

## Document Citation

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***The Apple***, by 18-year-old Samira Makhmalbaf, unreels the mostly actual story, and quite terrible parable, of two Iranian girlchildren who are suddenly freed by the Welfare Department from the lifelong prison of their home. Outraged, their grizzled old father quotes ancient wisdom: "A girl is like a flower; if the sun shines on her she will fade." Mother – a blind, shrouded "thing" – wants her backward, misshapen offspring to keep her permanent company in the dark. What a wonderfully resonant moment (for a woman filmmaker hemmed by cultural fundamentalism) when these resilient little ~~Kaspar~~ Häusers amuse themselves by slapping black-paint handprints on their prison wall, then stagger bravely out into the world on unsteady stick-legs, chattering away in puppylike whimpers, their tongues working in infantile anticipation of ice cream. *The Apple* may be charming kidstuff, but it also carries the charge of an existential horror story: Makhmalbaf's buried children, having emerged like stunted Eves from their parents' cave/grave to pursue the fruit of knowledge, can never really go home again.

(Reportedly, a boorish New York critic deliberately insulted young Makhmalbaf after a press screening by loudly declaring *The Apple* such an awful movie that it could only have been selected for the festival because her father is the respected Iranian director Mohsen Makhmalbaf, who wrote and cut the film. One must, of course, defend free speech even from the mouth of a disordered misogynist, but one does not have to curb one's contempt for premeditated cultural sadism.)

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