Review: Screenplay shines in Oscar-nominated 'Anatomy of a Fall'

CHENNAI: Justine Triet's Cannes Film Festival Palme d'Or winning courtroom thriller "Anatomy of a Fall" is an elaborate study of a marriage that appears to be tottering. Now up for five Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Director, at the Oscars in March, the film has gone from success to success.

The relationship between a successful author, Sandra (played with incredible finesse by Sandra Huller — in fact, she has been nominated for the Best Actress Oscar this year), and aspiring writer Samuel (Samuel Theis) has been examined minutely in the 160-minute movie.

There are tensions in their marriage which seem trivial on the surface but when Samuel is found dead just outside their chalet in the Alpine region, mayhem ensures. The fact that he was discovered by the couple's visually impaired son Daniel (essayed

by a very talented Milo Machado Graner) makes the whole tragedy even more gruesome.

Many questions are raised in the courtroom drama that follows with suspicion falling on a number of players, including the deceased himself.

A brilliant script penned by Triet and her husband, Egyptian French screenwriter Arthur Harari, lifts the film to dramatic heights without any histrionics, just fantastic dialogue that leads us through a perilous journey fraught with suspense and a deep sense of unease. As one watches "Anatomy of a Fall," the ground we tread on seems slippery, throwing up niggling questions – most significantly about a wife's role at home and a community's restlessness when she takes an upper hand in the marriage.

The movie could have slipped into a pit of boredom had it not been for the engaging dialogue — the energy with which the screenplay is written ensures there is never a dull moment. With plenty of close up shots, the visuals demand our attention and there is just one flashback with the rest of the film focusing on the legal proceedings. Smart direction and an equally smart editing make Triet's creation absorbing.