

Drift Ashore

вероятно, никога повече

Written by Alejandro Scott

LOGLINE

After the funeral of her mother in law, Iskra realizes she has spent years playing the mother her husband never stopped needing. Trapped now in his childhood home, where reality shifts around her, she discovers that to break free, she'll first have to fight the woman that wanders in its walls, a version of herself she did not know existed.


01 THE TEASER

01 — THE TEASER

Waves, before anything else. Waves against the rocks. And as we watch their hypnotic dance, two voices rising out of that same dark water, muffled at first, the way the water itself sounds. They sharpen slowly, clearer, louder, angrier, until we're inside the fight without ever having chosen to be. Yasen, warm mannered, a man who has already surrendered more than once in his life. Iskra, younger, carrying the strength of someone who grew up faster than she should have. Husband and wife. Every accusation lands somewhere old, somewhere vulnerable: his mother, the years they spent failing each other quietly before failing each other loudly. We can tell, the fight will not end well.

Before the last word lands, we cut back in time to a quieter version of them. Their own house, the morning they get ready to bury his mother. She helps him with his tie. He holds her a little longer than the moment requires. Small kindnesses, simple demonstrations; the kind two people only still offer each other when there's still something worth protecting.

We follow them forward from there, tender in a way that makes what's coming feel unbearable, until it arrives, again, at the fight we already heard. This time, we see all of it. And we have to witness its consequences.



The morning Iskra and Yasen get ready to bury his mother, they realize the photograph meant for the funeral is missing. After almost giving up they find that the door to the one room they haven't opened since their child died is slightly ajar. Iskra does not dare open the door, it's Yasen who ventures in and finds what they were looking for. But is a different photograph from the one they ordered be printed. In the picture they see Yasen's late mother, but she's holding a small child -their child, before the accident. There's no time to print a new image, so take this one with them.

They drive to the island where the woman used to live. On the road a song plays on the radio. It's his song, the one that once made him famous. He turns the radio off.

The house where Yasen mother's lived sits on a small island of just a few other houses, so they must take a ferry to reach the place -this makes Iskra squeamish and nauseated for some reason. They eventually get on the ferry and she realizes the wind is refreshing. As she begins to enjoy the ride she notices how a toddler tries to climb the fence that fences the deck. She's paralyzed, can't even say a word. It feels like ages but the child's grandmother runs in and catches the child before an accident occurs. The woman eyes Iskra with a frown, as if questioning her for not having done anything.

Someone on board recognizes Yasen, asks if he's still making music. He gives a non-answer and tries to move on as soon as possible by hiding behind an excuse around Iskra.

At the funeral, an old couple stands apart from the other mourners, friends of Yasen's mother, two of the few people who actually still live on this small island year round. They knew her well. Orlando, a man who owns the house that's the closest, brings up the royalties Yasen still lives off and confides in him that he too is lucky to have made music that pays for his lifestyle, although it's commercial jingles. Lidia, Orlando's wife mentions the armchair in the living room, how it was always Yasen's mother's favorite, and then says something else, how they got to meet the child in the photograph before it tragically passed away. This makes them both uncomfortable and they quickly try to excuse themselves from the conversation. Lidia grabs Iskra's hand before she leaves and thanks her for taking care of Miriam (Yasen's mother) in her last days. That 'they talked a lot, about everything'. Upon hearing this, Iskra is disturbed.

When the mourners finally leave, the house goes silent around them. Facing the wreckage of the day alone, Iskra and Yasen have to decide what to do with the photograph. Neither of them wants to look at it. They decide it has to go out to the shed. Yasen volunteers to take it outside to the shed, and on his way back he sees the neighbor doing something in the dark near the house, something that doesn't sit right, but Yasen shrugs it off as the man is native to the island. He does not mention the encounter to Iskra but she senses something is off.

Iskra stares out the window, catching the glow of Orlando and Lidia's house as if trying to decipher a secret message past the glass.

