

# Sanctuary (2022 film)

***Sanctuary*** is a 2022 American dark comedy psychological thriller film directed by Zachary Wigon from a screenplay by Micah Bloomberg. It stars Margaret Qualley and Christopher Abbott as a dominatrix and her client who have an emotionally intense final session as he transitions to the life of CEO of a large company.<sup>[4]</sup> The film had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival on September 11, 2022, and received a limited theatrical release in the United States on May 19, 2023.

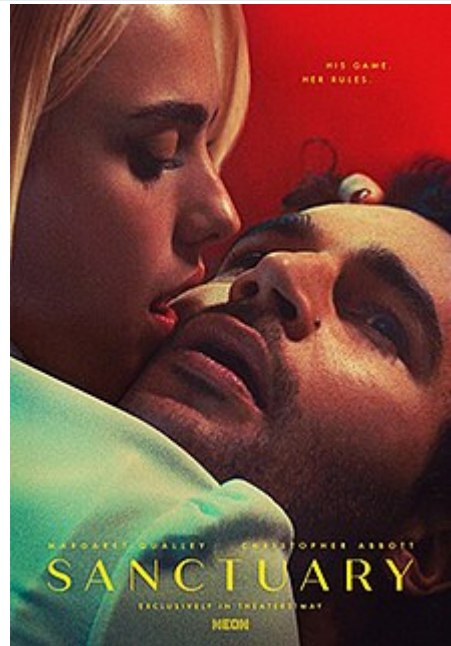
## Plot

As Hal orders room service in a fancy hotel, Rebecca arrives to interview him for the position of CEO at this hotel chain. Her questions become increasingly personal and eventually turn to sexual degradation. She is in fact a dominatrix following a script that Hal has prepared to shame him. After she forces him to clean the bathroom in his underwear, she allows him to climax and the two end their scene and have dinner. He thanks her and they briefly discuss his transition to actually being CEO of the company after his father's death. He explains that he can no longer see her, as it is not appropriate in his new lifestyle and gives her an extremely expensive watch as a parting gift. She is clearly offended and leaves abruptly.

At the elevator, she has a realization and returns to the hotel room. Using some of the business philosophy that Hal's father put into his management book, she alleges that Hal's father believed Hal was weak. She is really responsible for making him the man he is. She demands half of his first year salary: \$4 million. To force him into giving her the money, she alleges that she has recorded their sessions and will leak them to the public. At first Hal does not believe her, then acts as though he is undisturbed by the blackmail threat, but he eventually trashes the apartment in a rage looking for the camera as Rebecca dances to disco and mocks him.

Hal accidentally electrocutes himself. While lying on the floor humiliated, Rebecca points out that he has become aroused. Hal again says that he is actually in control of their relationship and that it is purely transactional: he has no emotional

### Sanctuary



Theatrical release poster

<b>Directed by</b>	<u>Zachary Wigon</u>
<b>Written by</b>	Micah Bloomberg
<b>Produced by</b>	<u>David Lancaster</u> Stephanie Wilcox Ilya Stewart Pavel Burian
<b>Starring</b>	<u>Margaret Qualley</u> <u>Christopher Abbott</u>
<b>Cinematography</b>	Ludovica Isidori
<b>Edited by</b>	Kate Brokaw Lance Edmands
<b>Music by</b>	Ariel Marx
<b>Production companies</b>	Rumble Films Charades Mosaic Films Hype Studios
<b>Distributed by</b>	<u>Neon</u>
<b>Release dates</b>	September 11, 2022 ( <u>TIFF</u> )

attachment to her and if he wanted, he could have her killed. Rebecca seems disturbed by this at first, but then tells Hal she is really in control of their relationship, initiating sex at knifepoint and saying that Hal will impregnate her and they will have a child together, tying the two of them together for life.

Hal goes to his laptop to arrange to have the money wired to Rebecca. She leaves once again, but this time Hal intercepts her at the elevator and demands to get some collateral to ensure that she will not keep on dragging out blackmail threats indefinitely. She refuses and insists that there is nothing he can do to be in control. He drags her back into the hotel room and demands to know what is really happening. She shows him footage of the two of them that she has secretly recorded. Hal is so despondent that he ties Rebecca to a bedpost and demands she delete the footage. Instead, she tells him that she has quit her job as a dominatrix and has even broken up with her fiancé, as she only feels self-actualized during their sessions. He demands Rebecca say she is lying, and even uses their safeword "sanctuary", but she ignores him. Horrified, Hal threatens to commit murder–suicide.

Instead, Rebecca proposes that they play one final game: she will become Hal's father, returned from the dead. Hal is reluctant, but she continues the roleplay and eventually leads him into the bathroom where she tells him to say, "I am nothing like you and I never will be" and Hal responds, "I am nothing like you and I don't have to be". The two embrace and fall asleep.

Rebecca awakens on the bathroom floor as Hal cleans up the apartment. The two exit at the same time and as Hal is on his way to attend a ceremony where his mother will hand over control of the company, he comes up with the idea that Rebecca can be CEO instead. This way, she can be near Hal and live the life of an independent woman who is in charge. Meanwhile, he can offer her emotional comfort, material support, and sex. Rebecca alleges that he has no way to even say that to his mother, so the plan will never work. He responds that he will say that they are in love and he is giving her his company. They kiss as the elevator opens into the lobby.

## Cast

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- Margaret Qualley as Rebecca Marin
- Christopher Abbott as Hal Porterfield

## Production

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In September 2021, it was announced Margaret Qualley and Christopher Abbott had joined the cast of the film, with Zachary Wigon directing from a screenplay by Micah Bloomberg.<sup>[4]</sup> Principal photography took place in New York City.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Release

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*Sanctuary* had its world premiere at the 47th Toronto International Film Festival on September 11, 2022.<sup>[6]</sup> Shortly thereafter, Super LTD, a division of Neon, acquired distribution rights to the film; however, it ended up being distributed under Neon.<sup>[7]</sup> The film also screened at Miami Dade College's 40th Annual Miami Film Festival on March 11, 2023, where it was nominated for the Knight Marimbas Award.<sup>[8]</sup>

	May 19, 2023 (United States)
<b>Running time</b>	96 minutes <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Box office</b>	\$794,362 <sup>[2][3]</sup>

It had a limited theatrical release in the United States on May 19, 2023.<sup>[9][10]</sup> It was released digitally on June 20, 2023, and a physical media release on August 15.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Reception

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On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 89% of 90 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 7.6/10. The website's consensus reads: "Revolving around outstanding performances from Margaret Qualley and Christopher Abbott, *Sanctuary* confounds expectations with élan."<sup>[12]</sup> Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 67 out of 100, based on 17 critics, indicating "generally favorable" reviews.<sup>[13]</sup>

## References


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## External links

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- [Official website \(<https://neonrated.com/films/sanctuary>\)](https://neonrated.com/films/sanctuary) 
  - *Sanctuary* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt15364972/>) at [IMDb](#)
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