for leaving her. When Diane returned home that night, she found a blue key had been left on her coffee table, representing that the hit had been completed. In her grief, Diane dreams up the story of Betty and Rita as she tries to cope with what has happened. Eventually, Diane cannot live with the pain and ends up killing herself.

Mulholland Drive was originally created as the pilot for a television series on ABC. Filmed in 1999 on a budget of \$8 million, the show was expected to create new audiences for ABC and fame for Lynch. After creating *Twin Peaks*, Lynch was expected to take up that type of show again with similar ratings. Although the network had originally approved the script for *Mulholland Drive*, they were put off by the length of the film. Lynch tried to work with the studio by cutting out some of the excess, but they could not come to an agreement.

A year later, Lynch gathered the cast together and filmed the final scenes on a \$7 million budget that the French film company *Studio Canal* put up for filming. Lynch hoped that the film could wrap up loose endings in the original version and help the film later become a television show. However, the studio decided to put out the feature-length version we now have instead of creating the film for a television show.

One interesting fact about the *Mulholland Drive* DVD is that there are no chapters in the original version. Lynch requested that pressing the skip button take viewers to the end of the film so that they could not skip around. He believed that watching the film in one sitting was ultimately important to grasping both the plot and the meaning. This is not Lynch's only time to make this request, and although it may be frustrating for some viewers, Lynch's film is best understood when watched at once in its entirety.

When released, *Mulholland Drive* was nominated for and won many awards. The National Society of Film Critics voted *Mulholland Drive* as the Best Film of the Year, with Naomi Watts getting the award for Best Actress. Peter Deming won an award for Best Cinematography at the Independent Spirit Festival. Additionally the film was nominated for Golden Globes in the categories of Best Director, Best Motion Picture, Best Original Score, and Best Screenplay. David Lynch won the award for Best Director at the Cannes Film Festival and was nominated for an Academy Award.

Summary and Analysis

Mulholland Drive begins with a group of people swing-dancing. A crowd applauds as Betty Elms comes to the forefront of the group. Then, the picture changes to a bedroom where someone is sleeping, and we realize that perhaps this is part of a dream.

In the next scene, we see the taillights of a car as it drives away. Camilla Rhodes rides in the back of the car and tells the driver that he's wrong - they don't usually stop here. He pulls a gun on her and tells her to get out of the car, but before she can, the car is hit by another car and catches fire. Camilla gets out and runs away. She goes to Sunset Boulevard and sneaks into her own house. She quietly falls onto the pillow.

At the scene of the wreck, the police find the gun in the back of the cab. They also find a pearl earring, and they begin to suspect that someone is missing from the scene. At the house, another woman comes home. The next morning, two men meet at Winky's, a restaurant, and one of them admits that he wanted to come there because he had a dream about the place. He tells the other man that he's had two identical dreams about Winky's, but it usually happens at "half-night." He is terrified in the dream, and the other man stands near the counter and is scared too. The dreamer tells the man that eventually he realized that there's a man in the back of the place who is doing "it." The man suggests that he came here to get rid of the feeling, but after he walks away, the scene starts becoming the dream. They go outside behind a garbage can, only for the man with the dream to see a large monster and die from shock.

In her room, Camilla lies in bed. A man receives a call telling him that "the girl is still missing." He then calls someone and lets them know as well. He makes another call but no one answers. Betty Elms is then shown helping an older woman named Irene through the Los Angeles airport, saying "Oh, I can't believe it!" Betty is obviously star-struck by the idea of being in Hollywood; she plans on becoming a famous star on the big screen. She also meets Irene's husband. A taxi driver picks up her bags, and she's on her way. The older couple rides home in their limousine and laugh.

Betty arrives at a huge mansion and rings the doorbell. She meets Mrs. Catherine "Coco" Lenoix, in whose house her aunt had been living. Betty is amazed by her aunt's new living quarters. Coco lets Betty in, telling her that she and her aunt must have an agreement. In the bedroom, Betty notices that a dress and some things are thrown on the floor, a major difference from the rest of the house. As she continues exploring the house, Betty finds Camilla in the shower. Camilla tells Betty that she was in an accident and came there. Betty goes to unpack so that Camilla can finish her shower. Camilla has amnesia and doesn't remember her own name. After seeing a Rita Hayworth sign in the bathroom, she decides to make that her name.

