

IOTA PRODUCTION, BLUE MONDAY PRODUCTIONS, LOUISE PRODUCTIONS PRESENT

LÉONIE SOUCHAUD LUDIVINE SAGNIER ALBAN LENOIR

INTO DAD'S WOODS

A FILM BY VERO CRATZBORN

WITH LÉONIE SOUCHAUD, LUDIVINE SAGNIER, ALBAN LENOIR, MATHIS BOUR, SASKIA DILLAUS DE MELO, CARL MALAPA & YOANN BLANC SCREENWRITER VERO CRATZBORN WITH THE COLLABORATION OF FRANCOIS VERJANS & EVE DEBOISE DIRECTOR VERO CRATZBORN PRODUCER ISABELLE TRUC (IOTA PRODUCTION)
CO-PRODUCERS NATHALIE MESURET (BLUE MONDAY PRODUCTIONS) & ELISA GARBAR (LOUISE PRODUCTIONS) ASSOCIATE PRODUCER TO THE DEVELOPMENT CHRISTOPHE DELSAUX (ORIFLAMME FILMS) DOP PHILIPPE GUILBERT EDITOR LOREDANA CRISTELLI SET STEPHAN RUBENS
COSTUMES SYLVIE DERMIGNY MAKE-UP CATHERINE TILMANT SOUND HENRI MAÏKOFF, MARC BASTIEN, EMMANUEL DE BOISSIEU ORIGINAL MUSIC DANIEL BLEIKOLM & MAXIME STEINER 1ST ASSISTANT FRÉDÉRIC ALEXANDRE CASTING SÉBASTIAN MORADIELLOS & LAURE COCHENER
PRODUCTION MANAGER CÉCILE RÉMY-BOUTANG POST-PRODUCTION MANAGER LIONEL DUTRIEUX IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH LA RTBF (TELEVISION BELGE), BETV, RTS, SRG-SSR WITH THE SUPPORT OF CENTRE DU CINÉMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL DE LA FÉDÉRATION WALLONIE-BRUXELLES
AND THE OFFICE FEDERAL DE LA CULTURE (OFC) WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF WALLIMAGE (LA WALLONIE), PICTANOV0 - REGION HAUTS DE FRANCE, CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE (CNC), WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF CINEFORUM AND THE SUPPORT OF LA
LOTÉRIE ROMANDE, AND WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE TAX SHELTER DU GOUVERNEMENT FEDERAL BELGE - CASA KAFKA PICTURES - BELFIUS, COFINOVA, L'ASSOCIATION BEAUMARCHAIS - SACD, FOCAL, AND CREATIVE EUROPE DISTRIBUTION KMBO INTERNATIONAL SALES BE FOR FILMS

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INTO DAD'S WOODS

A FILM BY

VERO CRATZBORN

PRODUCED BY

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SYNOPSIS

Gina, 15, has grown up in a loving family who lives on the edge of a forest. She admires her father, Jimmy, an unpredictable, whimsical man whose constant excesses and extravagance she readily forgives. Until the day when the situation becomes unbearable: Jimmy tips over the edge and the family's fragile balance is shattered. Unable to understand the situation and in a period of rebellion, Gina teams up with a teenager from her neighborhood to save her father.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT BEGINNINGS

I grew up amidst mental illness, this strange affliction from which my father has always suffered. Living with someone who is mentally ill was my normal.

This film stemmed from my gradual awareness as I was growing up that there was indeed a boundary between normality and mental illness: the moment when I realized as a child that things were not all that normal.

So, the seeds of this story come from personal experience. But it was within the framework of the Fémis Film School's Screenwriting Workshop that I started to write about it as a

work of fiction, and as a cinematic subject. I drafted a first version by myself, which allowed me to obtain financial support from the CNC and a Beaumarchais-SACD screenwriting grant for further drafts. Then the process followed its course with several successive stages in which **Eve Deboise** and then **François Verjans** worked with me. No longer writing alone helped me move towards a more universal vision of the story.

Over a period of two years, within the framework of artistic residencies, I worked with health teams and patients in three different outpatient clinics that were part of larger psychiatric establishments. We made fictional short films. In my private life, I would go to such hospitals as the daughter of a patient. While writing the screenplay, I returned to these institutions as an artist, which allowed me to distance myself and find the counterpoint to my initial perspective. During the process, I drew inspiration from different consultants: a psychiatrist, a psychologist, and a psychiatric nurse.

MADNESS

One out of five people is afflicted with mental health problems. Children are front row witnesses to family life. We speak to children about death, sex, abuse, and violence, but we rarely speak to them about mental illness because of the way society looks at the mentally ill.

Reducing mental illness to its subversive impact or creative power is disregarding the pain endured. People are less empathetic when it comes to psychological suffering in comparison with physical illness. There is still a great deal of prejudice in the way people perceive mental illness, seen for instance as involving dangerous behavior. They're mostly invisible diseases. We do not know when they start, and we never know when they will be over. These conditions elicit fear because it can happen to anyone.

