



Jules

87 min

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Since the beginning of motion pictures, unidentified flying objects carrying visitors from outer space have landed on planet Earth in movies made around the world. The aliens sometimes come in peace, but more often than not, they arrive with havoc on their mind. My favourite film about an alien that's not hostile is director John Carpenter's *Starman* from 1984 starring Jeff Bridges and Karen Allen. The arrival of a visitor from another galaxy is at the heart of *Jules* a movie with Ben Kingsley, Harriet Sansom Harris and Jane Curtin dipping their toes into the wellspring of aging characters. Kingsley plays Milton, a 78-year-old widower living in a small town in Pennsylvania. He spends a lot of time watching television and tends to his beautiful garden. He never seems to miss a town council meeting. During its public comments section, he always urges the Council to change the town's slogan to something more sensible and asks repeatedly for a crosswalk on a specific street. His requests are greeted politely, but nothing he suggests ever moves forward. During one meeting, Milton advises the citizens at the meeting that a flying saucer has landed in his yard and there is a creature from the UFO staying with him. With a careful look, the town supervisor attributes this unusual information to the fact that Milton is probably a little bit senile. However, while Milton may have accidentally put a can of green beans in his bathroom's medicine cabinet once, there really is an alien from outer space staying with him. This development is what makes the movie unique. Milton's daughter Denise (a superb Zoe Winters) is worried about him in the way that many children of older parents worry. She doesn't know about the alien who's watching television with her dad. She's just concerned that aging may be taking its toll on him. She thinks he needs to take some tests. "Go to a doctor," she encourages. Milton would prefer not to. Jade Quon plays the alien, and her performance is magical. Without uttering a word, she creates a character that alters our preconceived notions about how movies like this should proceed. The two strangers create an emotional bond over apples and TV. A woman named Sandy (played by Harris) thinks the young people of the town would benefit from doing good deeds for senior citizens and learns that there really is an alien. Joyce (played by Curtin) also discovers the truth. Drifting throughout the film are agents of the United States government allegedly searching for a "weather satellite" that may have returned to Earth. Director Marc Turtletaub and screenwriter Gavin Steckler have crafted an utterly charming movie that succeeds because the audience feels comfortable about Milton, Sandy, and Joyce going out of their way to practice kindness to a true stranger in a strange land. The point Turtletaub and Steckler are making is that the trio of humans are not senile or inching towards dementia because they have befriended an apple-eating alien. As time goes by, older people lose long time friends and lovers. There's nothing wrong with replacing them with the pilot of a UFO. The acting by Kingsley, Sansom, and Curtin is magnificent. *Jules* is the most delightful movie of the year.

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