Camilla introduces herself as Rita to Betty, and then Betty begins telling her dreams of becoming famous. Betty's aunt is off filming a movie right now. Betty tells her, "I'm sorry. I'm just so excited to be here. I mean I just came here from Deep River, Ontario, and



now I'm in this dream place. Well, you can imagine how I feel." Betty is very worried about Rita, but Rita just lies down on the bed, saying all she needs is some sleep.

Down at the Ryan Entertainment building, several men meet to discuss casting of the lead actress for their film. They ask the director to keep an open mind, showing him the picture of Camilla Rhodes and explaining that this is the girl for the role. However, the director wants to choose a top actress for the part rather than some unknown. Although they worked hard to get one of the men a perfect espresso, he spits it out anyway and walks out of the room. Everyone begins yelling, and the director finds out that he is no longer in charge of the film. Angry, the director goes to talk to someone in a car, but he ends up attacking the car with his golf club and breaking the window.

Later, Betty goes back to check on Rita. In the building downtown, an older man is told that the director doesn't want Camilla Rhodes, but the man says that they can get rid of the director and shut everything down. Two men meet in another nearby building and laugh about the car accident. One shoots the other, tries to cover it up, and accidentally shoots a woman through the wall. The man attacks and kills the woman, who thinks she was badly bit rather than shot. He then kills the janitor who saw him attacking the woman.

Betty talks to her aunt on the phone and tells her about Rita being there when she arrived. Her aunt tells her that she doesn't know a Rita, but Betty tries to convince her that she doesn't need to call the police. When she goes in to see Rita, she confronts Rita about being there. Rita begins to cry and tells Betty that she thought sleep would make her feel better; she finally admits that she doesn't remember who she is. Betty convinces her to open her purse and find out who she is, but all she finds is several stacks of money and a key. The man who killed the people in the building spends time with another woman. Betty doesn't know where the money came from.

The director finds out that the film has been stopped, and he goes home. At her aunt's place, Betty and Rita speculate about what happened to Rita. Finally, Rita remembers that she was trying to get to Mulholland Drive. Betty suggests that they call the police to find out whether a wreck happened there the night before. They decide to walk around Hollywood to see if there was an accident nearby.

Adam gets home and finds his wife, Lorraine, in bed with Gene, the pool guy. Adam takes her jewelry and pours red paint on it. When she realizes what he's doing, she attacks him. Gene throws Adam out of the house, and he drives away. Before going out, Betty and Rita hide the money in her aunt's home. They find the pay phone near Winky's, and Betty calls the police to ask about an accident on Mulholland Drive the night before. Betty tries to get detail, but the police are not forthcoming about the details. They then try to find information in the papers about the accident, but there's no information. Betty thanks Diane, their waitress, for helping them, but then she begins remembering something. She remembers the name Diane Selwyn, and she believes that maybe that's her name.



There's only one Diane Selwyn in the phone book, so Betty calls the number. It's not Rita's voice on the answering machine, but Rita is sure that she knows the voice. Betty suggests that perhaps the voice is actually that of her roommate. A man comes to Adam's house to find him, but Lorraine tries to beat him up. Gene tries to protect her, but the man knocks them both out. That night, Adam learns there is a problem with his credit cards, and that someone from his bank came by to tell him he's maxed-out all his accounts. The man apologizes for having to tell Adam that everyone knows where he is. Adam calls his secretary, Cynthia, and she confirms that he is now broke. She also tells him that "The Cowboy" wants to see him, and she tries to convince Adam to meet him. Cynthia says she will set up the meeting and promises to call Adam back soon.

Betty tries to get Rita to go with her to find where she might live. Suddenly, someone knocks at the door. Betty opens the door to find a woman telling her that someone is in trouble. The woman, Louise, is very upset, and she explains to Coco when she walks up that there is a dog in her room. Coco was just bringing Betty some faxed sheets for her audition tomorrow. Coco takes Louise home, and Rita stares at Betty, crying the whole time. They drive up to the scene of the accident.

Adam meets the Cowboy, and the Cowboy asks him, "A man's attitude... a man's attitude goes some ways toward how a man's life will be. Is that somethin' you agree with?" Adam agrees, but then the Cowboy begins to play mind games with him. Adam tells him that he's thinking, but the Cowboy replies, "No, you're not thinkin'. You're too busy being a smart aleck to be thinkin'. Now I want ya to think and stop bein' a smart aleck. Can ya try that for me?" The Cowboy explains that he's driving the buggy, and if Adam goes along with him, he will get a free ride too. The Cowboy tells him that the next day, he will cast Camilla. Before he walks off, the Cowboy says, "Now, you will see me one more time if you do good. You'll see me two more times if you do bad. Goodnight."