When I was younger, I also felt marginalized: I didn't understand what was happening. I was embarrassed and I felt guilty. This is what my film addresses: a young girl who loves her abnormal father, with all his ideas and beliefs. She idealizes him while others think he is crazy.



It's a story about filial love or love in a family where because there is mental illness, it is difficult to love. Love is altered, attacked. It is this love I wanted to depict, love as "resistance." Gina loves and struggles with the constant fear of losing herself if she rejects her father who is an integral part of who she is as a person. During the course of the story, she is going to have to free herself, turn towards the future without the suggestion of death or pathos.

And if this father sinks into madness, it's also perhaps because it's the only answer he has found for dealing with society's violence. The only protection he can offer his children.

Through this narrative thread, I was looking to express the idea that psychological problems question our world, which tends to normalize everything, and erase the individual. The film's social perspective on this subject is implicit as I believe cinema opens up a space to explore the issue: raising questions, through the eyes of a teenager who little by little is finding her way in society.

In the screenplay, and then later when directing the actors, setting up shots, I worked on the father-daughter, madness-society bonds. This line, these boundaries are present in every aspect of my filmmaking: scenery, casting, photography, sound, music...



I sought to treat the irruption of mental illness into the family sphere with simplicity and restraint - the precise moment when the person tips into insanity - yet at the same time being open about the difficulties, the crises which plunge everything and everyone into disarray and incomprehension. I wanted to enter the subject through day-to-day life, in a personal way, instead of "sensationalizing" the topic or portraying a romantic vision.

CASTING

To play Gina, I absolutely wanted to work with an actress who was the character's age. There is something inexpressible about adolescence, the way one carries themselves, a grace mixed with gawkiness.

We started pre-casting teenagers. Among them was **Léonie Souchaud**, a young girl from Brussels who had just been in a film for the first time, *Fanny's Journey*, by Lola Doillon. I was impressed by the mystery she exuded, the looks she gave, and her ability to have an incredible presence in silent moments. When we were finally able to start shooting two years later, I was a little apprehensive about seeing Léonie again because teenagers grow so quickly, especially girls. And indeed, she had grown a great deal. But curiously, she still had this unique presence. As a girl scout, she had spent many nights in the forest. We spoke a great deal about the role she was playing - her character's determination, and discretion - because Gina isn't someone who readily expresses her emotions.

Just before meeting **Ludivine Sagnier** and **Alban Lenoir**, who play her parents, she said to me: "I hope I'm going to like them." I took this as a sign that she could carry the film's point of view, and the film itself on her shoulders. The duration of the shoot - which was very physically demanding - was relatively short due to our budget. She had just turned 16.

For the father, Jimmy, I wanted a sensitive giant who doesn't bear the scars of a victim. I very much enjoyed *French Blood* by Diastème. Alban Lenoir is a very physical actor with an incredible emotional range.



He also has a touching authenticity. He isn't afraid to express vulnerability. To prepare the film, we referred to the neuropsychiatrist and psychoanalyst **Gisela Pankow's** work on psychotic individuals' dissociated image of their bodies. And we worked with a Belgian coach, **Olga Masleinnikova**, who specializes in movement.

For Carole, I wanted an actress who could be both a mother and a lover, maternal and sensual. I went to see Ludivine Sagnier sing. I'm very sensitive to voices. I like voices that tell life stories, that express sensitivity. I also like the way she moves, her fragility and strength. I simply went up to speak to her after the concert. Ludivine is radiant, a fighter and protector. She's a wonderful working partner.

From the very first work session with Alban and Ludivine, everything clicked between them. Like kindred spirits, they were generous and worked constructively. That was a godsend. They accompanied me in early pre-production. We had the time to establish mutual trust, to get to know one another, and to explore together.

Mathis Bour (Tony) and **Saskia Dillais de Mello** (Nora) very naturally became part of this unique family. Children are very present in the film - they are full-fledged characters and their own people. Both of them had to have the desire to be there, building their characters through drawing upon their imaginations and their own life experience. I wanted them to have fun as well. Mathis is Ludivine's nephew. He was in *Le Rire de Ma Mère* (My mother's laughter). He is also the middle child, a place that isn't easy, which he represents well. Saskia had a little bit of acting experience. After her first meeting with Ludivine and Léonie, I was absolutely convinced. I adapted my work method to the age of each child actor. Everyone reacts to the irruption of this illness in their family according to their age, and their own personal history.

As for **Carl Malapa** (Nico), he first came just to read with Léonie, but he was such a natural, it seemed an obvious choice to work with him. I like the relationship that developed between them: a mix of embarrassment and attraction.



Carl was also able to bring depth and nuance to his role: Nico is an ally, not a follower. He respects Gina, for he also has a secret world of his own, and is marginalized by others, much like the wounded pigeon that he takes in.

