



Valentine's Day just got a little bit sweeter this year with the introduction of the latest Nicholas Sparks film, a love story entitled "Safe Haven" starring heart throb Josh Duhamel, and Dancing With the Star's alumni Julianne Hough. The film, directed by Lasse Hallstrom, opened on February 14, 2013; the international love holiday for couples the world round.

"Safe Haven" follows the story of spousal abuse victim "Katie," (Hough) who flees her city home after a battle to the death with her alcoholic husband; blood is shed, a knife is pulled— moments of sheer uncertainty unfold before the eyes of the viewer, before "Katie" takes off to seek shelter and a new name in a small town far away from the mayhem. Hoping to lay low and start anew in the seaside town of Southport, North Carolina Katie tries to stick to her lonesome, but finds herself succumbing to the undeniable attraction she has towards widower Alex Wheatley and his two children. Unfortunately with love, comes honesty and vulnerability, and Katie doesn't trust that she can tell Alex where she came from or even find safety in a world with his family.

We've all seen our share of silver lining love stories built from the clouds of one of the characters abusive pasts, however, Nicholas Sparks "Safe Haven" provides a new take on the venture by keeping it interesting and unpredictable. This is one of the first Sparks films that kicks the suspense up a notch, and makes room for intriguing plot twists and a refreshing new angle on film romance.

"What we really wanted to do with this movie was, ok— there's a Nicholas Sparks audience that

we know is going to want to see this movie, but we don't want to just be compared to or lumped in with the other movies, we want this to be our own independent movie from the rest of them and different in its own way. At the core of this is about a connection between two people, and that's it, and we didn't want to force it. Fortunately Lasse (Hallstrom) was all about making this thing have sentiment without being overly sentimental. Just sort of letting things happen—he is a very patient man, and this movie is kind of a reflection of him.” Duhamel states.

“I think they're going to get caught up in the story.” Sparks shares. “There's a place for this film if you want to go in and settle into a small sleepy town with great performances and a story that you can get caught up in that twists off into directions that you maybe didn't expect. That's why people go to films, because it hits their mood and their mood to see something like this.”

Neither Duhamel or Hough have ever played characters like Alex and Katie in their film catalog before, so although these characters aren't extreme departures from what could be considered the norm to some individuals, these two talented actors bring a sincerity to their roles that make this fictitious world both believable and engaging.

“My character has a huge responsibility to give the audience, especially people who have gone through something my character has gone through, a realness about it,” Hough shares with Insight News, “Although this story is not necessarily just about abuse— it is about romance too, you still want to give people a strength in knowing they can overcome something like that if they've gone through it.”

“Safe Haven” is a perfect film for couples as well as individuals looking for a new take on the romantic film. You definitely won't be disappointed with this flick. Take a moment this weekend, to celebrate love or creativity in “Safe Haven.”