The next morning, Betty and Rita practice the lines for the audition. Rita encourages Betty in her acting even though the scene is lame. Coco comes in and finds Rita lounging in the apartment. Coco tells Betty that her aunt called to find out who else was staying there. Coco realizes that Betty is lying about Rita, and she tells her to get rid of Rita if she is trouble. Betty tells Rita everything is all right, and then gets ready for her audition. Two men drive by in a dark car just before Betty leaves, but she doesn't see them. She goes down to the studio to meet everyone.

At the studio, Betty meets much of the rest of the cast and prepares to do her scene. They begin the scene, and Betty does a superb job in the role. Everyone is impressed with her performance, and they tell her that she's "done her aunt proud" today. The lead guy also assures Betty that he will be talking to her again very soon. However, although Betty feels good about the scene, the casting agent and another woman take her for another audition, as the movie she first auditioned for probably won't be made. Adam is the director of the film they want Betty to audition for.

Adam explains to the woman who just auditioned that he has to see everyone first. Camilla Rhodes is supposed to be the next person auditioning. Adam calls Jason up to



sign the woman he thinks is Camilla for the part. Betty runs out of the audition to pick up Rita so that they can look for the house of Diane Selwyn. Rita sees some mysterious cars outside, and she doesn't want the men to see her. They find the place, but as they make their way to the apartment, they are spooked by other people standing around. Rita and Betty go to the apartment, and they find that Diane switched apartments with another woman. Since the woman doesn't recognize Rita, they realize she can't be Diane.

When they go to the other apartment, no one answers the door. Betty finds an open window and climbs inside. The apartment stinks, and they find Diane Selwyn dead in her bed. The other woman comes to the apartment, but Betty and Rita don't answer the door. Rita is afraid that she killed Diane or will be recognized. Betty helps Rita change the style and color of her hair so she looks like someone else. That night, Betty invites Rita to take off her wig and spend the night in her bed. The two women begin kissing in bed and then make love.

In the middle of the night, Betty and Rita get up and go to a nightclub that Rita had a dream about. The actors pretend to perform, but the emcee says, "This is all a tape recording. It is an illusion." Rita and Betty have very emotional reactions to the music and begin to shake and cry. After the show ends, Betty finds a mysterious glittering blue box in her purse. They go home, but Betty disappears after she lays the box on the bed. Rita uses the key from her purse to open the box, and she is sucked into it. We go along with her as the box falls to the floor.

Suddenly, we are back in the dead Diane's apartment. The Cowboy is there trying to wake her up, and people are knocking at the door. Diane (Betty) wakes up and answers the door. Her neighbor comes in to get her stuff, and she notices a blue key on the table. She also lets Diane know that two detectives came by again to find her. Diane sees Camilla (Rita), but this Camilla is not the same one with blonde hair that the studio's pushing. Camilla and Diane begin to have sex on the couch, but Camilla tries to make Diane stop. However, Diane tries to push herself onto Camilla and have her way with her. Camilla tries to make it clear that she's warned Diane before. Diane says, "It's him, isn't it?"

The scene then switches to Camilla with Adam, the director. He puts the moves on Camilla, and Camilla makes sure Diane sees them. Diane watches unhappily. She refuses to make things easy for Camilla, and we later see her masturbating unhappily. Finally, the phone rings - the same phone that wasn't answered at the beginning of the film. Diane answers and is taken to a party in the same limo that Rita was in at the beginning of the film on the same mysterious drive to Mulholland Drive. Everything begins to happen the way it did in the car with Rita, but the driver doesn't pull a gun on Diane. Diane finds Camilla, and they walk into a party together. Adam is the host of the party, and his mother is Coco. As Diane watches Camilla and Adam making out across the table from her, we learn that Diane came to Hollywood after she won a jitterbug contest and decided to be an actress. After her aunt died, Diane came to Hollywood, where she met Camilla on a film called *The Sylvia North Story*. Camilla got the part Diane wanted.



As the party guests are eating, the Camilla from the beginning of the film comes over and passionately kisses the new Camilla/old Rita. Diane is obviously upset about the turn of events. As Adam and Camilla seem to be about to announce their engagement, Diane becomes even more upset. Suddenly, something falls in the background: Betty (the waitress at Winky's who was Diane earlier) dropped some utensils on the floor. Diane is meeting with the hit man to give him the money from earlier in the film to have Camilla killed. Diane tells him that she wants this "more than anything in this world." He shows her a blue key and tells her it will be finished when she finds the key where he told her. "What's it open?" she asks, but he just laughs.