SCENERY

During the writing process I need to travel the length and breadth of the story's spaces as well as the scenery through researching locations during pre-prod. I soak up the atmosphere, the wind, colors, light, and volume. I also write with these considerations in mind. I wanted a stark contrast with what Gina and her family were going through, as well as a strong presence of nature to highlight my characters' connection with the world through small details. This also represents the father's desire to escape through byways.

We searched for scenery where the forest was in close vicinity: the apartment building, supermarket, villa, and hospital. The forest mirrors his feelings as something intimidating or at other times as something protective. It is at once the nourishing mother accompanying Jimmy's fits of delirium, and the last bastion keeping him from tipping into insanity. The forest is also a place where children's fables take place: fears and mystery. It's a character in itself. When I discovered, thanks to the Hainaut Region Film Commission, this building nestled in the greenery, I immediately knew that it was where we needed to shoot the film. I was intensely moved when I discovered the clothesline on the roof, a vestige of communal life.

I was intensely moved when I discovered the clothesline on the roof, a vestige of communal life. There is an incredible view of the forest canopy from up on top.

We scoured the roads, got lost and accidentally stumbled upon the Drève des Insurgés near St Amand-les-Eaux, where we found the tree of life from the opening, the woods where the children get lost, and the Gustave Doré style forest at the end with the gigantic tangle of roots of the two fir trees felled by a storm.

The film was shot in natural scenery: this mix of truth and fiction is quite important to me, and in particular for the

psychiatric hospital. We have many preconceived ideas and representations of all kinds pertaining to the reality of mental health centers. Places that are open and welcoming are unfortunately too few and far between. There is still much to be done in this area, society needs to reflect a great deal more about these institutions.

The short films I had made with the healthcare workers and patients - equally representing both the workers and patients - opened my eyes and allowed me to refine my method. It also opened doors for me, because we were able to shoot scenes within the institutions as long as we respected the patients' and staffs' privacy. In this way, I was able to shine a light on the reality of these places. Indeed, the hospital is a place of care and a working environment.



The hospital also made available to us all the equipment we needed for shooting the film. We continually tried to balance the story with reality while bringing about a slight disparity to underline the fiction.

MUSIC

The music embodies this family's unique form of happiness. In fact, all the actors knew the song before the shoot. This is the song the mother and daughter dance to while bonding to occupy the father's absence once he is gone. It is also this melody that works its way to the surface to show that life goes on and follows its course.

Manuel Roland wrote the lyrics and composed the song: "*The Girl without a name.*"

We recorded two versions with two different tempos, the first with Ludivine just before the shoot. I was there with Manu and Ludivine; it was very moving to explore with them, to take part in the birth of this song, to own it together. For the second version, the tempo was increased to 140 BPM for the dance sequence and **Jeanne Added** laid down the tracks with her voice in post-production.



BIOGRAPHY

Vero Cratzborn grew up in a housing project in the Baelen countryside, in eastern Belgium. After having first gone to HEC-Liège, she then studied Communication Arts and Sciences at Liège University. She discovered filmmaking at the age of 25 with the producer Bruno Péseroy (films by Alain Resnais, Noémie Lvovsky, Olivier Assayas, Claire Denis...) then with the director Leos Carax, whom she assisted with two projects. She wrote and directed five short films broadcast on television and presented in a number of French language or international festivals around the world. She has directed two documentaries and a digital documentary experiment.

CAST

GINA	LÉONIE SOUCHAUD
CAROLE	LUDIVINE SAGNIER
JIMMY	ALBAN LENOIR
TONY	MATHIS BOUR
NORA	SASKIA DILLAIS DE MELLO
NICO	CARL MALAPA
DR. LE FLOCH	YOANN BLANC

CREW

DIRECTOR	VERO CRATZBORN
SCREENPLAY	VERO CRATZBORN WITH THE COLLABORATION OF FRANÇOIS VERJANS
DOP	PHILIPPE GUILBERT
SET	STEPHAN RUBENS
COSTUMES	SYLVIE DERMIGNY
SOUND	HENRI MAÏKOFF
EDITOR	LOREDANA CRISTELLI
SOUND EDITOR	MARC BASTIEN
MIX	EMMANUEL DE BOISSIEUR
MUSIC	DANIEL BLEIKOLM MAXIME STEINER
PRODUCERS	ISABELLE TRUC (IOTA PRODUCTIONS) NATHALIE MESURET (BLUE MONDAY PRODUCTIONS) ELISA GARBAR (LOUISE PRODUCTIONS)



TECHNICAL DETAILS

RATIO	1:85
SOUND FORMAT	5.1
RUNNING TIME	90'
ORIGINAL VERSION	FRENCH
YEAR OF PRODUCTION	2020
COUNTRIES	BELGIUM, FRANCE, SWITZERLAND

INTERNATIONAL SALES AGENT

28 AVENUE DES VILLAS | 1060 BRUSSELS | BE

28 RUE FOURCROY | 75017 PARIS | FR

+ 33 6 14 34 37 55

INFO@BEFORFILMS.COM

WWW.BEFORFILMS.COM



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