



# ETHIRL SINGER

A twisted love story about a young man, Benjamin Hammond, who is in love with a Russian Stacking Doll. But in this world, Stacking Dolls aren't just antique wooden toys. They are a race of people known as Matryoshkans, a subspecies of humans born with a very peculiar abnormality—they have a collection of smaller people living inside of them.

Ben never thought he'd ever fall in love with anyone—let alone a Matryoshkan—but from the moment he met Ynaria, he knew she was the only one for him. Relationships between humans and Matryoshkans are practically unheard of, and despite objections from their friends and family, the two are determined to marry. The only way Ynaria's strict, conservative parents will approve the union is if Ben and Ynaria undergo The Trial, a Matryoshkan wedding tradition where couples lock themselves in a house for several days—perhaps weeks or months—in order to introduce each other to all of the people living inside of them.

No human has ever gone through The Trial and spoke of it before, so Ben has no idea what's in store for him. He assumes that he'll love each of Ynaria's inner selves just as much as he loves her, but as she peels off her layers he realizes that each one is more neurotic and difficult to deal with than the last. And if they're ever going to be together, Ben must fall in love with each and every one of his fiance's inner personalities, no matter how strange or disturbing they turn out to be.



## LIHATE A MATRIENCHT

"Matryoshka" is the Russian word for a Stacking Doll or Nesting Doll. A toy. A hollow wooden doll with smaller hollow wooden dolls nestled inside of it.

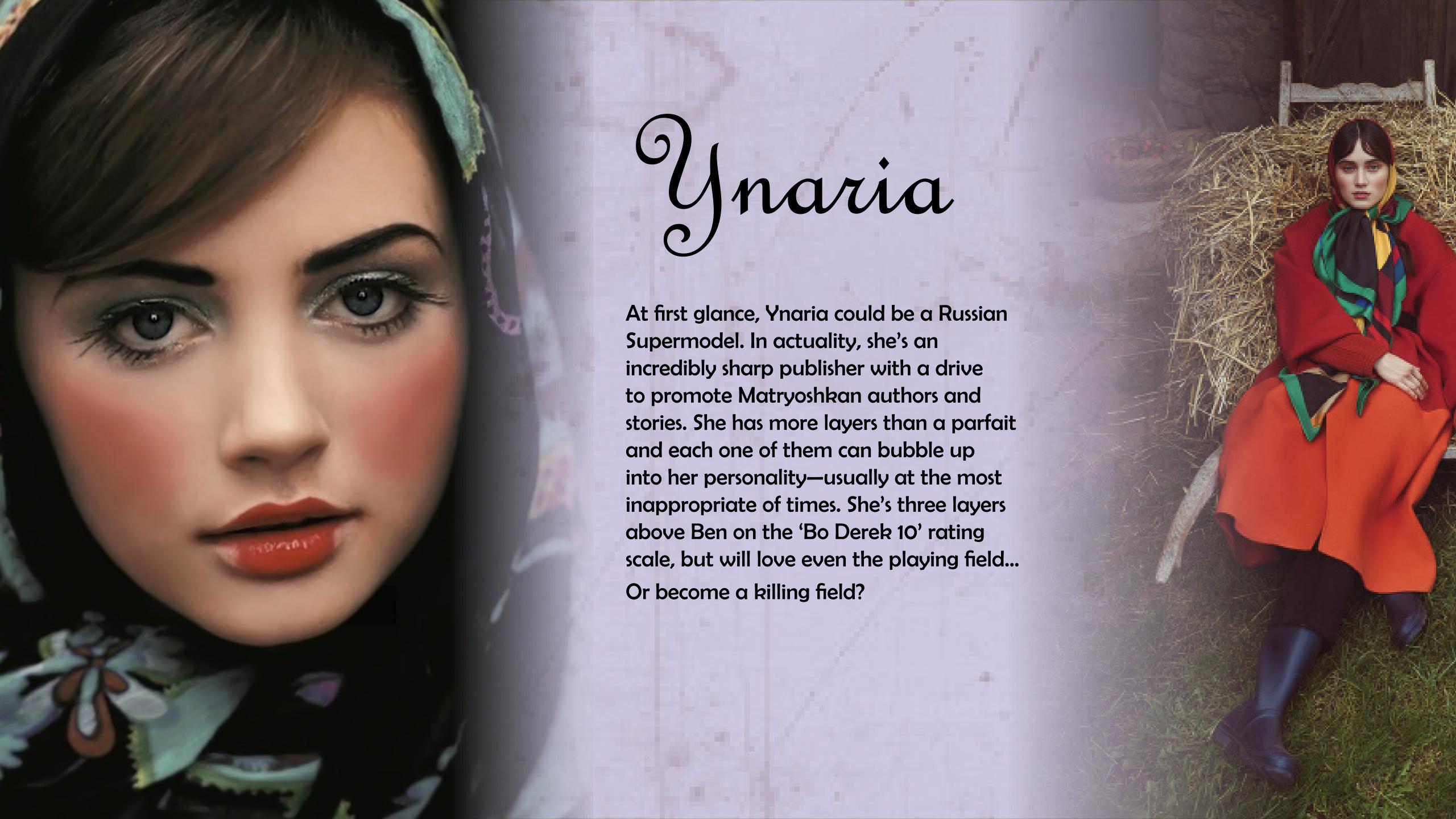
STACKING DOLL takes place in an alternate reality where Matryoshkans are a living, breathing humanoid species. The physical manifestation of a traditional Russian toy.

