



BLACK SAMPHIRE

A couple take a holiday to a coastal village in a bid to save their relationship. However, the poisoned rivers around them hide a dark secret that will decide their fate.

SILICON
GOTHIC

CANDID
BROADS
PRODUCTIONS

THE PROJECT

GENRE Folk horror/thriller

BUDGET £800K - £950K

THEMES Water Pollution, Toxic Relationships, Mental Health, Addiction

FORMAT Digital

ESTIMATED RUNNING TIME 90-100mins

STATUS Late Development

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"Ignoring something doesn't make it go away, Mari."

- ISLA

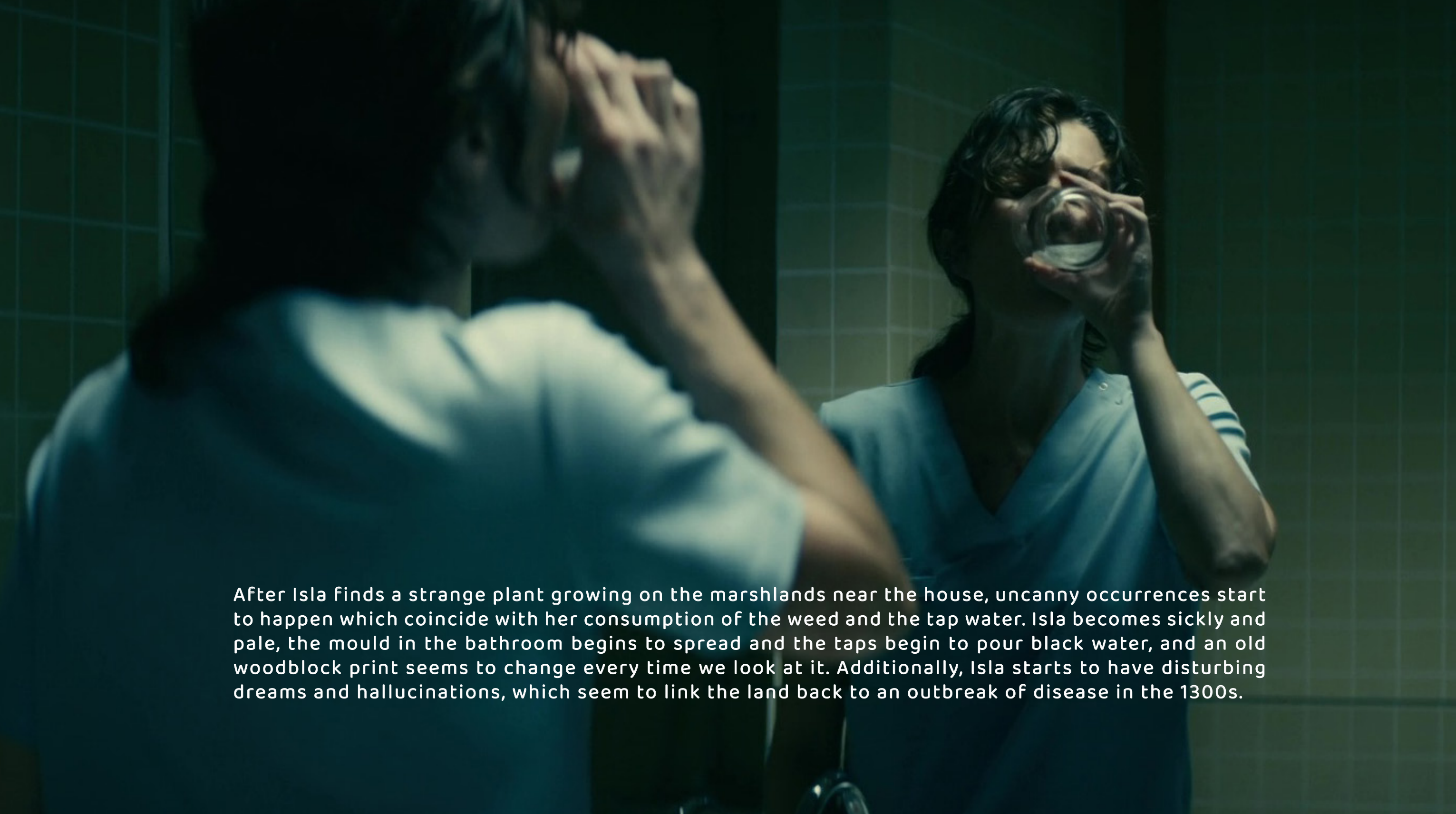


SYNOPSIS

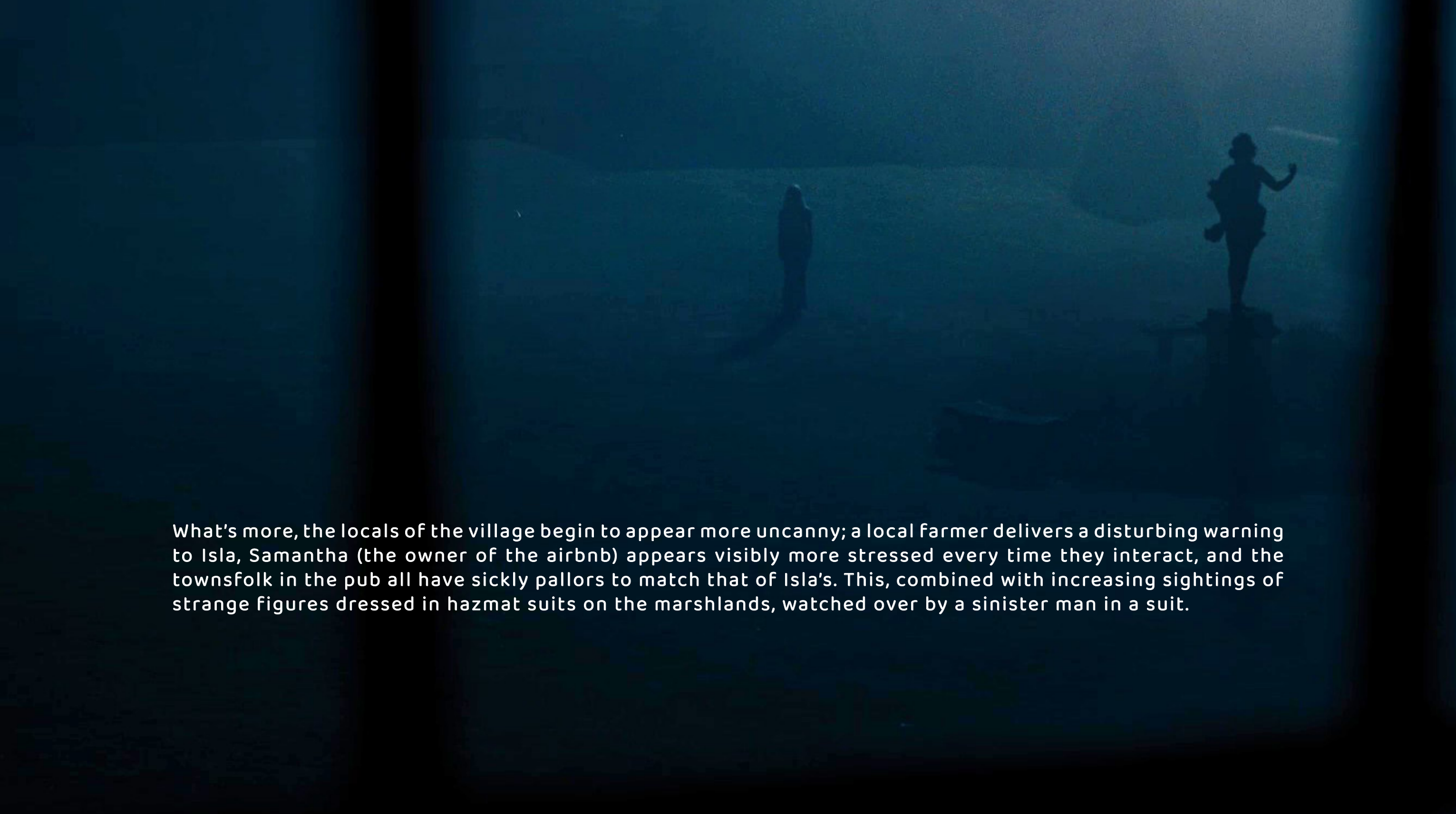


Sick of the bustle of London, Isla and Mari have booked a week away for a break in West Sussex in a bid to fix their decaying relationship. But when they arrive at the beautiful airbnb Isla has booked, all is not what it seems...



