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Sommario/riassunto	The story of an all-female caving expedition gone horribly wrong, 'The Descent' (2005) is arguably the best of the mid-2000s horror entries to return verve and intensity to the genre. Unlike its peers ('Saw', 'Hostel', etc.), 'The Descent' was both commercially and critically popular, providing a genuine version of what other films could only produce as pastiche. For Mark Kermode, writing in the Observer, it was 'one of the best British horror films of recent years,' and Derek Elley in Variety described it as 'an object lesson in making a tightly-budgeted, no-star horror pic.' Emphasizing female characters and camaraderie, 'The Descent' is an ideal springboard for discussing underexplored horror themes: the genre's engagement with the lure of the archaic; the idea of birth as the foundational human trauma and its implications for horror film criticism; and more.