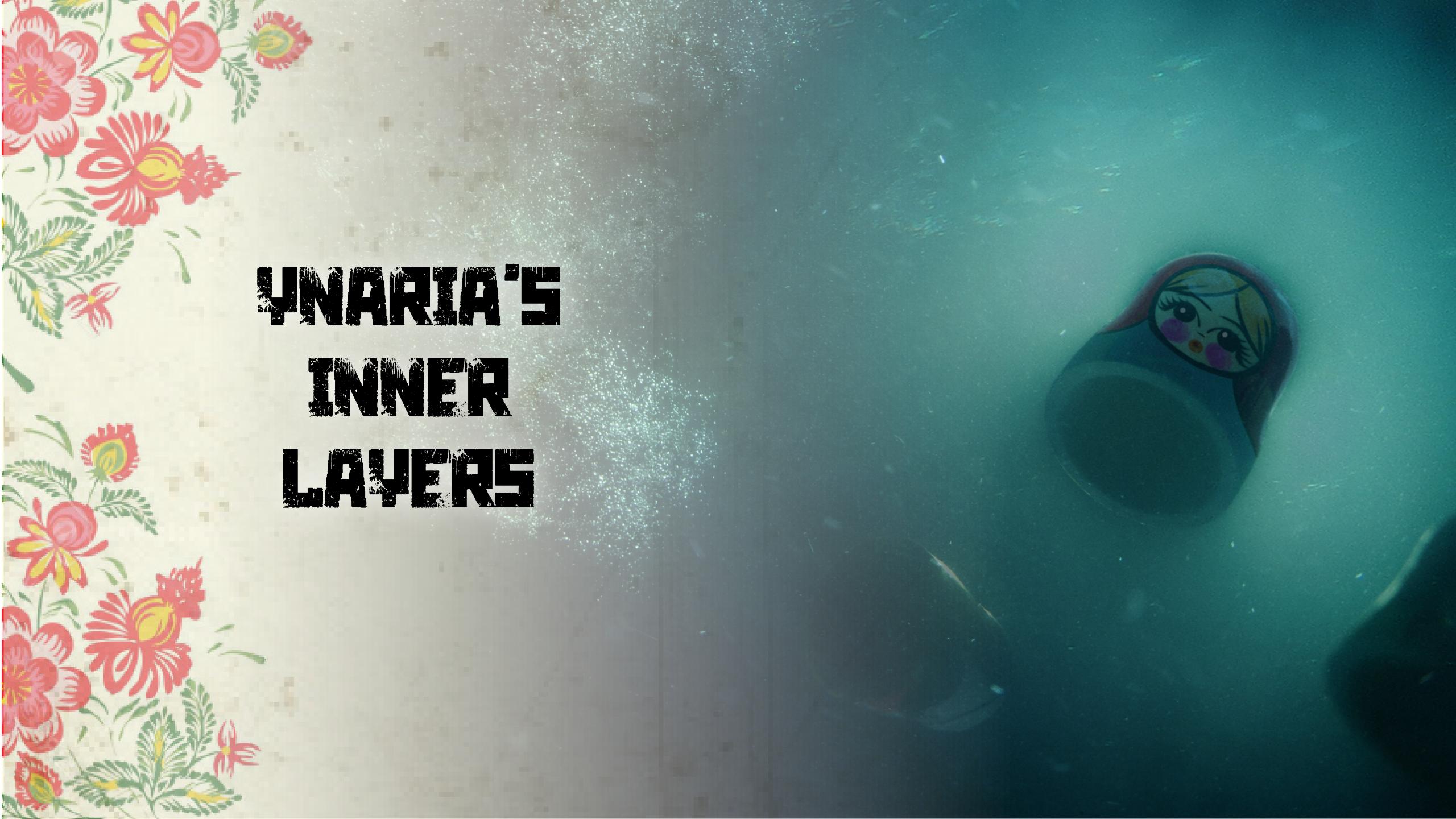
Perhaps they are an alien species that seeded Earth many, many years ago. Or perhaps they were an evolutionary offshoot from humans. We may never know. Matryoshkans are notoriously secretive about their origins and culture—out of fear of persecution from humans.

