

Despite solid performances, weak writing spoils 'Stay Close'



CHENNAI: US author Harlan Coben inked a 14-novel deal with Netflix in August 2018 — the on-screen adaptation of “Stay Close” follows “Safe,” “The Stranger,” “The Woods” and “The Innocent.” The latest, despite a brilliant cast, stretches on for far too long at eight episodes. There is just not enough meat to keep the series flowing without hiccups and the time-worn trope of having a lead character’s past catch up with them is becoming less and less effective, as evidenced here.



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“Stay Close” stars Cush Jumbo, Daniel Francis and Sarah Parish. Supplied

Directed by Daniel O’Hara and others, “Stay Close” takes us to British suburbia where Meghan Pierce-Shaw (a wasted Cush Jumbo) lives in domestic bliss with her three children and fiancé, Dave Shaw (Daniel Francis). They are planning to wed soon, but an unexpected twist occurs. Her past catches up with her in the form of an old friend, Lorraine (Sarah Parish), who comes armed with a warning. She informs Meghan that a stalker from her past life, Stewart Green, is back on the streets, despite the mother-of-three’s attempts to create a new identity for herself. Her biggest blunder — or so it seems — is that she did not move away from her old neighborhood, which is a bizarre and weak plot point to say the least.

Coben also introduces another angle to these mysterious goings on. Hard-bitten detective Broome (James Nesbitt) and his ex-wife, Erin Cartwright (Joe Joyner), are now professional partners probing a string of missing men, including Green who disappeared 17 years ago.



The series boasts eight episodes. Supplied

The series stays true to Coben's strong suit — his novels are always about the uncovering of past crimes and secrets — but it fails to create any sort of meaningful tension and cliches and cliffhangers fail to hit the mark.

The twist at the end is much too feeble to make any impact or sense in a story that often runs like an Agatha Christie murder mystery, with just about everybody seemingly a suspect.

“Stay Close” does not quite stay with you, despite some great pieces of acting from Jumbo and Nesbitt.