The scene moves to the back of diner where we once again see the monster from the beginning. We now realize that he's just a homeless man, but he is holding the mysterious blue box we saw earlier. The couple from the airport, suddenly very tiny, make their way out of the box. Later, we see the blue key on Diane's table as she sits staring at it. Then, the couple, now life-size, appear at her apartment, laughing and screaming crazily, and chasing Diane around. Diane rushes into her bedroom and shoots herself. She falls onto the bed. We suddenly see the L.A. cityscape with Betty and Camilla's faces washed out against the background; they are laughing together.

Suddenly, one of the actresses from the club earlier comes on stage and says, "Silencio." The film fades out and ends.



Characters

Betty Elms/Diane Selwyn, played by Naomi Watts

Description

Naomi Watts does an excellent job playing two overlapping characters in this film. Betty Elms is the first character we meet in the film. When we see Betty, we discover that she has just come to Hollywood to stay at her aunt's apartment and begin her acting career. Betty seems like a very innocent girl and settles in quickly. She meets Rita and begins helping Rita uncover the truth of her mysterious accident and identity.

One hour and fifty-six minutes into the movie, we finally meet Diane Selwyn, the true character in the film. All of the previous action with Betty has actually taken place as Diane is dreaming before she dies. Diane's world is reality. Diane is in love with Camilla, the Rita of the first part of the film, but Camilla has recently announced her engagement to her director, Adam. Diane is heartbroken and has a hit put out on Camilla. When she finally returns home to find the mysterious blue key that the hit man said he'd leave when the deed was finished, Diane shoots herself.

Analysis

Betty and Diane are two parts of the same character. As Diane is dying after committing suicide, she contemplates what she has done to Camilla. As she hallucinates and dreams, Diane recreates herself into the character of Betty (the name of a waitress at Winky's) and begins to create a story in which none of the ugliness of that night ever happened.

Although Diane is terribly hurt that Camilla seems to be announcing her engagement to Adam, in the end Diane seems shocked by what she has done. When she sees the blue key on her table, she knows that the hit on Camilla has been successful, so she creates a fantasy world into which she can lose her guilt. However, not even her elaborate fantasy can help her escape from her own actions. She finally shoots herself to rid herself of the misery of her life.

Rita/Camilla Rhodes, played by Laura Elena Harring

Description

As the film begins, we see Rita having a gun pulled on her by her driver, getting into an accident, and running away to hide in Betty's aunt's apartment. Until the end of the film, we mostly believe that the events happening to Rita are true. However, when the film reaches 1:56, we learn that everything we have seen up until this point is false.



Rita is actually Diane's imagination of what could have happened had her lover, Camilla, avoided the hit that she put on her. Diane uses Rita to replay her life and choices in a way that keeps her from having to face the bitter reality that she just had her lover murdered.

Analysis

In the short time that we meet Camilla, she seems to be selfish and cares more about herself and her career than she cares about Diane. Although we may be able to see why Diane was upset with Camilla, we can still not completely understand why she would put a hit out on Camilla.

Rita, on the other hand, has no faults: she is simply the innocent woman in a bad situation. By fantasizing about helping Rita, Diane can justify that she is, in fact, a good person and that under other circumstances, things might have turned out differently. We see everything through Diane's eyes, so we do not likely get an accurate picture of Camilla in this film. However, by seeing the way Diane recreates the "good Camilla" in Rita, we begin to understand Diane's obsession and hatred.

Adam Kesher, played by Justin Theroux

Description

Adam Kesher is a promising young director in Hollywood. Throughout the film, Adam remains the same person, although his goals may be different. In the beginning of the film, in Betty's fantasy world, Adam is a young, idealistic director who is being forced by some members of the underworld into casting Camilla Rhodes. He is also married and finds to his shock that his wife is cheating on him.

In the real world, Adam is still a director, but he is also dating Camilla. Since Diane also loves Camilla, Adam becomes the enemy. Camilla uses Adam to make Diane jealous and to forward her career as an actress.

Analysis

Adam is a tool that helps us see the real Diane and Camilla. By seeing how Camilla uses Adam to torture Diane, we can understand to some extent Diane's feelings towards Camilla. For the most part, Adam is a secondary character whose actions lead us to the final story between Diane and Camilla.