And can you blame them? Humans don't have a great track record with accepting things they don't understand.



















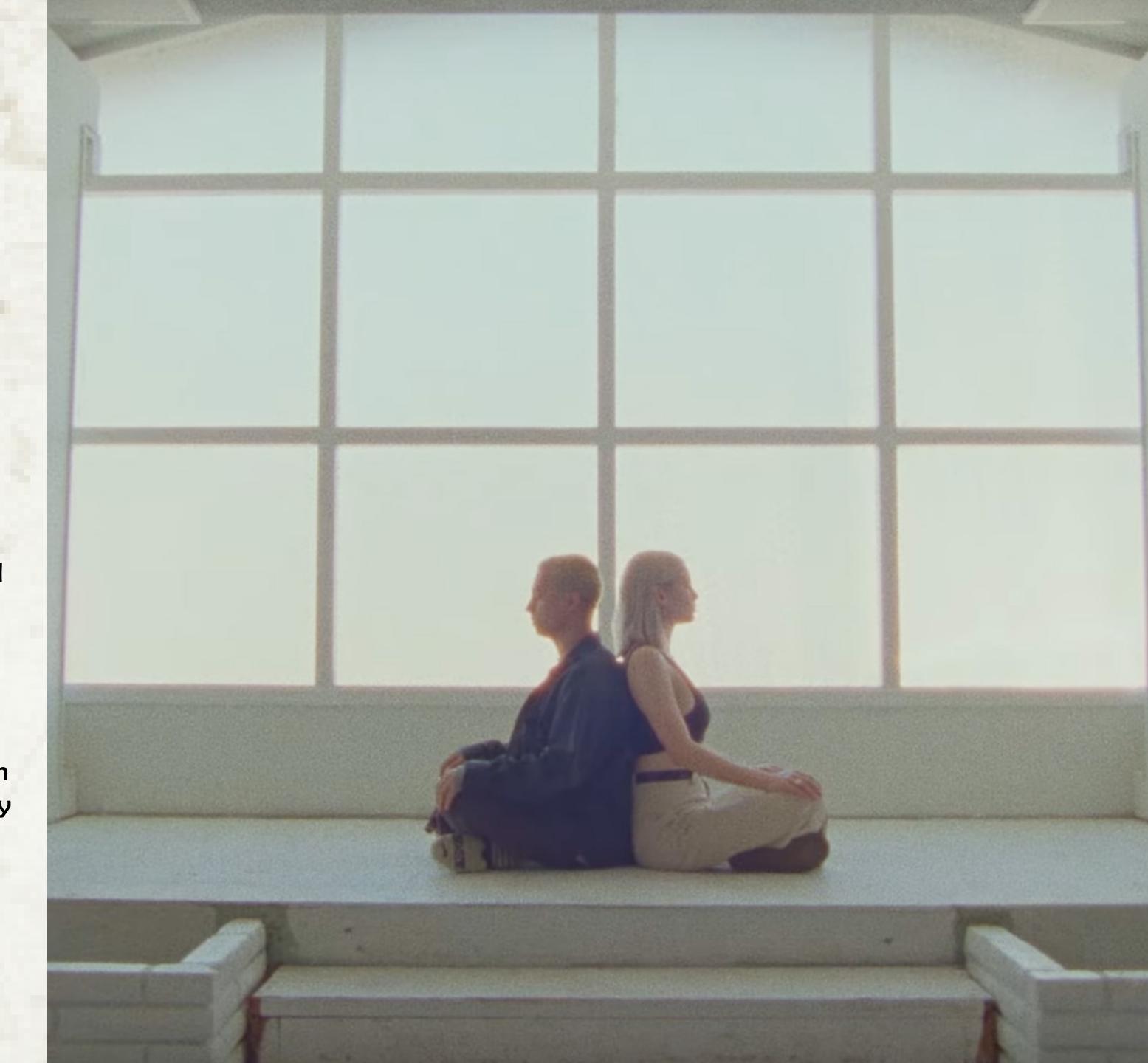
### THEMES A VIIVE

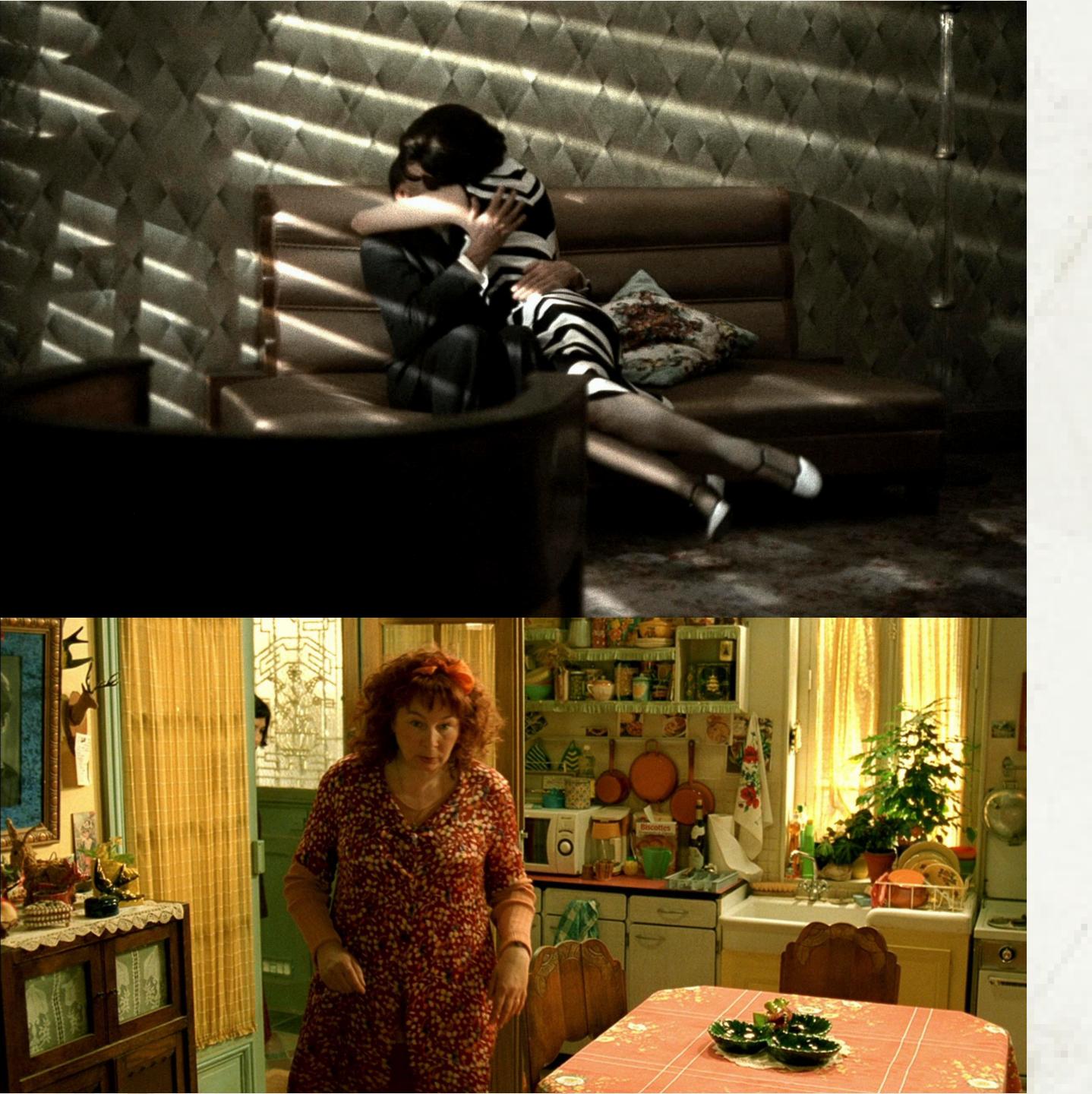
Stacking Doll is a film about layers.

