

PURGE:

Tragic Surviving: A Dark Noir Fairy Tale

Director's Statement

By Antti J. Jokinen

Not like my previous film *The Resident* (2010), *Purge* interweaves several plot lines, around the consequences of a tragic female storylines during the war and around 1992 human trafficking. It's a riveting drama with very powerful lead characters and extremely unique circumstances.

The book is presented in a non-linear arrangement where the lives of the characters are depicted before and after the war. The film will stay truthful to this set-up and merely tell the same story through a different artistic form. The main characters each have 'past', 'present', and 'future' story threads, which are shown as non-linear fragments that punctuate elements of the overall story, all imminently coming toward each other and coalescing as the story progresses. I feel this is a very powerful way to construct the film and to tell a modern story like this. The book success and also very candid story telling have mesmerized me. I think, because it was originally written as a theater play it has a three-section plot line all ready attached to it. Quite honestly the book was so good that I felt our biggest challenge was to decide which section we had to leave out. I underline "had to." I would have been very happy to adapt and shoot the entire book.

The disturbing, riveting film partly operates in opposition to that fog of forgetfulness. In the film — an escaped Russian sex slave turns up out of nowhere, collapsing in front of the dilapidated house of an elderly woman in Estonia — is a jolt. The two main characters Aliide and Zara feel instant and riveting draw towards each other. Set in 1992, only three years removed from the joyful optimism undammed by the demolition of the Berlin Wall, *Purge* burns through the mists to show how decades of debasement have twisted society in the former USSR into one characterized by crime and cruelty. In the film I will navigate through this larger themes within a tight, unconventional crime novel style, one punctuated by dreadful silences, violence, shameful revelations and repellent intimacies. My main goal is to examine the toll of history on a close, personal level. I hope the film makes the cost of mere survival (never mind the price of retaining one's dignity) sickeningly palpable and thrilling. In another word all the elements of the book are still attached but now told in a more visual and cinematic way. My ambition is to deepen the story, cruelty and dramatic segments by visualization, character play and not to bring a completely new feel to it.

Yet for all its darkness, *Purge* will be an engrossing film. Zara, a desperate, battered young woman, is from far away of home and even further away emotionally from herself. She seeks rescue in a rickety home on the edge of the woods. Aliide, the cunning, solitary woman who takes her in, is skilled in the powers of human mind. I feel the essence of these two lead characters is that neither either is completely what they appear to be. As Aliide cares for Zara and Zara gets her bearings, we witness a psychic game of cards in which each woman carefully reveals a piece of her history, debating mightily with herself if presenting a sliver of truth will harm her cause or perhaps save her.

What's at stake for Zara is straightforward. She needs Aliide to help her get away from her captors, two Russian Mafiosi whose trade is beating and raping young women into forced prostitution in Germany. But what reason Aliide would have for risking the seemingly peaceful life she leads is teased out, taking the story back to Estonia in the '40s and '50s, and uncorking a past full of betrayal and pettiness, of living in hiding and speaking with your head bowed. Soviet-occupied Estonia is full of people abandoned to terrible violations and lasting humiliations; some of it at the hand of the government, some of it caused by human weakness. Masterful themes for a film.

Visually my approach would be to highlight two major themes of the script.

Mixed and limited perspectives. This is a fantastic take for a very dark and interesting film. There's always more to the story than what can be seen in the frame at any given moment--- this rule counts all the way to the last part of the film. I love it and I think it should be celebrated in visuals. In this film there seems to be second agendas to everything. This is naturally achieved by its non-linear arrangements and showing things from Alidee's and Zara's point-of-view through out the film. It's satisfying how differently we as people relate to situations, feelings and other people's motifs. There seems to be no common ground and anything can trigger pain, torment, hate or even love. Both of these two storylines will be shot with a different look and the film really finds it visual unity at the very end of it.

In my mind this films second proper backbone is imprisonment and escape. This theme has been layered throughout the film and will be my second thematic approach to deliver this film. Both Aliide and Zara are imprisoned by their actions, motifs and very dark tragically powered decision they have and will live with.

Visually all these themes will be achieved by a naturalistic, raw and stylized look that create an atmosphere for suspense and unseen things. Lots of shadows and almost "Film Noir" type of contrast lightning. Camera will move like roaming eye through the locations and sets and with the use on long lenses I'll create a claustrophobic look. Lot's of it will be handheld. However, since I am doing a very character driven and psychologically demanding film; visual, light and editing will tell the story and create the atmosphere and not over take the beauty of its story.