After a night of poor sleep, Iskra wakes up early and finds the photograph back inside the house, posed upright in the mother's favorite armchair. When she confronts Yasen about not taking it outside as he had promised, a fight breaks and escalates fast. As they go back and forth throwing all sorts of accusations Yasen's eyes drift past Iskra and lock on the photograph, and whatever is left of him gives way to something none of them recognize. He's taken by some almost supernatural anger and turns the fight into a terrible lashing out against Iskra. She backs away from him and bumps into the armchair. The photo falls, the glass shatters. He says the worst thing he has ever said to her. His words are: "Shut your fucking mouth. You are nothing like her (his own mother). At least she could be a mother".

They walk away from each other for the night.

The next morning, she is resolute to leave. She looks around the house for her passport and as she finds it, she runs into Yasen ready to clean the shattered glass from the fallen picture. As he fails to say anything to her, she finds the courage to leave at that very moment.

She takes the car with her but on the way to the ferry she swerves, and crashes. She blacks out. When she comes to, she realizes it's day but she still walks to the port but the hours are gone and so is the ferry. She sees a small boat at the dock but she realizes it has no oars to paddle with. She gets in anyway, pushes off out of pure stubbornness, and goes nowhere. She sits there, unable to make a decision.

From the water she sees a still, unexplained woman on the shore, exactly like the one in the picture -same dress and holding a child that resembles her own. Iskra and the figure lock eyes; even in the distance she can feel the figure's eyes piercing into hers. And then we see a violent flash of Yasen drowning beside the boat, his face all wrong. Iskra seems to understand something in the figure's piercing stare and breaking the spell looks at the water, sees Yasen drowning and immediately jumps in after him.

She makes her way back to the house on foot, mud to her knees. When she approaches the house she sees warm light coming from inside. Through the window she sees a version of herself already there, dancing with Yasen, dancing his music he so much hates, the same some he turned off the radio for on their way to the island. Inside the couple looks tender, loving, everything she doesn't have anymore. The other Iskra smiles and reaches for a glass of wine. Yasen stops her, gently, protective in a way that says more than either of them is saying out loud.

The original Iskra watches from outside, unable to hear the words clearly through the glass. Then, without any cut, without any warning, she is no longer watching. She is the one Yasen is speaking to. She is inside and through the window she can see nothing but the darkness of the night. Yasen, standing behind her, asks her what names would she like to name their next child if she was a girl. Iskra is confused, voices her concern around never agreeing to a second child and brings up the fight they had had. He tells her that maybe she's had too much wine, and that she should rest, not before confirming that idea of trying again was hers. She doesn't argue and goes to bed but she moves with caution.

As she tries to end the night and go to rest, still unsure of what has happened, a door she opens connects her to the room from their own home, the same one she's never able to enter since they lost their first child. It is the same room, but dressed for a daughter, not their son, with the exception of a single small shoe that she recognizes and leans in to pick up. From inside the room, a reflection shows us how the mother-in-law stands behind Iskra as she tries to understand what she sees. The deceased woman's hand reacher for Iskra's shoulder and when she almost gets to her, Yasen appears behind her, startling her. She looks around and the room has changed.

She goes to bed, asking him if he'll join her. But he says he has been struck by inspiration and wants to write a few songs in celebration of their new plans.

Iskra wakes up in the middle of the night. Alone in bed. She get's up calling out for Yasen but she only finds the echo of her own voice. In the living room, Lidia sits on alone with a calm demeanor. She invites Isrka to join her for tea. Iskra sits across the woman and asks about Yasen and why she's there to which the woman only replies with cryptic messages of Iskra needing to go an a quest to save her daughter. Suddenly Iskra asks the question she's been wanting to ask Lidia: "What did she say to you?".

That's when the chair that sits between them, the same that was the mother-in-law's favorite, starts to shake as if victim of its own earthquake. Iskra keeps her attention between the chair and Lidia's oracle-like sentences. When the chair reaches its most violent point of shaking, Iskra whips her head towards it and the chair stops. An instant later she's startled by a loud scream and the sound of glass shattering.

When she looks, Lidia is gone and in her place only broken glass is seen on the floor, that and bloody footprints. Isrka follows them through a escher-esque hallway full of mirror. And in them, Iskra's reflection is that of the mother-in-law but Isrka does not notice, she in a trance.

