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'Aberdeen'

Road rage

Just as she's being promoted at a major London law firm, the past returns to dump a whole fresh load of chaos on Kaisa (Lena Headey). Her mother (Charlotte Rampling), with whom she's politely near-incommunicado, insists that Kaisa drop everything and escort her father, Tomas (Stellan Skarsgård) — from whom Kaisa's most definitely estranged —



Royal pain: Lena Headey plays Kaisa, a resentful, cussin', cocaine-snorting lawyer who has to escort her estranged, alcoholic father from Norway to Aberdeen.

—back "home," to Aberdeen. As if that's not bad enough, Dad lives in Norway. Plus, he's a falling-down, pissing-in-inappropriate-places, first-degree drunk. Kaisa isn't exactly a pillar of well-being, either: resentment roils beneath the expensively turned-out professional veneer, frequently surfacing in fits of sailor-worthy cussage, furious decision-making coup d'états, and secret cocaine hoovering. The father-daughter duo are barely warming up when they get banned from an entire airline, which forces them to take the slow route — via car, ferry, and other means — to Aberdeen. The tourist-snap experiences they accrue along the way include a night in jail, a street fight with way too many punch-happy party animals, and the temporary baby-sitting services of trucker Clive (Ian Hart), who is too sane not to be appalled but too kindhearted to let their self-destructive behaviors go without intervention. Norwegian writer-director Hans Petter Moland's first English-language feature traces a familiar trajectory by the end of which parent and child overcome all accumulated emotional baggage to realize they kinda need each other, warts 'n' all. But there's very little of the usual sentimentality on tap here: both Kaisa and Tomas are discomfitingly extreme fuckups, and *Aberdeen* dishes out some truly brutal humiliations before there's much hope of redemption. Beautifully shot and performed, often tartly funny, this excellent drama manages to create something very engaging from the company of two people you'd pray never to meet in real life. (Dennis Harvey)

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P. 78