

# MOTHER DAUGHTER

**Production year 2021**

**Duration 29 min**

**Film stock DCP 2K**

**Aspect ratio 1.85.1**

**Frame rate 25p**

**Spoken language Dutch**

**Subtitles English**

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## **A film by:**

Eyas Almokdad

Eyas Almokdad **Bio**

## **Film pitch**

A film about a mother-daughter relationship. About lost memory, and the legacy of ancient wars. A story about collective memory, in a divided world.

## **Film synopsis**

Lilly, a 40-year old politician who fights against immigration, returns to the family house to take care of her elderly mother Hanna who suffers from Alzheimer's disease. During her stay, she discovers a hidden side of her mother's early history.

## **Treatment**

The film try's to understand the functioning of collective memory. In particular, the effect of the collective memory on the family relationships. What do we know about our parents' history ?! What effect does that knowledge have on our human development ?! What is the impact of stories and their continuation to create the human knowledge accumulation necessary for our collective feeling of the suffering of the other ?!

To look closely at that topic, the film tell's the story of a mother and daughter relationship.

Lilly forty-year-old Belgian politician, who appears at the beginning of the film, tired and emotional, only to discover later on, that she suffers from a severe criticism from the political society, because of her hostile statements against refugees. And part of her going to her mother's house is escaping from facing that problem. In addition to her sudden pregnancy from an unknown.

Hanna 80 years old, Lilly's mother, who suffers from Alzheimer's, and lives alone with the help of a nurse who visits her every day. When Lilly returns home, Hanna couldn't recognize her daughter's face. This deeply affects Lilly. The mother takes us on a journey about her personal history, and all of that collision comes at the moment when Hanna believes that Lilly is her mother who died when she was a child in Aleppo. Hanna begins to narrate the details of that tragic story. Hanna who comes from a Hungarian origin, fled with her mother during World War II, to end up in Aleppo, the city that provided them with a tent to have a shelter. After the grandmother passed away, nuns take care of Hanna, then send her to Europe on the last train that crossed from east to west, to end up in Gent.

All this new information, alongside with the psychological and physical conditions that Lilly goes through, made her enter into an emotional state. A mixture of pity and sadness for herself and her mother. Nostalgia prompts Lilly to return to her childhood things to capture some of the happy memories, until she reaches a box in which Hanna hid her pictures with her mother. Lilly looks at the pictures to discover that she really looks like her grandmother.

Hanna disappears at the end of the film in a mysterious way. Lilly tries to search for her, but she completely disappears.

Hanna's disappearance at the end of the film is a sign of her missing story with war and asylum. Life continues and our human mistakes are repeated in vain, so that at the end of the film (Lilly's daughter) the child turns into the only hope of making a different story for the future of mankind.

In the public sphere, many pragmatic politicians take up populist political stances that flirt with the masses of political parties. Their presence in the public sphere deprives us of looking at their human side, bypassing the masks they swap out as professional stage players.

The film tries to look at the psychological structure of that character, which seems coherent and stable, along with fragility and weakness.

Research on that contradiction that a person lives in his struggle between his past and his new values. That conflict, may reveal the inherent fragility of our moral structure, dealing with life with double standards that are not authentic.

## **Declaration of intent**

I lost the land of my stories, and I'm looking for a new home for those stories. In this case, the research will rush towards those standardised questions, which do not change with cultural differences. Memory and its profound repercussions on the lives of immigrants. The accumulation and sharing of human knowledge over time, makes the commonality between us more profound, to become a statement in the face of those who try to divide us into conflicting races, peoples and cultures. This profound loss of the homeland of the story prompted me to search for a different angle to talk

about my main issue (human versus tyranny). The movie (Mother and Daughter) deals with the topic of deep and undying memory. That memory that moves in a magical way, to narrate the depth of the human experience in the face of tyranny, and on the journey of salvation.

The story of the 80-year-old mother, Hanna, who suffers from Alzheimer's, but the disease could not erase the face of her mother, who carried her on their flight from Hungary to the historical city of Aleppo, due to the violence of World War II. The city of Aleppo is a symbolic place of salvation, and the city of Ghent is another station in that salvation. The story of the survival between these two cities, only the last train that crossed between the East and the West remains in Hanna's memory, allowing Hanna to escape, and depriving thousands of people like her to take the same way of salvation. It is the same story that is being repeated today. The borders are always closed between East and West, in a stark expression that there is no more salvation. Hanna: I was afraid of the trees sound on a stormy night, until my mother explained it to me. It's the crying trees in the winter. But don't worry my dear, in spring the leaves will return to their mothers.

## **Reflection on the creative process**

### **Screenplay**

In the early stages of writing, the focus was on creating those characters who would tell my story. Since the choice is to make a Flemish film, I had to think about the psychological structure of the film characters differently, than if the film was in Arabic. In an attempt to create a connection between me as the filmmaker and the characters of my film, I tried to bring the characters closer to people I knew in my life, such as my grandmother, who was the inspiration for Hanna's character.

How does Hanna resemble my grandmother, who did not suffer from Alzheimer's disease?

