

‘Karwaan’ is a road movie with a spirited driver



CHENNAI: It is simply amazing that a first-time film director, Akarsh Khurana, although he has a long record in charge of theatrical plays, could have handled the morbid subject of death and loss in such a breezy, subtly witty way in “Karwaan.” It’s a moving story by Bijoy Nambiar and an utterly believable screenplay by Khurana. The film’s trump card is Irrfan Khan, who proves to be the very soul and spirit of this road movie.

Portraying Shaukat in his usual quiet, lighthearted but mesmeric manner (with some of the best lines), Khan steers his ramshackle van through the winding roads of southern India, criss-crossing the Blue Mountains, calm rivers and picturesque Kerala landscape. But this hides an ominous tale: of a horrific accident on the Himalayas, and two dead bodies, each handed over to the wrong relative. Avinash (Dulquer Salman), who hates his father so much that he cannot even grieve his death, gets the body of Tanya’s (Mithila Palkar) grandmother. And the father’s corpse goes to Tanya’s family in Kerala.

When Avinash finds out about the blunder committed by a transport company, he seeks his friend Shaukat’s help to take the grandmother’s coffin to the right address. On the way, the two men fetch Tanya from her college hostel, and then a hilarious

journey begins. Shaukat's lack of English leads to rib-tickling fun, and his electrifying presence and sharp sarcasm are a marvel to watch.

Salman is wonderful as well as a son estranged from his bossy father who does not let him pursue his passion for photography, but he seems a little uncomfortable in Hindi and often breaks into English. However, he manages to convey cowardice and loss with amazing ease. Tanya is a modern girl for whom sex and pregnancy are no big deal, but her character could have had more substance.

One of the finest films I have seen in a long time, "Karwaan," while having a novel plot, sparkles all the more because of Khan, whose magnetism rubs off on his co-stars, and we see a delightfully natural and understated performance from Salman, too.
