

STAR MAGAZINE

4/10/08

DARK MATTER

Reviewed by Marshall Fine

3 and a half stars

Who's in it: Aidan Quinn, Meryl Streep

What's it about: A Chinese physics student (Ye Liu) reacts violently when his genius is thwarted by his graduate student adviser (Aidan Quinn).

Big talk: The student has come to the college in Utah to work on his doctorate about the Big Bang - but his egocentric adviser can't handle the fact that the student may be smarter than him. The student, meanwhile, comes under the wing of a rich China-phile (Streep), who acts as a kind of mother hen for the Chinese exchange students. This dense, emotionally complex film looks at the struggle for academic achievement in a competitive scholarly landscape, ruled as much by personal jealousies as by professional achievement. Liu captures the excitement of a student whose mind is suddenly free to roam - and the frustration that comes with being reined in. Quinn has the perfect blend of phony concern and pompous nastiness as the adviser, while Streep oozes compassion as a woman who sees disaster in the making and is helpless to stop it.

Long story short: This one is tough but rewarding.  
3 and a half stars.