

Tunisia Video Collection

The Silences of the Palace

Capitol Home Video, 1996

125 minutes, color

This video examines a woman's struggle in dealing with her childhood past. The video begins by introducing the woman named Alia. When Alia is informed that a man from her past, named Sid'Ali, has died, she is forced to re-live her life and her mother's life and death. She returns to the place where she spent her childhood: a palace in Tunisia. Most of the video shows Alia looking back at her young teenage years during the 1950's, when she served at the palace with her mother, Khadija. Alia struggles with her own identity, as her mother refuses to tell her who her father is. She also struggles with what her mother is expected to do for her masters. Alia tries to deny the fact that she will remain working in the palace like her mother, yet finds herself being used in the same ways as she grows into a woman. Alia's time at the palace ends during the time of the Tunisian revolution. Alia herself is now dealing with an unplanned pregnancy, and at the end of the film makes a decision about the child by re-living her past with her mother. This film gives the viewer a good introduction to gender roles and politics in Tunisia during a time of political unrest when French domination came to an end. It tells a very interesting story that will hold the viewers attention throughout the entire film.
