

TRUTH

It will protect you—
or destroy you.

By D. Nikki Wheeler



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Logline

When a tormented screenwriter channels her unraveling psyche into a horror script about a mythical creature, her creation begins to manifest in the real world—forcing her to confront the line between fiction and madness before the monster she birthed destroys everything she loves.



Overview

Truth is a chilling psychological horror that explores the terrifying convergence of art, ambition, and mental unraveling. Esme Keller, a struggling screenwriter with an unfulfilled career and a mind fractured by insomnia, anxiety, and pressure, takes on a horror film project she never wanted. As her creativity spirals into obsession, the ancient legend of the Golem becomes the heart of her screenplay— and her waking nightmare.

Synopsis

Opening with a haunting prologue set in a Czech synagogue during wartime, we witness the violent unearthing of an ancient mystical force hidden within a mound of sacred books. This sets the tone for a film where suppressed horrors, both human and supernatural, are unearthed with devastating consequences.

In modern-day Los Angeles, Esme is coerced by Atkins, a domineering studio executive, to write a low-budget horror film within a tight deadline. Emotionally and professionally drained, Esme turns to folklore and her fractured memories for inspiration. She crafts a story about a Golem, a creature brought to life to protect its creator, only to lose control of its purpose. As Esme immerses herself in the script, the boundary between her waking life and the story disintegrates.

Esme's ex-husband Marty, a smooth-talking screenwriter, returns to collaborate on the script, rekindling unresolved tensions. Meanwhile, Esme's insomnia deepens, and strange phenomena plague her home—muddy footprints, distorted dreams of sculpting a towering clay figure, and whispers of doubt within her mind. The creature reflects her mental state: powerful, protective, yet capable of uncontrollable violence.

The film crescendos as Esme realizes the horrors she has unleashed. Her script comes to life, with Emet meting out brutal justice in her world, leaving destruction and death in its wake. Esme confronts her own guilt, past failures, and the moral ambiguity of her creation. The climax intertwines her script's resolution with her real-life battle against Emet, leading to a heart-wrenching decision to destroy the creature and acknowledge he is part of who she is.



ESME KELLER

A talented but deeply flawed screenwriter whose insomnia and anxiety fuel her creativity while jeopardizing her grip on reality. Esme's journey is one of self-reconciliation and artistic redemption.

Esme is a determined and resilient writer grappling with the weight of past regrets, internal struggles, a difficult divorce, and professional challenges in an unforgiving industry. Her sharp wit and defiant speaking style reflect a tenacious, independent spirit, but beneath her strong facade lies a vulnerable core marked by sadness, uncertainty, and a yearning for validation.

Esme is highly resourceful and pragmatic, often finding solutions in the midst of chaos, yet she is deeply introspective and contemplative, reflecting on her failures and fears. Her creative ambition is both her strength and her undoing, driving her to confront the boundaries of her own reality as mysterious occurrences compound her mental state.

Esme's voice carries professionalism and intensity, often laced with frustration and a profound sense of longing for redemption.

EMET

A towering clay creature born of Esme's subconscious and inspired by Jewish folklore, Emet is a physical manifestation of her fears, guilt, and creative ambition.

Emet's hulking, imposing form contrasts with his surprisingly contemplative nature, as he questions his purpose and existence. Designed to be a protector and bringer of justice, he embodies both heroism and the destructive consequences of unchecked creation. His vulnerability and longing for understanding make him a tragic figure, blurring the lines between monster and victim.

Silent for much of the story, Emet's rare moments of speech are profound and commanding, reflecting the weight of his existence and the pain of his role. He exudes an aura of danger and otherworldly power, instilling both fear and awe.



MARTY

Esme's ex-husband and former writing partner, Marty is a charming yet deeply flawed individual whose charisma often hides his opportunistic tendencies. Nostalgic for their past, he reenters Esme's life under the guise of collaboration, though his true motives are tinged with both regret and self-interest.

Marty is a complex character who embodies a mix of vulnerability and manipulation; he genuinely cares for Esme and seeks to reconcile with her, but his need to prove himself often clouds his actions. His charm is his greatest weapon, allowing him to persuade and diffuse conflict with ease, though his defensiveness and occasional arrogance hint at unresolved guilt over their failed marriage.

Marty's speaking style is smooth and measured, effortlessly balancing humor and warmth with moments of longing, sarcasm, and emotional sincerity.





ATKINS

A bombastic and domineering studio executive whose relentless ambition masks his insecurities and desperation to maintain his success in the cutthroat film industry.

Atkins thrives on control and manipulation, using his aggressive demeanor to push others into meeting his deadlines and expectations.

Despite his bravado, his thinly veiled fear of failure drives his often-ruthless behavior. His relationship with Esme is a volatile power struggle, with his constant pressure acting as both an antagonistic force and a catalyst for her resilience.

Atkins' speaking style is sharp, blunt, and laced with condescension, often cutting others down to assert his authority, but his rare moments of vulnerability reveal a man terrified of irrelevance.