Themes

Your Actions May Haunt You

Although Diane puts a hit out on Camilla, she does not seem to realize how much her actions will end up haunting her. Once she sees the blue key on her coffee table, Diane begins to fantasize about a world that might have been had her life been completely different. She imagines that Camilla escapes from the hit and that the two women meet and fall in love as they try to figure out Rita's true identity.

At the end of the film, we finally see what happened that led up to Diane's fantasy. We begin to see that although she thought she was doing what she wanted, her actions are actually haunting her. Diane cannot get away from what she has done, no matter how much she fantasizes that she and Camilla could have fallen in love and lived happily in some other way. As she sees the blue key for the final time, Diane hallucinates that an old couple are chasing her, laughing at her mistakes, and she finally kills herself out of her misery. When she cannot escape her past actions, the only thing left for Diane to do is to put an end to her misery and guilt.

Everything Is Not Always What It Seems

For the first hour and fifty-six minutes of the film, viewers do not recognize that they are actually experiencing a dream world made by Diane as she dies. As they see the story of Betty and Rita, they assume this must be the truth of the situation, because Betty and Rita are the first characters encountered in the film. Betty and Rita meet after Rita's tragic accident, and fall in love as Betty tries to help Rita. The viewers are certain that everything they have seen in the film is true.

However, viewers later learn that things are not always what they seem. At the 1:56 point, they suddenly discover they have been dealt a false hand. Betty is not a young girl who just moved to Hollywood to stay at her aunt's place for a while; she is actually Diane, a struggling actress whose aunt died. Rita is actually Camilla, Diane's lover who sacrificed Diane in order to be with Adam, a popular director who is pushing her career. Nothing is as it seems, including the car accident and the relationship between the women. The theme emerges quickly that everything is not always what it seems, and Diane is simply using her fantasies to try to create a reality that is less painful than the truth.

Controlling Force of Revenge

Diane is completely controlled by a feeling of revenge in the film. After Camilla flaunts her relationship with Adam and seems to announce their engagement, Diane is overcome by feelings of rejection. She seeks to hurt Camilla in the same way she has



been hurt. Diane decides that the only way to make things right is to make sure that Camilla dies.

Diane puts the hit out on Camilla so that she can feel the revenge and know that Camilla has gotten what she deserved. However, Diane then spends time fantasizing about how different life could have been had she not become controlled by her need for revenge. In the end, she regrets having Camilla killed, and she cannot live with herself and her mistakes. She loses everything, including her life, for revenge.

Style and Cinematography

David Lynch is known for his unusual style. The plot of *Mulholland Drive* is told in pieces and parts rather than as a whole. Viewers first see the story of Rita and Betty and become involved in their lives, before being sent to the present where the real action is happening. The first hour and fifty-six minutes of the film are spent in a dream/fantasy world of Diane's own creation. The unusual change of place and circumstance as well as the use of many different storylines that seem totally unrelated make the film seem unrealistic and cause it to be very confusing on a first viewing. By following the moves of the different characters, one eventually realizes that Diane and Betty are the same person as are Rita and Camilla. When their relationship is highlighted and Diane meets the hit man, the whole story begins to slowly fall into place.

Several parts of the film are shot in scenes of semi-darkness, which helps viewers realize the confusing nature of the relationships and events in the scenes. The opening and closing scenes especially use this technique: we see Diane in bed in both scenes, but we have trouble recognizing her, especially in the first scene. The scenes with Betty and Rita generally use more light, showing a more positive, happy view of life and Hollywood. Because the colors and lighting in her fantasy are far more vibrant than those in the "reality" scenes, viewers understand that Diane's fantasy world is, to her, far superior to her real life. When the blue box is finally opened and we enter Diane's real world, the picture becomes darker and more dismal, as do her motives and personality. Lynch uses lighting and color to effectively reflect mood throughout the film, especially as we move from Diane's fantasy into her reality.



Motifs

Living A Double Life

For most of the film, we see that Rita is living a double life. She doesn't know who she is, but she obviously has a past. Because of her situation, we are able to see her motives and feelings from an undisturbed viewpoint. Rita does not know why the accident occurred or who she is, but she lives a short life with Betty that brings them together.

Through this image of a double life, we see what Diane wanted in Camilla all along. In her fantasy, Diane pictures Camilla as Rita, the type of person that she wanted Camilla to be. However, Diane has recently discovered that Camilla will do whatever it takes to get ahead in her career, including leaving Diane behind. The double life of Rita allows the viewer to see the hopes and wishes of Diane as well as her reasoning of how things might have been.