At face value, Stacking Doll is a bizarre love story between a human and a non-human. Scratch beneath the surface, and you'll find something more: a mirror reflecting modern society and revealing a deeper truth about ourselves.

It is a beautiful and painful love story that reminds us of how scary it is to fall in love—slowly revealing your true self, letting your guard down, and wondering if the other person will truly accept you for who you are. A love story as twisted and frustrating as love is in real life.

As Ben witnesses Ynaria peel off layer after layer, he questions his ability to truly love unconditionally. And as Ynaria excitedly and reluctantly reveals each new aspect of her inner self, she hopes that Ben will still love her even when he sees her darkest and ugliest parts. The result is a love story that makes us wonder if any relationship can survive The Trial. Do we want to go down that rabbit hole, and can we accept what we find once we get there?





But Stacking Doll is much more than a simple speculative fiction romance. While the United States reckons with its own history of xenophobia, Stacking Doll presents a timely story about love, acceptance, and redemption in the face of systemic racism. Ben and Ynaria face pressure from both sides—urged to call off their union because their cultures are so vastly different that there is no way that their love can endure. But they are determined to prove their friends and family wrong. It is a universal question wrapped in a thrilling package.

Matryoshkans, like immigrants who have fled from political and economic strife, do their best to assimilate while attempting to retain their own culture. They hide aspects of their culture that seem foreign or incomprehensible to humans. Ben must learn and embrace Matryoskan culture if he's going to be with Ynaria. He's going to have to prove he loves her inner layers as much as her outer one.

Of course, humans are not without their own layers, and Ben must struggle with his own. He's done things in his past that he's ashamed of, which he must reveal to Ynaria if they are to truly love each other.

# TRECTORE VIEWS

Like the Matryoshkans who inhabit its world, Stacking Doll has many layers.

Its surface roils with horror/fantasy. When Ben gets locked in the Sanctuary with Ynaria, we have a sinking feeling that one of her inner layers may be dangerous. Sure, their marriage is at stake, but so is Ben's life.

Meanwhile, on the inside, Stacking Doll bears the hallmarks of a classic love story: a madly-in-love couple wants to be together, while cultural differences pull them apart. Will their love overcome all odds?

This multi-layered aspect makes Stacking Doll not only an entertaining horror/fantasy but an elevated love story which raises the question: can you fully love someone—the good, the bad, and all the messy bits in between?



