

The Perfect Couple: Netflix's murder-mystery turns, twists and thrills

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The first impressions of the Nicole Kidman starrer, *The Perfect Couple*, did mislead me. It was gorgeously mounted, set in a scenic American sea coast and had the most beautiful people serenading across the small screen. It so very much resembled one of those Hindi serials in which the characters are impeccably dressed at all times of the day and night. *The Perfect Couple* – Netflix's latest outing – seemed frivolous and even pretentious in those first minutes. But, then, I was wrong. It was glamorous, it was dazzling and the scenes were alluring. But the six-episode limited series had stuff, and resembled an Agatha Christie murder mystery – where every character is a suspect, and each had a motive to kill. Brilliantly shot and mounted, it grew on me, every minute of it and I had to finish all of six hours of the show (or thereabouts) at one go.

In the midst of all this opulence – lavish lifestyles funded by fifth generational wealth that could buy the most expensive cars and Kashmir knits – a bloody

incident plays spoilsport. Set in Nantucket, Massachusetts in the U.S., a family gets together for a marriage in a 40-bedroom mansion that is nestled by the blue waters of an ocean. Kidman's Greer Garrison Winbury and Tag (Liev Schreiber) have been married for 29 years, and outwardly they are a perfect pair. But are they? Well, not really. Tag has had a string of affairs that Greer chooses to ignore, but when one of his girlfriends at the beach resort is washed ashore, it is trouble and turbulence in paradise.

The couple has three sons – Thomas (Jack Reynor), Benji (Billy Howle) and Will (Sam Nivola). Benji is the groom, all set to walk down the aisle with Amelia (Eve Hewson). They are madly in love with each other, a union that Greer frowns upon, losing no opportunity to savage the bride behind her back.

There are more people. Thomas's pregnant wife Abby (essayed by Dakota Fanning), Shooter (Ishaan Khattar from our own Bollywood) and the faithful housekeeper Gosia (Irina Dubova). Wait a sec. Isabelle Adjani as a family friend and a couple of detectives complete the circle or almost. One of them is Donna Lynne Champlin as Nikki Henry,

and what a performance. Every thought she has about each member of the motley group is written so luminously on her face. I would think that she is the queen of the drama -- not Kidman, not Fanning, not Hewson.

Based on the 2018 novel, also titled *The Perfect Couple* by Elin Hilderbrand and which became a hot topic of conversation, the series helmed by Susanne Bier is flawlessly directed and smartly edited. The suspense does not suffocate you, and the beach watch has an easy going feel. Even when the body of a woman is washed ashore, the grimness of the terrible incident is not thrust on your face. In a way, the style is Hitchcockian, subtle and soft. And the atmosphere resembles a Barbara Cartland novel with a touch of the Agatha Christie mystery. A lovely cocktail, indeed.

I know the reviews have been mixed, but I quite enjoyed it, because of its crispness and peppy dialogue. Do not miss out on Adjani taking French, nineteen to a dozen. And the turns and twists thrill! When the climax comes, nobody could have guessed it. The sleuths themselves could not!



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