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Splitsville, a Land of Diabolical Lawyers

‘Divorce Corp.’, a Documentary by Joseph Sorge

By NICOLAS RAPOLD JAN. 9, 2014

Opens on Friday.

Directed by Joseph Sorge

1 hour 33 minutes; not rated

The muckraking documentary “Divorce Corp.” is about as subtle as those television pitches by lawyers with books-by-the-foot backdrops who are itching to take your marriage off your hands. Joseph Sorge’s document dump of a movie grinds through the abuses and outrages experienced by people at the mercy of divorce lawyers and family courts.

Divorce often gets a comical bounce or a leering eye at the movies, but the excesses claimed here aren’t tabloid-rack fun. Protracted divorces sap couples’ resources even in amicable separations and, as in other areas of legal practice, the lawyers seem to have an incentive to draw out the conflict. In Mr. Sorge’s film, which is narrated by Drew Pinsky, unhappy people recount conflicts of interest among judges and problems with custody evaluators. Lawyers and activists concede many of the points, and a California private investigator relishes the role of assuring us that it’s all even sleazier than you could imagine.

The tone ranges from wounded to disgusted, but a movie positing this deep a rot in the system needs to be more measured and better made to take hold. The inelegant animated explanations don’t help, nor do the frequent mentions of the enlightened ways of “Scandinavians” (as the voice-over insists on referring to them en masse), with their simpler divorce procedures. Ending as abruptly as a dropped microphone after a harangue, Mr. Sorge’s movie suggests that divorce will probably be even more unpleasant than any couple would expect.

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