

Digital Press Kit

LAST DAY

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Like birth, death is a physical encounter with the unknown that every person undergoes in their lifetime. But unlike birth, death is no unifier. The experience is ultimately a solitary one; no one can cross over to the other side with you. Instead of coming into the welcome embrace of the world of the living, one lets go of home, of loved ones, and of self to step into what comes next. Even if we have lived a full life, in death, we are alone.

Mila is an immigrant from the former Soviet Union, now living far from home and country in the United States. She lives close to her daughter and granddaughter, but not too close; their physical proximity belies the vast expanse between them. And like other former Soviet subjects, Mila lives beneath the specter of a lifetime of trauma — for her, the shearing of self occurred a long time ago. Her husband has died. Her daughter has her own life and her own family now. The one bright spot that Mila can still cling to is her beloved only granddaughter, Elle.

I wanted to make this film about Mila's last day alive because it offered an opportunity to explore the end of life in an unsentimental fashion; unclouded by family and final obligation, we see Mila explore the liminal spaces between our world and the next. The emotional terrain that she traverses is strange — filled with fear, emptiness, and futility. She has a terrifying nightmare about the grave and then wanders into a church in the morning out of desperation, to try to find some guidance and peace. She starts to ask God for more time, but stops herself — more time for what, exactly? At the end of life, there are no parades. Mila comes into acceptance when she realizes she is living in an imagined past more than in the present. She finds herself returning to a favorite tree in an orchard long ago razed for high-rises, a bite into a sun-warmed apple grown in a country that has ceased to exist. There is very little left for her in this life. Or was there ever? As they say, you cannot take it with you. There is only one foot in front of the other, the two hands that help us slide down into the grave.

Yet Mila's life was not insignificant; none of ours are, really. She brought her daughter to the United States and thus changed the trajectory of her and Elle's lives forever. And in this way, Mila's life mattered much more than her death. Elle will always remember her strange grandmother, and the sweet taste of her favorite apple cake. As an adult she will dip a slice of it into her coffee and think about her many relatives, mostly nameless and faceless to her now, and what they endured — the water they carried — so that she might live.

CREW



POLINA OSEN – director

Polina Osen is an award-winning photojournalist and filmmaker whose storytelling sensibility is steeped in Werner Herzog's concept of the "ecstatic truth." She aims to transport viewers beyond actuality in familiar contexts in order to reveal deep truths about the contemporary human experience and the stories we've told ourselves along the way. She is very interested in making films that open up new ways of considering the past and allow us to feel our way toward a greater emotional understanding of one another and of the Earth.

Prior to her career as a filmmaker, Polina worked as a professional photojournalist and was a member of the main roster at Redux Pictures in New York. Her clients included *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Rolling Stone*, *ESPN The Magazine*, *NPR.org*, *VICE*, and many others. She is a graduate of Columbia University and is currently pursuing her MFA in Film & TV Production at USC's School of Cinematic Arts. She is the recipient of the George Lucas Family Foundation Endowed Award for Film & TV Production.



ANNA DAMASKOVA – producer & writer

Originally from Bulgaria, Anna is an aspiring producer and a recent graduate from the Peter Stark Producing Program at USC in Los Angeles.

Previously, she specialized in directing and screenwriting at the Northern Film School in the UK. She also did an exchange in one of the best and oldest film academies in the world - FAMU in Prague. Her professional experience spans from studio film productions ("*Hellboy*", "*Angel Has Fallen*") to her current occupations as an Executive Assistant (Development) at Millennium Media.

She is driven by her desire to tell personal stories in fiction and documentary genres and bring them to the screen. She is inspired by heartfelt storytelling and bold filmmaking. Anna is an avid reader, she loves the arts, enjoys trekking, and is always ready to pack a suitcase and travel.



TANMAY CHOWDHARY – cinematographer

Tanmay Chowdhary was born in India in the winter of 1990. He is an award-winning Photographer, Cinematographer and Filmmaker with a Master's degree in Film from the University of Southern California.

His photography work has been published by various magazines and publications around the world. The films he has shot have premiered in international film festivals, including Camerimage, Directors Guild of America and Festival du Nouveau Cinema.

He received the outstanding achievement in Cinematography award at both the First Look and Tide Film Festival.