A door calls to her, she nears it and opens it wide. It leads to the shed where Yasen hid the photograph. She walks out of the shed and into the night. The mother-in-law's figure watches her by big tree by in the distance, same tree Orlando watched Yasen in the shed that night. At the base of the tree Iskra finds a half-unearthed chest. Inside she finds it full of water and only a child's shoe floating in it.

She realizes the shoe belong to her lost child. Her face shows us she seems to understand something we can't tell. She rushes back into the shed, but that door now leads her to the shed's mess. Confused, she turns back and night has turned into morning. She runs into the house through the yard while calling Yasen's name.

She finds him in the living room. He is picking up blankets from the couch, as if he had slept on it the night before. She tries to tell him she has something to say to him, something important, something that's been anchored in her heart for a long time and it's been suffocating her, but he ignores her completely. She grows in frustration and starts messing the house around him but it is as if she was not even there; Yasen exits the room without even glancing at her.

She sits across from him at the table. Between them, two bowls, his barely touched, oats gone soft in milk he hasn't finished. She notices he never looks up, not once, not even when she moves.

He stands, taking his bowl toward the sink. She tries to say something, or maybe she doesn't, we're not sure she even gets the chance. He is already gone from the room before she can decide.

She stays there a moment longer, alone at the table now. When she looks up again, his chair is empty, has been for longer than it should have taken him to leave. It is as if he was never there at all.

Like a projection, a scene appears on her iris. We keep zooming in until Iskra is gone, and the scene is a beach, the waves running over the sand.

We pull back to find Iskra and Yasen walking it together, holding hands. As we pull back further they shrink into a small corner of the frame, and Yasen is revealed sitting alone in the sand, watching the two of them the way you watch a memory, not a moment. We keep pulling back. Yasen gets smaller still, and Iskra is standing above him now, in the distance, looking down at the beach where he sits by himself.

She turns around and her body blocks our view for an instant to reveal she's back in the house and she moves full of resolve. She goes to the living room where the blankets are folded as he had left them before she messed the room, as she had never made a mess. He's there, sitting on the couch by himself. She stares at him, studying his face - he seems very nervous, uneasy. Maybe this isn't her Yasen at all.

As she tries to decipher his face she notices the other Iskra enters the room and sits next to him. From her perspective, the original Isrka is again baffled. The two sit for a second on the couch looking at each other's eyes. Yasen presses her with a monosyllabic question (And?). The Isrka on the couch pulls a pregnancy test, one that tells them she's pregnant. He cannot believe his eyes, he's happy. Iskra witnessing the scene has never seen him so happy.

The two on the couch kiss and hug for a very long time in celebration. After an instant, the Iskra on the couch turns her head in an almost unnatural way and looks directly into the eyes of our original Iskra, who is taken aback, that she can be seen by her double. Something is very wrong in the air and as if out of nowhere, she jumps. There is now only one Iskra, she's now holding Yasen who's now in tears of happiness.

Iskra is beyond confused. But as if things weren't difficult enough for her to understand, she sees the mother-in-law's silhouette standing in the distance behind Yasen. She can hear as he whispers words of happiness and rejoice on her ear. The last thing he says is mention he has the perfect name for her.

Iskra pushes him away. Having had enough of all the confusion and mind games she confronts him and tells him she never wanted a second child (maybe never wanted the first one to begin with -she cannot bring herself to confess this yet so she stops herself mid-sentence). She claims she won't let him decide for her no more.

She runs out of the house in search of Lidia's and Orlando's house on the island. The night's island is hostile and maze-like. Many a ghost seem to haunt her as she rushes through dark paths and unexpected bushes. When she reaches the house she's looking for she finds Orlando, calmly sitting by himself, as if he had been expecting her.

He offers her tea, in the same fashion that Lidia had done it earlier. Iskra does not trust the man one bit and starts asking him questions about him and Lidia. The man denies the existence of Lidia and claims he had never been married in his life. Iskra, confused, presses him but his demeanor remains calm and his answers negative.

As she grows obfuscated we hear a boiling kettle in the background. The tension of the whistle grows and Iskra is curious about it. She walks towards the kitchen where she finds the mother-in-law standing there with her back turned to Iskra. She picks up a knife, sneaks up on her and stabs her.