It is true that my grandmother did not suffer from Alzheimer's, but what I quoted from her character is that strength, spontaneity, and at the same time the kindness and love, that is inherent in her stories. Hanna in my film combines strength and fragility, as was my grandmother. This is what made that character closer to my sentimental. Hanna's character influenced the construction and writing of other characters. She is the source of the story, and she is the instigator of the dramatic act. In the first version of my scenario, the last scene was related to the loss of the mother. I wrote an entire scene about the daughter (Lilly) finds her mother, after getting lost. A comic scene based on the confusion of a mother -Because of Hanna's condition- when she looks at her daughter's face. But after I finished writing,

I felt that the scene I loved so much was not appropriate for the movie. What is the solution? My desire to make a magical realistic film made me think about the elements that might create that sense of the magic of life. I went back to Tarkovsky's film (The Sacrifice), the disappearance of the child in the movie prompted the mystery to possess all the details of the film. In film (Mother and Son) by Sakharov, we see the mother and her son in a magical world, crowning that magic with the death of the mother and the departure of the son from The home of the story. These two films made me realise what was missing in my story. It is the mysterious fate that surrounds life... I write off the scene, to write the scene of the dream, and the scene of the absence of the mother, which represents to me her return to the homeland of her stories that she told in my film.

### **The camera in the film**

How do we capture the magic of reality? How can I make a portrait of a relationship between a mother and her daughter, transcending through space and time?

I began my answer to this question by choosing the actresses I thought that they were suitable for the story. Then the locations required to embrace the events of the film, to arrive at the integration of the elements all together in my imagination. There is no logical explanation for me why I imagined all scenes in the movie as if they happen behind a transparent curtain that diffuses the light, and preventing the focus from being sharp. I did a conscious choice with the film DOP **Hyun De Grande** to use a diffuser filters on the zoom lenses that which we chose.

Why zoom lenses?

There is a visual difference between the effect of the zoom lens in motion, and the effect we create by placing the camera on Chariot to move closer or further away from the action. This difference made me think about the effect that I want to create in the film.

The zoom lenses will allow us to create a movement that, in my view, reflects the closure or the opening of the cinematic space it self. The movement is dramatic enough, but also very sensitive.

The zoom movement create the feeling as if the cinematic space were being folded, and not bypass it, as happens if the camera were used on the Chariot. The zoom will allow me to create that sense of mystery and claustrophobic effect.

### **Editing**

The film editing process was the most creative stage. It was a whole process of figuring out what it means to remake the story on montage. The editing phase, with the film editor **Erik Parys**, allowed me to ask questions about filmmaking and audiovisual storytelling techniques. This was because we discovered that the film, in the sequential way in which it was filmed, would

deprives the audience of accumulating the event while watching, depriving them from the pleasure of anticipation that reveals the mystery of the story. We started by looking for the magic of reality, we found it in the non-compliance with the synchronisation between sound and image in dialogues. A minimal style in sound and music, to allow the opportunity to reflect on the event, and gradually reveal the mystery of the story.

## **Cast**

Joke Devynck  
Marijke Pinoy  
Yentl Gijbels  
Margaretha Ootje De Vylder- Merckx  
Ruth Joos  
Johan Opstaele

## **CREW**

<b>1AD</b>	Servaes Dewispelaere
<b>Script Supervisor</b>	Femke de Beule
<b>DOP</b>	Hyun de Grande
<b>1AC</b>	Pieter Claessens
<b>2AC</b>	Bob van den Berg
<b>Gaffer</b>	Anantha Krishnan
<b>Electro</b>	Kato Stevens
<b>Grip</b>	Fernando Vandekeybus
<b>Sound Engineer</b>	Sven Dehandschutter
<b>Makeup Artist</b>	Lauren Bracke
<b>Art Director</b>	Katerina Indesteege
<b>Set Dresser</b>	Helenka Cupakova

<b>Corona Manager - Production Assistant</b>	Alejandra Rogghé
<b>Montage</b>	Erik Parys
<b>Sound Designer</b>	Frederik Van de Moortel
<b>Music composition</b>	Kinan Azmeh
<b>Sound mix</b>	Frederik Van de Moortel
<b>Color Grading</b>	
<b>Graphic</b>	Pablo Diartinez
<b>Mentor</b>	Johan Opstaele
<b>Master Coordinator</b>	Hilde D'haeyere

**Screenplay Consultant**

Johan Opstaele  
Nathalie Teirlink  
Bie Boeykens  
Denis Dercourt  
Martine Huvenne

**Filmvertaling naar het Vlaams**

Servaes Dewispelaere - Femke de Beule

**Photography crew for the images that appeared in the film****Photography**

Ken De Vylder  
David Danil

**Art Department**

Gaia de Peter  
Alexander Goesaert

**Makeup Artist** Cindy De Wette

**Hair Stylist** Emad Younes

**Gaffer** Gillis Cornelis

**English Subtitles**

Erik Parys  
David Fryer  
Hilde D'haeyere

**Hungarian language trainer**

Piro Pallaghy

**Editing Consultant**

Johan Opstaele  
Pablo Diartinez

**Production Support**

Mieke De Wulf  
David Denil

**Logistic Cooperation**

Majd Khalifeh

**KASK Team**

Bob Mees

Jasmijn Cedee

**Catering**

MAHA Restaurant - Brussels

ORNINA - Syrian Sweet - Brussels

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**Production: Eyas Almokdad**