Dreams and Fantasies

The majority of *Mulholland Drive* takes place within Diane's dream or fantasy before she dies. By using a dream/fantasy sequence, the film takes on an almost unreal air, and the viewer is never quite sure of the difference between fact and fiction. In her head, Diane creates a story in which she is Betty and Camilla is Rita. Diane places Camilla in the role of the girl who needs saving and Betty in the role of the savior.

Unlike Diane's true feelings for Camilla, which now rest in hatred and a desire for revenge, Betty's feelings for Rita are completely pure. By seeing Betty's perfect picture of Rita, we can guess that Diane at one time felt the same way about Camilla. Now, however, she feels that Camilla has deceived her by being with Adam, and Diane has Camilla killed for her mistakes. Her fantasy is an attempt to get back her life, but Diane cannot escape her mistakes. Eventually, the fantasy has to end, and Diane remains alone and sad, killing herself in the end to avoid the consequences and pain of her actions.

Lover's Quarrel

Diane and Camilla have had a major lover's quarrel that sets the events of the film in motion. Having been lovers for some time, Diane and Camilla have separated. However, Diane does not like this idea, and she becomes very angry with Camilla. Camilla flaunts her relationship with Adam, but after she announces their engagement, Diane can no longer handle the rejection and stress. She decides to put out a hit on Camilla.

Diane and Camilla's quarrel allows the filmmaker a reason to include the dream/fantasy scene that introduces the viewer to the characters, at least the way they are portrayed in Diane's imagination. We also realize that since Diane's imagination is so wild, there is always a chance that the final scenes of the movie are stretched as well. The lover's quarrel brings about the events of the film so that we can see into Diane's mind before she kills herself from grief and guilt over her actions.



Symbols

Mysterious Blue Box

The mysterious blue box is the path into the night of the real world. When the box springs open, the story of Betty and Rita suddenly ends and the story of Camilla and Diane immediately begins. Transported into real time, we see how Camilla has treated Diane, and we see Diane's response to the rejection. After Camilla seems to announce her engagement, Diane completely loses it and decides to have Camilla killed. Without the blue box leading us to the recent past and present, we would continue living in the happy world that Diane created for herself after finding the blue key on her coffee table.

Characters Overlapping

Throughout the film, the different characters overlap. There are two Camillas, only one of whom is the real Camilla/Rita. In addition, Betty and Diane are also the same person. The overlapping of characters and actresses helps viewers see different aspects of each character's personality. For example, the first Camilla seems to be young and innocent, but she is getting parts simply because of some men who are making demands on the director. The real Camilla, on the other hand, dates the director and possibly even plans to marry him so that she can get better parts. Additionally, we see the kind, caring side of Diane in Betty. Betty genuinely wants to help Rita and cares for her deeply, but the real Diane has become trapped in feelings of hatred, rejection, and revenge so that she cares for nothing but herself.

Blue Key

The blue key that appears on Diane's coffee table is symbolic of the hit being carried out on Camilla. While at Winky's, the hit man tells Diane that the blue key will be her sign that the job has been carried out. When she comes home to see the key, Diane knows that all her plans have been completed, but she is still not happy.

Rather than symbolizing revenge or freedom from Camilla, the key ends up symbolizing Diane's own sadness and death. She is haunted by her actions and can no longer bear to live after what she's done. The blue key reminds her of her plans, and she finally kills herself in the midst of a miserable fantasy in order to put all the unpleasantness behind her.

The Monster

At the beginning of the film, two men walk behind Winky's and spot a monster. Later, we learn that the monster is a poor homeless man who lives behind the restaurant. The monster represents those worst parts of people that sometimes get loose. Although the



homeless man may have been a nice person, he was trapped by his appearance and considered a monster by those around him. Diane herself became a monster once she was hurt by Camilla, and thus, it is only fitting that her final hallucinations of the mocking old people come from the homeless man's bag.

Old Couple on the Plane



Essay Questions

What is the relationship between Betty/Diane and Rita/Camilla?

What is the symbolism of the mysterious blue box?

How does Rita's episode at the beginning of the film relate to Camilla's fate?

Why is Diane so upset with Camilla?

What does the monster symbolize?

Is Diane dreaming or hallucinating before her death or are parts of the earlier events in the film real?

How do you interpret the beginning of the film and the final fate of the characters?

Why do so many of the characters overlap in the film?

Why does the Cowboy threaten Adam to force Camilla's role in his movie?

Why does Diane kill herself at the end of *Mulholland Drive*?

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