When she does, the woman disappears and her dress falls onto the floor. The kettle is the loudest and that's when Yasen appears from behind Iskra. She is now back in the mother-in-law house holding a bloody knife. When she turns to him he's visibly worried about her, asking her what is happening with her, that he's scaring her. He tries to take the knife from him but Iskra, realizing she now is wearing the mother-in-law's dress becomes hostile, tired of all the changes happening around her. She cannot longer trust anyone, maybe not even herself.

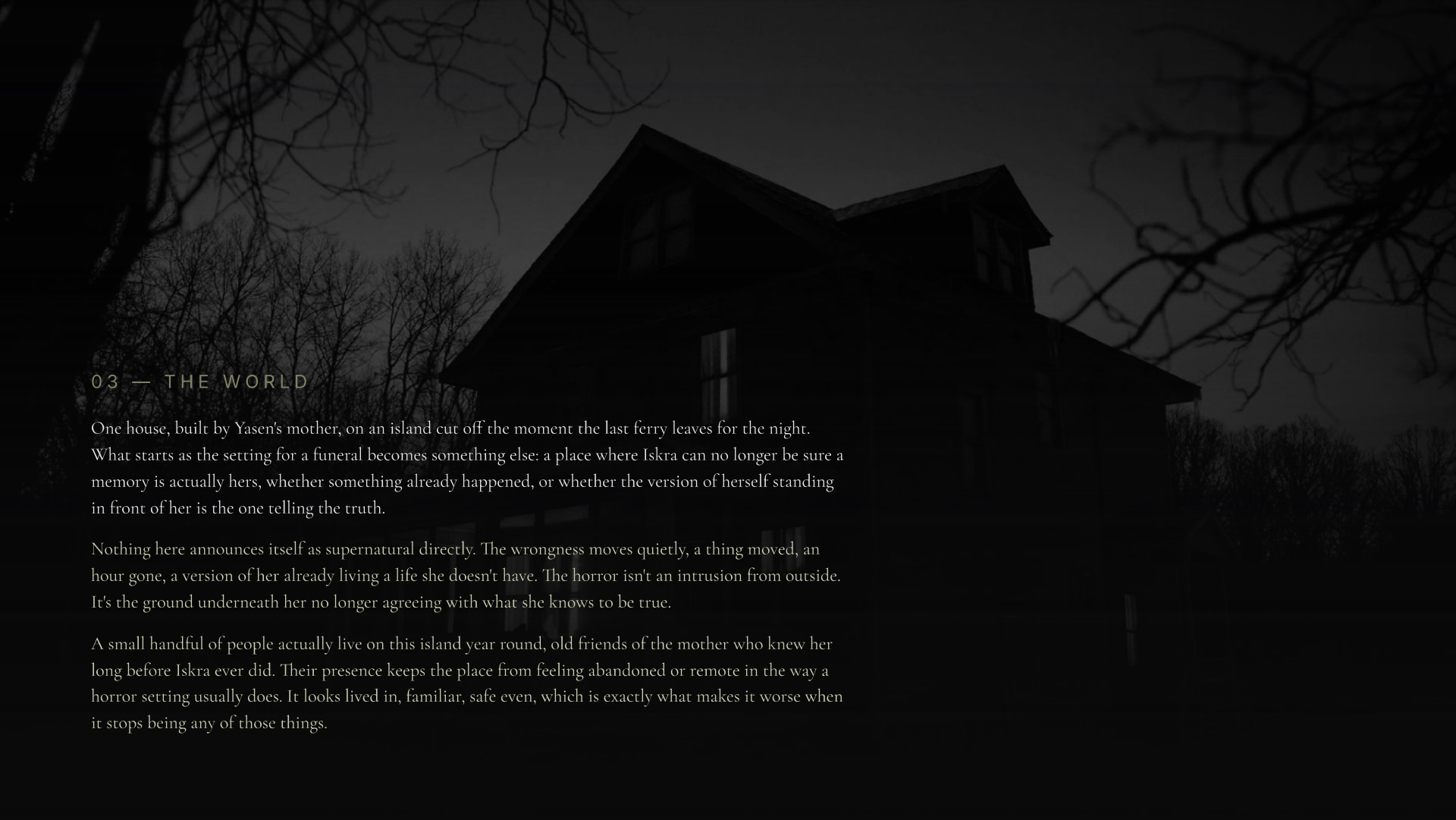
Yasen tells her she's hurting their daughter, that she needs rest. Iskra rejects him, they struggle and she cuts him. Realizing what she's done, she drops the knife and runs out of the house. The door leads her to the shore, where she can see a familiar scene: herself sitting on the boat with no oars.

