The Dark End of the Street, a film by Jan Egleson, opening Friday Feb. 27 at the Galeria Cinema near Harvard Square.

What's it really like to live in the city? The Dark End of the Street explores this question with a drama staged in and around a housing project of the inner city. Filmed entirely in the Boston area, the drama gives one a glimpse of city life rarely encountered in sheltered environments like MIT.

As soon as one gets over the shock of realizing that there is a real world outside of MIT, one can begin to explore it. For the naive, Egleson's film is a good place to begin that exploration. The Dark End of the Street deals with the conflicts that arise in an imperfect society such as our own. The plot is very simple, almost too simple to be enjoyable. Henry Tomaszewski and his girlfriend Donna (Laure Harrington) are surprised when their friend Ethan (Terence Grey) shows up late at night. All three are up on the roof of the housing project, the local "hangout." It soon becomes apparent that Ethan is drunk, but before Billy can grab him, he falls and is seriously injured. Billy leaves the scene of the accident afraid to face the police. Subsequently, the police suspect Brian (Al Eaton), a young black man seen earlier at the scene of the accident. The movie goes on to detail the conflict between Billy, who would rather see Brie convicted than face the police and tell the truth, and Donna, who is torn between loyalty to Billy and in-justice to Brian. Meanwhile, Ethan dies, raising the dramatic tension of the film.

In the end, the movie follows the much-used path in which justice wins out. Brian is released, and Billy must face the police. Egleson clearly defines the conflicts of each individual in the drama, be it the detective, the accused, the girlfriend or the frightened Billy. In defending individual roles, Egleson goes too far. One can easily predict the actions, and even the lines of the characters.

The Dark End of the Street gives us a portrait of city life complete with racial tensions, fear and dishonesty. It does not adequately analyze, explain or justify this portrait. Egleson provides a believable series of events, but he provides little material for reflection once the lights go up.

Jeff Friedman