

# The New York Times

## ‘Land’ Review: True Nature

By Glenn Kenny Feb. 11, 2021

In her feature directing debut, Robin Wright plays a woman who moves alone to the mountains.



Robin Wright in “Land,” which she also directed. Credit...Daniel Power/Focus Features

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The beauty of the mountain regions of Alberta, Canada, is presented in modes both lush and piercingly sharp in Robin Wright’s feature directing debut, “Land.” Wright also plays the lead role, Edee, a grieving woman who wants to get away from the world.

Many say they’d like to do that, but Edee means it. As she heads off to a mountaintop where she’s bought a minimally equipped cabin, she sees an incoming call on her iPhone. She throws the phone in a trash bin. At the cabin, she asks the man who’s handing it over to her to drive her

rental car back down the mountain. “It’s not a good idea to be out here without a vehicle,” he warns. She does not heed him.

“This isn’t working,” Edee admits to herself as hard winter sets in. We’ve seen flashbacks to her former life, so we’re now partially aware of her situation. Through impressionistic shots that seem part flashbacks, part wishful visions, we get glimpses of an existence that is no longer Edee’s. And we begin to understand that while she’s come to this location perhaps in part to relive scenes from that life, she may also be actively courting death.

Suffering from exposure and dehydration, she’s found by a hunter, Miguel. With the help of his sister, a doctor, Miguel brings Edee back from the brink of death. The hunter is played by Demián Bichir, a great actor who very well may have the saddest eyes of anyone working in movies today. “Why are you helping me?” Edee asks. “You were in my path,” he says.

As they get to know each other a little, Miguel recognizes the arrogance and egotism that have made Edee’s mourning a destructive thing. To her assertion, “I’m here in this place because I don’t want to be around people,” he responds, in a gentle voice, “Only a person who has never been hungry thinks starving is a good way to die.”

Miguel reveals the losses in his own past, but it’s only at the movie’s very end that we learn how deep his injury, and indeed his self-injury, have gone. And what Edee’s been keeping hidden also comes fully to light. What’s left is reconciliation. If possible.

Wright’s movie is ambitious (that location! that weather!), but not grandiose. Its storytelling economy helps make it credible and eventually moving. While “Land” sometimes leans too hard on conventional signifiers (the rootsy music score is predictably somber), it’s a distinctive, strong picture.