Visual and Narrative Style

Visual Style:

The film's aesthetic is a blend of dreamlike surrealism and stark realism, with shifting color palettes to distinguish Esme's waking life from her dreamscapes. Themes of artistic creation, mental health, and self-destruction are explored through atmospheric tension and nuanced performances. The narrative's meta-elements blur the lines between Esme's screenplay and her lived experiences, culminating in a chilling and cathartic resolution.

Narrative Style:

The film's tone is dark and oppressive, blending dreamlike sequences with stark realism. It features fragmented editing to convey Esme's deteriorating mental state and an atmospheric score that heightens tension. The visual language uses shifting shadows, muted tones, and splashes of vibrant red (symbolizing blood and creation) to underscore key moments.

Key Themes:

- **The Power of Creation:** The Golem, both a symbol of protection and destruction, mirrors Esme's internal battle with her creative ambitions and failures.
- **Blurring Realities:** The interplay between Esme's life and the fictional world of her screenplay creates a hallucinatory, surreal experience for the viewer.
- **The Cost of Ambition:** The film examines the lengths one goes to in pursuit of success and the toll it takes on mental health and personal relationships.

Truth is a haunting psychological horror that examines the price of ambition and the power of self-forgiveness. Its layered storytelling and visceral imagery promise an unforgettable cinematic experience.

Market Analysis

Target Audience Demographics:

- Adults aged 18–49, particularly fans of elevated horror and suspense films.
- Gender-balanced appeal, with a slight skew toward women due to the strong female lead and themes of mental health and personal struggle.
- International potential, with significant interest in North America, Europe, and parts of Asia where psychological horror performs well.

Marketability: *Truth* has the potential to attract a wide audience due to its unique blend of psychological horror, folklore, and contemporary themes like mental health struggles and creative ambition. These elements resonate with fans of critically acclaimed films like *Hereditary*, *Black Swan*, and *The Babadook*. The exploration of Jewish folklore also distinguishes the film from competitors, offering a fresh cultural lens to a popular genre.

Profit Potential:

- Moderate to high, supported by the psychological horror genre's consistent track record of strong returns on modest budgets. Elevated horror films often rely on compelling performances and atmospheric tension rather than costly special effects, making them cost-effective.
- Recent successes in the genre include:
 - *Hereditary* (2018): Budget \$10M; Worldwide Gross \$81M.
 - *The Invisible Man* (2020): Budget \$7M; Worldwide Gross \$144M.
 - *The Babadook* (2014): Budget \$2M; Worldwide Gross \$10M.
 - *Get Out* (2017): Budget \$4.5M; Worldwide Gross \$255M.
 - *Midsommar* (2019): Budget \$9M; Worldwide Gross \$48M.

The Growing Appeal of Psychological Horror:

- Psychological horror appeals to audiences seeking intelligent, emotionally resonant, and thought-provoking narratives. A 2022 market study showed that over 60% of frequent moviegoers prefer horror films that delve into psychological or supernatural themes rather than gore or slasher tropes.
- Streaming platforms have contributed to the genre's growth, with films like *Hush*, *Gerald's Game*, and *The Platform* finding broad audiences globally. This positions *Truth* for strong streaming potential as well.

Writer Bio



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D. Nikki Wheeler is an acclaimed storyteller whose work bridges the worlds of high-stakes corporate strategy and compelling cinematic narratives. She is the author of *Sec. Spot. Run: A Media Relations Playbook for Getting More Coverage Faster* and a sought-after contributor to leading business and communications publications. By day, she is a respected corporate and crisis communications expert; by night, a disciplined writer crafting stories that captivate audiences worldwide.

Nikki's creative vision draws deeply from her diverse experiences: advising heads of state, navigating the high-pressure corridors of the U.S. Senate, and living in a Middle Eastern war zone as a government contractor. Her unique perspective infuses her work with authenticity and grit, whether crafting a screenplay or directing on set.

Currently, Nikki is in development with SIDEWAY on the original streaming web series *FABULIST* and has optioned *THE ONE*, a tantalizing thriller with Canadian-based Nasser Entertainment. A seasoned director and producer, she has also contributed as a set designer, bringing her distinctive flair to every project.

A passionate traveler and adventurer, Nikki's insatiable curiosity fuels her creativity. She resides in Colorado, where her home is affectionately described by her niece as "full of pets and stories waiting to be told."

Awards and honors include:

- Number 6, on the Capital Fund Hot 100 List, 2021
- Finalists, Wiki: The World's Fastest Screenplay Contest! 2021
- Semifinalist, ISA Genre Busting Screenplay Competition, 2021
- Semifinalist, Los Angeles International Screenplay Awards Spring 2020
- Quarterfinalist, The Script Lab - TSL Free Screenplay Contest 2020
- Quarterfinalist, ScreenCraft Drama Competition 2020
- Quarterfinalist, Emerging Screenwriters - Genre Screenplay Competition 2020
- Quarterfinalist, Willamette Writers - Kay Snow Writing Competition 2020
- Honorable Mention, Barnstorm Fest 2020
- Quarterfinalist, Scriptapalooza Screenplay Competition 2019