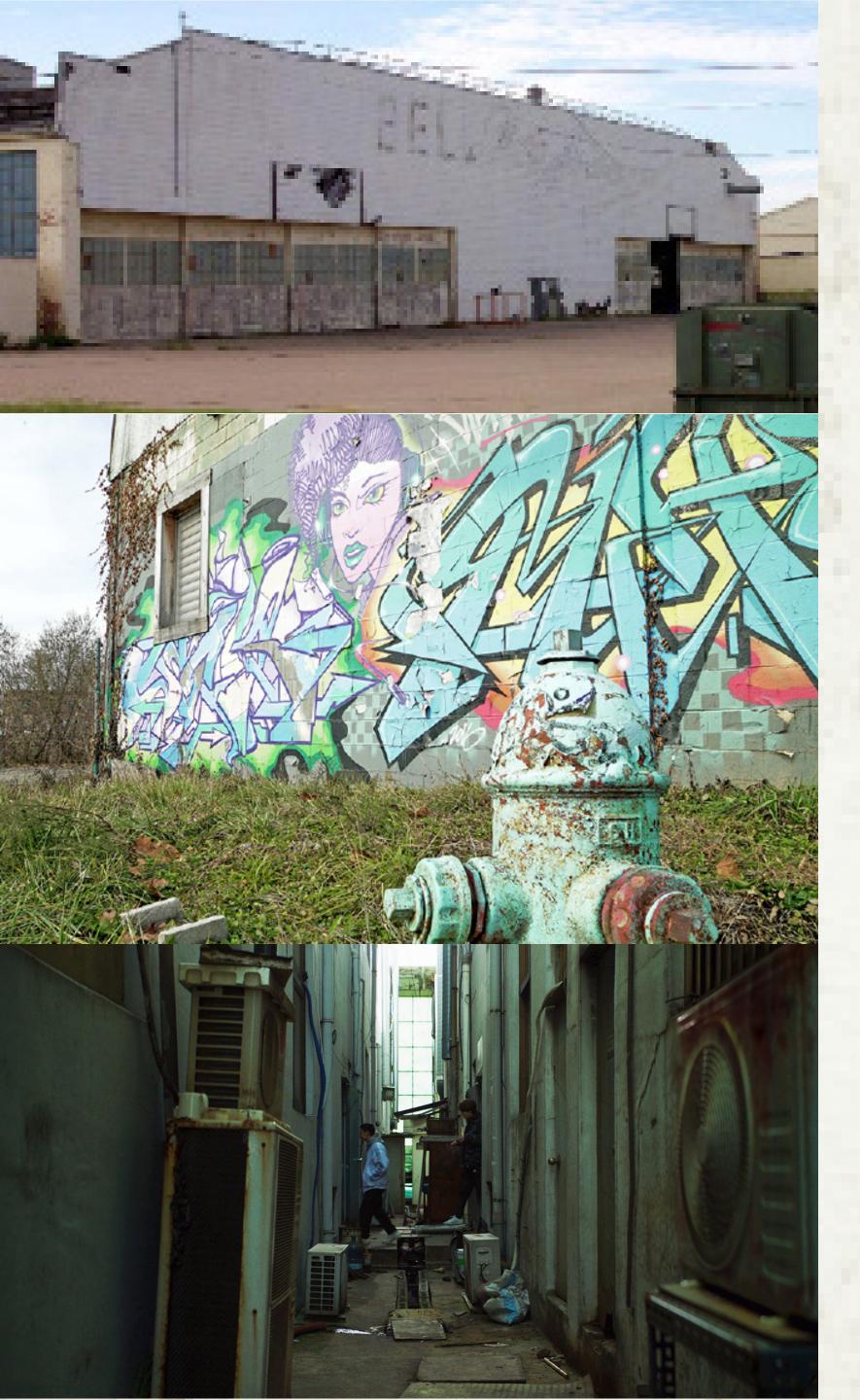
#### Mama & Papa's House

The Matryoshkan culture is vibrant and colorful, full of tradition and ceremony, and Ynaria's parent's house reflects that aesthetic.

From brightly painted exteriors to richly textured interiors, their home is both welcoming (to Matryoshkans) and intimidating (to humans).

Full of knick-knacks they've brought from the "old country", the palette will derive inspiration from traditional Slavic folk art: bold reds, blues and greens.



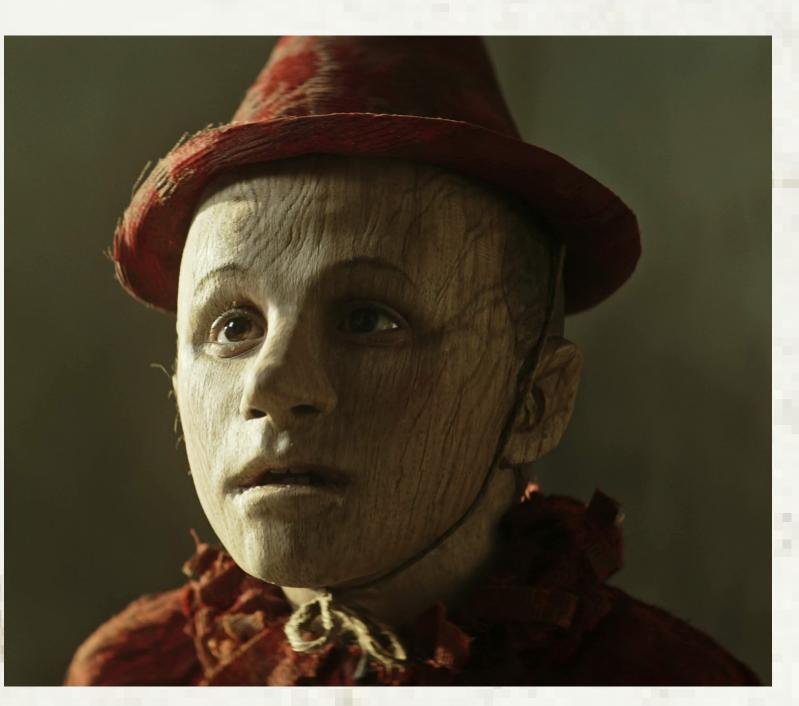


#### The Sanctuary

If a human were to walk past The Sanctuary, they would think it was simply a rundown warehouse. This is by design: The Sanctuary is a sacred space that is best left unnoticed and undisturbed.

