



VERA DREAMS OF THE SEA

by Kaltrina Krasniqi

Kosovo, North Macedonia, Albania
2021 | 87' | Suspense drama



LOGLINE

Vera, a middle-aged woman, is forced to face the raw reality of the deeply-seated gender issues when, after her husband's suicide, the tendrils of an underworld scheme begin to surface.

SYNOPSIS

Vera is a middle-aged sign language interpreter, who leads a well-structured life: a wife to a renowned judge, a supportive mother, and a caring grandmother. Her serenity is disrupted by her husband's unexpected suicide followed by an unwelcome, menacing parade of relatives who claim to have ownership over their village family house. When the tendrils of an underworld scheme begin to surface, Vera's world will face danger and seem ready to collapse. Fear and mistrust will force Vera to take the family's fate into her own hands.

Steeped into an ominous atmosphere, *Vera Dreams of the Sea* is an intimate yet universal portrait of a woman, who must face the raw reality of going against the deeply seated gender issues that prevail in our times.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Vera, my mother, was in her mid-thirties when she decided to divorce my father. Raised in socialist Yugoslavia, she believed in the judicial system and fought for several years in courts to ensure our share of inheritance. The lengthy procedures, endless appeals, and high court costs defeated her. This was the first time she was confronted with the limits of the society she aspired for herself, becoming aware that the legal system follows a very patrilineal logic, which historically *othered* women regarding property rights and trapping them in a lifelong economic dependency from men.

In telling Vera's story, I was interested in challenging the traditional hero narrative, because this character arc often does not fit the experience of women and other marginalized people. At the same time, I was attentive not to recreate the trope of the suppressed woman who has no agenda.

It takes a lot of effort to see past the tradition, which is forcing the individual actions. Women in general are used to the patriarchal rules imposed on them. We pretend to be succeeding by following the rules, but looking past beyond the modes of existence in which we are expected to perform, there is another life, which we do not see on TV or on our social media news feed.

In 2014, writer Doruntina Basha introduced me to her script *Vera Dreams of the Sea*. I was immediately drawn to her *Vera*; the main reason being her age and the social

fabric of her life experience, which offered a nuanced and all-encompassing context of Kosovo.

Vera's submissiveness made me very uncomfortable. The way she patiently mediates a feud between her conservative husband and unconventional daughter and serves as a battlefield for both, would spark anger in me. She speaks for the deaf, but the suicide of her husband finds her unequipped to negotiate her own position. The new highway passing through their family property forces her into a realm where her husband's past is used to rob her daughter's future. Vera hopes to strike a deal with tradition but instead she is silenced and systematically threatened to the point of jeopardizing her daughter's life. After this event she goes against her fundamental beliefs and exposes her husband's past in the underworld.

Vera's fate unveils a merciless postwar society entangled in corruption, where women can only be collateral damage of yet another highway in the making. I see myself as an intimate, curious observer of Vera's life, silently absorbing the internal drama of her day to day existence. She is in every shot, her actions shape a reality which in many ways is authentic and lacked - until now- visibility. The slowness of her aged body being forced to react is a storytelling vehicle, one which sets the pace and the emotional tone of the film - her internal and external desires, expressions and expectations.

Vera, my character, moves me because women of her generation are rarely-if ever-depicted in film or literature. So much prejudice and stereotypes are represented in their name, but as Zadie Smith puts it "The first generation does what the second one does not want to do so the third is free to do what it likes."



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Kaltrina Krasniqi is an award-winning Kosovo-based film director and researcher working in film, television and digital humanities since early 2000. She is a founding member of Kosovo Oral History Initiative – a digital archive, where personal histories of people from various paths of life are recorded and published, and a co-founder of Dit' e Nat'; a non-formal setting for promotion of film, literature and music. She graduated in Film Directing in the University of Prishtina in 2004 and in 2011 completed her MA in Kosovo's Institute for Journalism and Communication. In 2015 she continued her professional development in the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) with focus in Film Producing. Her last film *Sarabande* (2018) premiered in ZagrebDox and it was awarded as Best Documentary in Cinalfama Film Festival and was a nominee in short documentary competition at Camerimage Festival 2018. Her first feature film *Vera Dreams of the Sea* is set to release in September 2021.

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

Sarabande | 2018 | short

The Canaries Know | 2014 | short

Rolling to Brussels | 2012 | mid-length

Family Portray | 2009 | short

Tatita | 2006 | short

Silentio | 2003 | short

Relax | 2003 | short

Sudden Air | 2000 | short

MAIN CREDITS

Title: Vera Dreams of the Sea

Original title: Vera Andrron Detin

Directed by: Kaltrina Krasniqi

Written by: Doruntina Basha

Cast: Teuta Ajdini (Vera), Alketa Sylaj (Sara), Astrit Kabashi (Ahmet), Refet Abazi (Basri)

Produced by: Isstra Creative Factory (Kosovo) & Vera Films (Kosovo)

Co-produced by: Dream Factory (North Macedonia), Papadhimitri Film Production (Albania)

Producers: Shkumbin Istrefi

Co-producers: Ognen Antov, Klajdi Papadhimitri, Kaltrina Krasniqi

Country of production: Kosovo, North Macedonia, Albania

Cinematography by: Sevdije Kastrati

Editing by: Vladimir Pavlovski, Kaltrina Krasniqi

Production design by: Burim Arifi, Blendina Xhema

Costumes by: Albulena Borovci

Make-up by: Fiona Abdullahu

Music by: Petrit Çeku, Genc Salihu

1st Assistant director: Mjellma Istrefi

Sound by: Igor Popovski, Darko Spasovski

Production manager: Fis Cahani

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