Understanding that this is her from before, she watches as the Iskra on the boat dives into the water to try to save the image of Yasen drowning.

Underwater she discovers her other self trying to resurface but her ankle is being held by a Yasen that cannot swim. Iskra tries to saver the other self but the more she tries the more bubbles that obscure her and our vision of what is actually happening.

Iskra is now alone. She drowns.

Her body slowly floats up, as if being pulled from an invisible cable tied to her chest. Once on the surface of the water, she comes back to, gasps for air and the image match cuts to her waking up on their bed. Morning light spills from the window. Iskra sits up on the bed, to her side, Yasen stills sleeps a comfortable sleep. When Iskra looks up she sees on the wall in front of her the picture of the mother-in-law holding their lost child. Then she looks down at the bed to see how in between her legs there is blood staining the sheets, she looks back up and smiles.



03 — THE WORLD

One house, built by Yasen's mother, on an island cut off the moment the last ferry leaves for the night. What starts as the setting for a funeral becomes something else: a place where Iskra can no longer be sure a memory is actually hers, whether something already happened, or whether the version of herself standing in front of her is the one telling the truth.

Nothing here announces itself as supernatural directly. The wrongness moves quietly, a thing moved, an hour gone, a version of her already living a life she doesn't have. The horror isn't an intrusion from outside. It's the ground underneath her no longer agreeing with what she knows to be true.

A small handful of people actually live on this island year round, old friends of the mother who knew her long before Iskra ever did. Their presence keeps the place from feeling abandoned or remote in the way a horror setting usually does. It looks lived in, familiar, safe even, which is exactly what makes it worse when it stops being any of those things.



04 — THE CHARACTERS

Iskra (28)