Once inside, The Sanctuary stands in stark contrast to a traditional Matryoshkan home: a sterile, stark-white environment free from any and all distractions. The purpose is simple: allow the couple to focus on each other during The Trial and nothing else.





Older Matryoshkans have a wood-like texture to their skin.



The empty husks of each layer will have an eery life-likeness.

#### Special Effects

Special effects will be practical whenever possible.

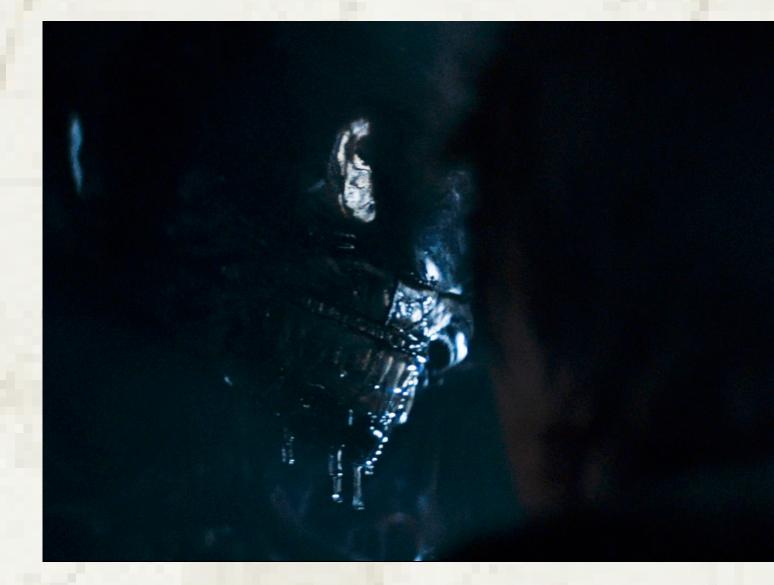
For makeup and hair, we'll emulate the paintedon lips and rosy cheeks of real Russian dolls.

Older Matryoshkans, like Mama and Papa, will have skin lines resembling wood grain. Their heavy, thumping footsteps will echo on creaky floorboards as they walk.

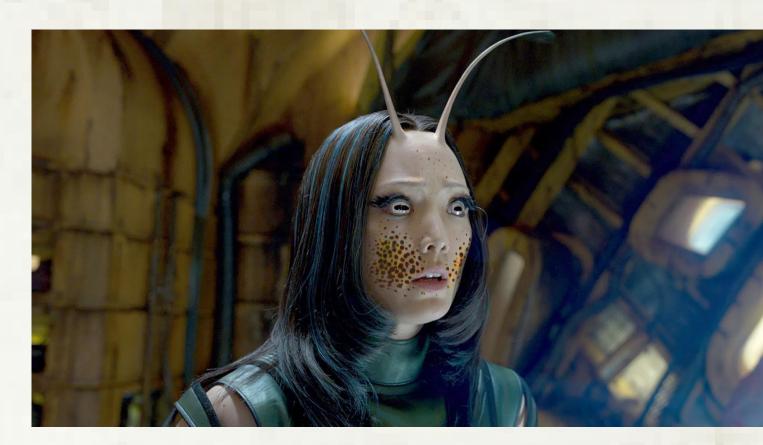
Sveta, the caterpillar-like layer, will be an animatronic, segmented puppet.

The insect-like Oksana creature effect will be a combination of animatronics and a bodysuit.

Along the way, it will provide some scares and surprises, then finally leaving you with the heartwarming feeling you get from a great love story.



We'll catch only glimpses of Oksana's horrific form and use rod and wire rigs to give her an unnatural, bug-like movement.



We'll reserve CG for enhancing specific effects, like hiding Oksana's rigging or creating Ekatarina's color-changing chromatophore skin.

## LUMPARALE HURRUR RUMANUE FILME



#### The Lobster (2015)

In a dystopian near future, single people, according to the laws of The City, are taken to The Hotel, where they are obliged to find a romantic partner in forty-five days or are transformed into beasts and sent off into The Woods.

Starring Colin Farrell and Rachel Weisz

Budget: \$4,500,000

Worldwide Box Office: \$18,019,834



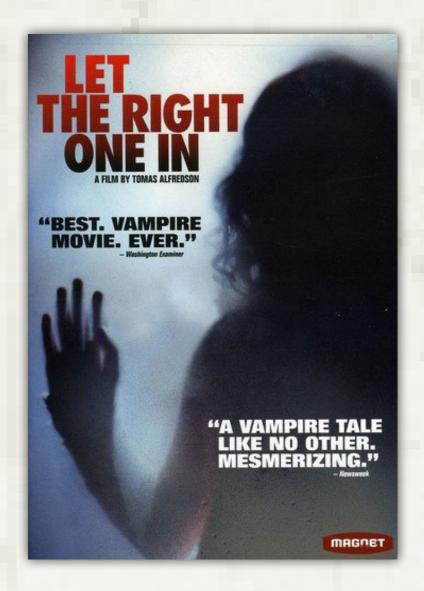
#### Ready or Not (2019)

A bride's wedding night takes a sinister turn when her eccentric new in-laws force her to take part in a terrifying game.

Starring Samara Weaving and Adam Brody

Budget: \$6,000,000

Worldwide Box Office: \$56,797,392



#### Let the Right One In (2008)

Oskar, a bullied 12 year old, strikes up a friendship with his new neighbor, the mysterious and moody Eli. Initially reserved, a sweet romance blossoms between them. But a dark, macabre secret revealing Eli's connection to a string of bloody local murders threatens everything.

Budget: \$4,500,000

Worldwide Box Office: \$12,247,682

#### What is Horror Romance?

**Romance:** a genre of film with a central love story and an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending.

**Horrors** a genre of film with the intended purpose of creating feelings of fear, dread, disgust, and terror.

Horror Romance is the intersection of the two.



#### Director: Michael Medaglia

Michael Medaglia is a writer/director whose films depict the dark, unexplored side of the human psyche. His cinema lives somewhere outside of reality, in the intersection of science fiction, thriller, and horror. Despite working in genre films, he strives to depict the complexity of human emotion and make his stories feel all the more real. His feature debut, Deep Dark, a psychological horror tale of a sculptor and his inhuman muse, garnered both critical acclaim and international distribution. Michael draws inspiration from David Cronenberg, Roman Polanski, and Jonathan Glazer.

#### **Author: Carlton Mellick III**

For almost 20 years, Carlton Mellick III has been writing some of the strangest and most compelling novels the bizarro fiction genre has to offer. Described as one of the top 40 science-fiction writers under the age of 40 by The Guardian and "one of the most original novelists working today" by extreme horror legend Edward Lee. In his 56th book, Mellick has created a surreal love story that explores the ugly and beautiful nature of relationships.



#### Producer: Jacqueline Gault

From developing a kernel of a concept into a steampunk-inspired world with a strong female role model, to acquiring scripts from award-winning and much sought-after writers, Jacqueline thrives in "development hell" - the world where everything (and nothing) is possible. Her first film premiered at the Austin Film Festival and screened as part of the SAG Short Film Showcase and Women in Film and Television International Short Film Showcase; she co-created a family action-adventure series Tess the Inventor, which is currently set up with Moonrise Pictures in Madrid and MMC Studios in Germany; and her first full-length feature film with Executive Producer Todd Haynes is currently in post-production. Jacqueline is a member of the Producer's Guild of America.

#### Screenwriter: Larry Starke

Larry Starke is a freelance writer dwelling in the western suburbs of Portland, Oregon. He enjoys listening to Japanese Metal, playing computer games with his children, and binge watching every Korean Drama he can stream. He co-created the family action-adventure series "Tess the Inventor" set up with Moonrise Pictures in Madrid. And he just finished writing a tentpole feature for Montreal's Morpheus Entertainment called "The Tesla Club." In addition to "Stacking Doll" and the projects above, Larry is spending his plague year churning out his thirteenth and fourteenth screenplays.

For more information, please contact:

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