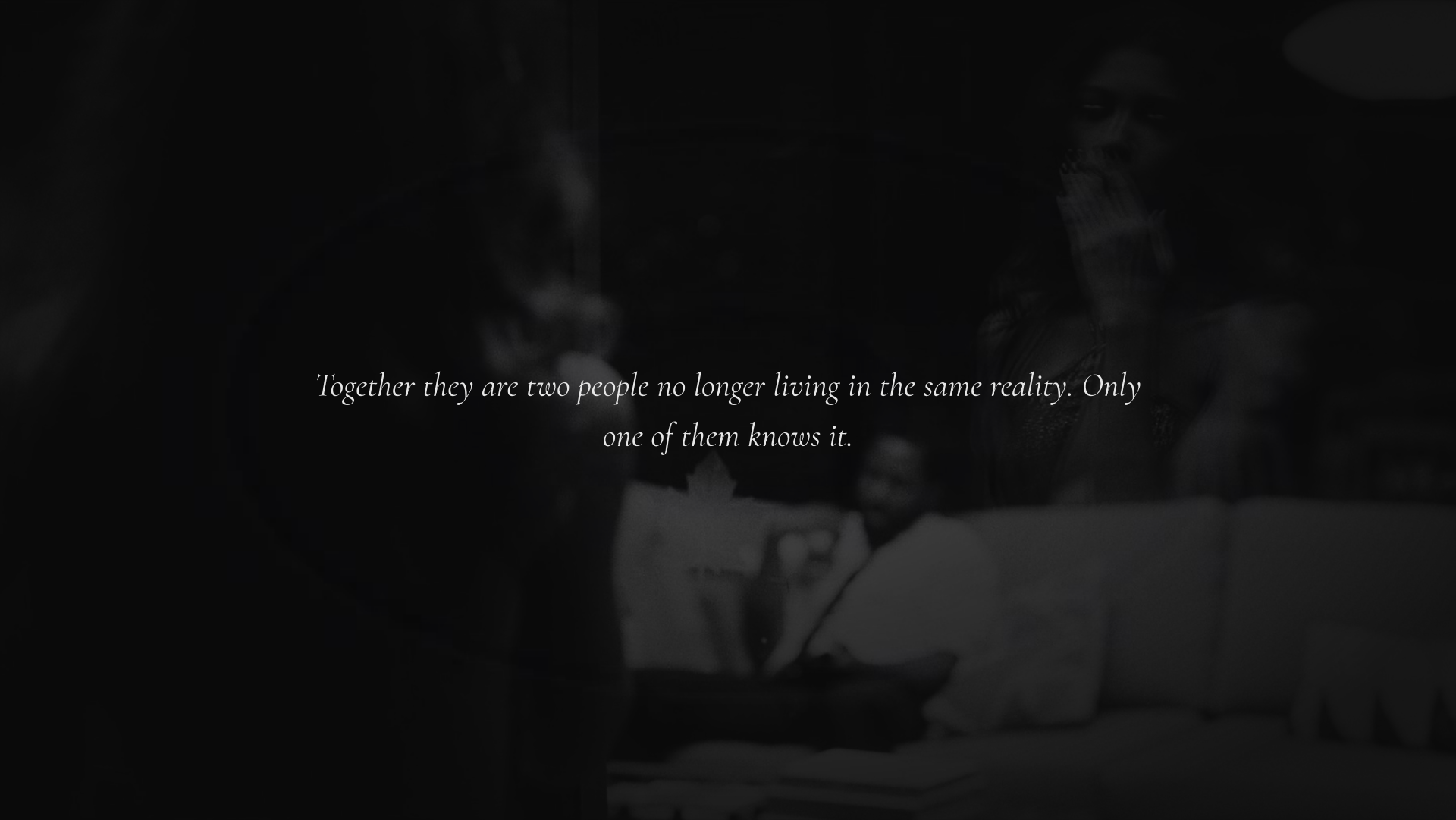
Carries the particular strength of someone who had to grow up before she was ready. She left college for Yasen after getting pregnant with his child, a child that did not live to see his third year of life. Yasen is the only serious relationship she's ever had, and has spent years mothering him, and at the end, his dying mother, while getting almost nothing back. They buried their own child years ago, a loss neither of them has found a way to speak about since. When something takes over him and unleashes his darkest resentments, he explodes in words he cannot take back. Iskra goes silent but beneath that silence is a want she's never said out loud: to leave, to find out who she is outside of him, and a fear that she no longer can.

04 — THE CHARACTERS

Yasen (35)

Wears the exhaustion of a man who has already surrendered more than once, to his music, to his mother, and now maybe to this marriage. He wrote one song that mattered, once, back when writing still felt like something other than proof he was running out of time. It's still the only thing strangers know him for, and every time someone recognizes him for it, it lands less like a compliment and more like a verdict, this is as far as you got. He hasn't set foot in this house since his mother died, and he still hasn't found a way to talk about the child they lost before that. Something in him gives way that one night, and he becomes a man neither of them recognizes. By the time Iskra finally finds the words to tell him she wants to leave, he can't see her at all.




Together they are two people no longer living in the same reality. Only one of them knows it.


05 THE TONE

05 — THE TONE

The film breathes before it speaks. Long stretches of silence do more work than dialogue, and for most of the runtime there is barely any, one devastating exception aside. Grief and shame are not feelings characters describe here. They are physical presences: a photograph that moves on its own, a shed at night with someone watching from the treeline, a boat that goes nowhere, a version of a woman standing in a lit window with someone else's husband.

Visually, the film trusts stillness. A held shot, a slow zoom into an eye, a fade so gradual it feels like the frame itself is reluctant to wake up. Water is the film's other language, its threat, its stillness, its only real way out.

Tonally, this lives close to The Witch in its isolation and slow-building dread, Persona in its bleeding of identity between two women, and Perfect Blue in its refusal to ever fully confirm what's real. Malcolm and Marie lends its two-person intensity to the one scene where everything is finally said aloud.

REFERENCE POINTS

Heredetary

Persona

Perfect Blue

Malcolm & Marie

Not horror in the jump-scare sense. Something closer to losing your grip on which version of yourself is speaking, and finding out far too late.







06 — WHY THIS FILM

I did not have to imagine the self Iskra becomes in this story. I have lived close to it, in my own relationships and in the ones around me growing up: the version of yourself built to hold everyone else together, to stay quiet rather than fight, until it stops feeling like a role and starts feeling like the only self you have left.

This film is about what that does to memory. About how, in a relationship like this, you stop trusting what you remember happening, because you've been told a different version of it so many times. About how the mind pulls you back toward the good version of someone right when you've finally found the will to leave. About the shame of having stayed as long as you did, and what that shame starts to look like if you give it a body and a face.

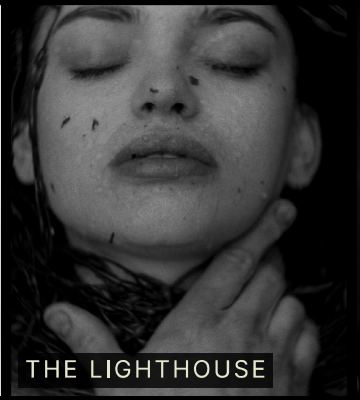
I have not been back to my home country in over fifteen years. In that kind of distance, you find yourself leaning on one person the way you'd lean on a small island, somewhere fixed, somewhere you can stand. I have done that with my partner more than once, trusted them to be that steady ground. And I know what it feels like when something goes wrong and that same ground no longer holds, when the whole world seems to turn against you at once, and even the house you inhabit, the walls you called home, seem to shrink all around you.

I am telling this story because I need to. I want to say something true about what happens when the self you build to survive becomes impossible to tell apart from who you actually are, and about the specific, quiet horror of loving someone who cannot, or will not, see you anymore.



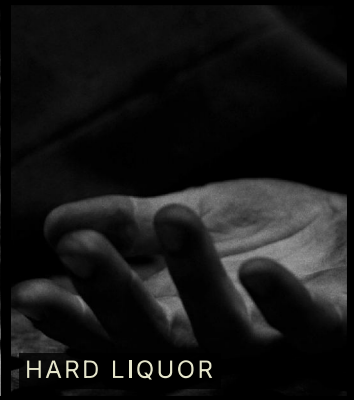
07 MOODBOARD


PERSONA


THE LIGHTHOUSE


ROMA


THE HAUNTING


HARD LIQUOR


PERSONA


POOR THINGS


PERSONA


MALCOLM & MARIE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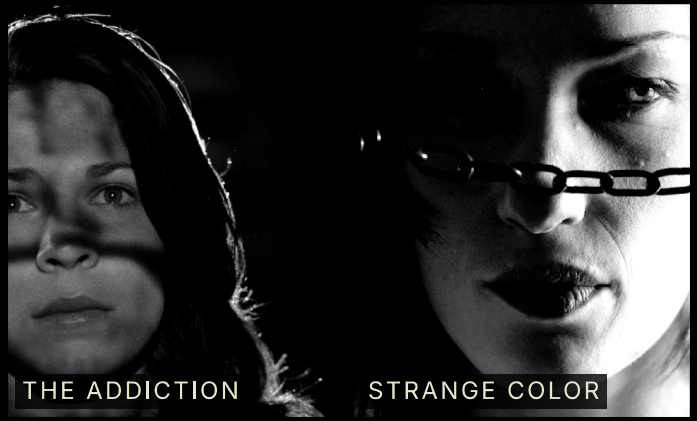
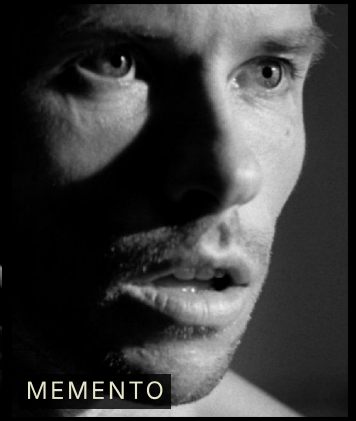

THE ADDICTION

STRANGE COLOR


TETSUO


MEMENTO



Drift Ashore

вероятно, никога повече

FOR INQUIRIES

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