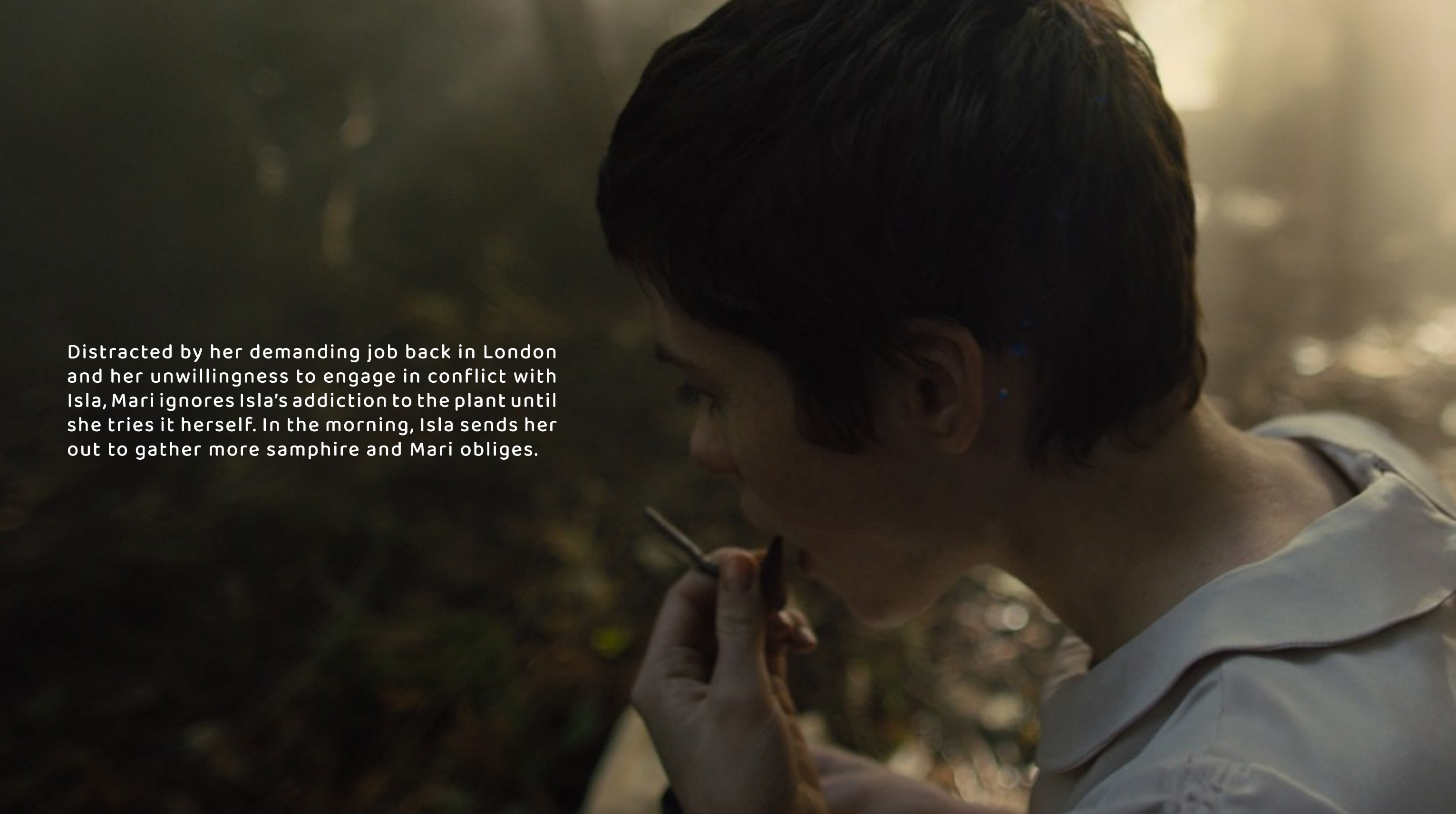
A person with dark, curly hair, wearing a light blue V-neck shirt, is shown from the chest up, drinking from a clear glass. They are in a bathroom with light-colored square tiles on the wall. The lighting is dim and moody, with a greenish-blue tint. The person's face is partially obscured by the glass and their hand. The background is slightly out of focus, showing more of the tiled wall and a dark area in the upper left.

After Isla finds a strange plant growing on the marshlands near the house, uncanny occurrences start to happen which coincide with her consumption of the weed and the tap water. Isla becomes sickly and pale, the mould in the bathroom begins to spread and the taps begin to pour black water, and an old woodblock print seems to change every time we look at it. Additionally, Isla starts to have disturbing dreams and hallucinations, which seem to link the land back to an outbreak of disease in the 1300s.

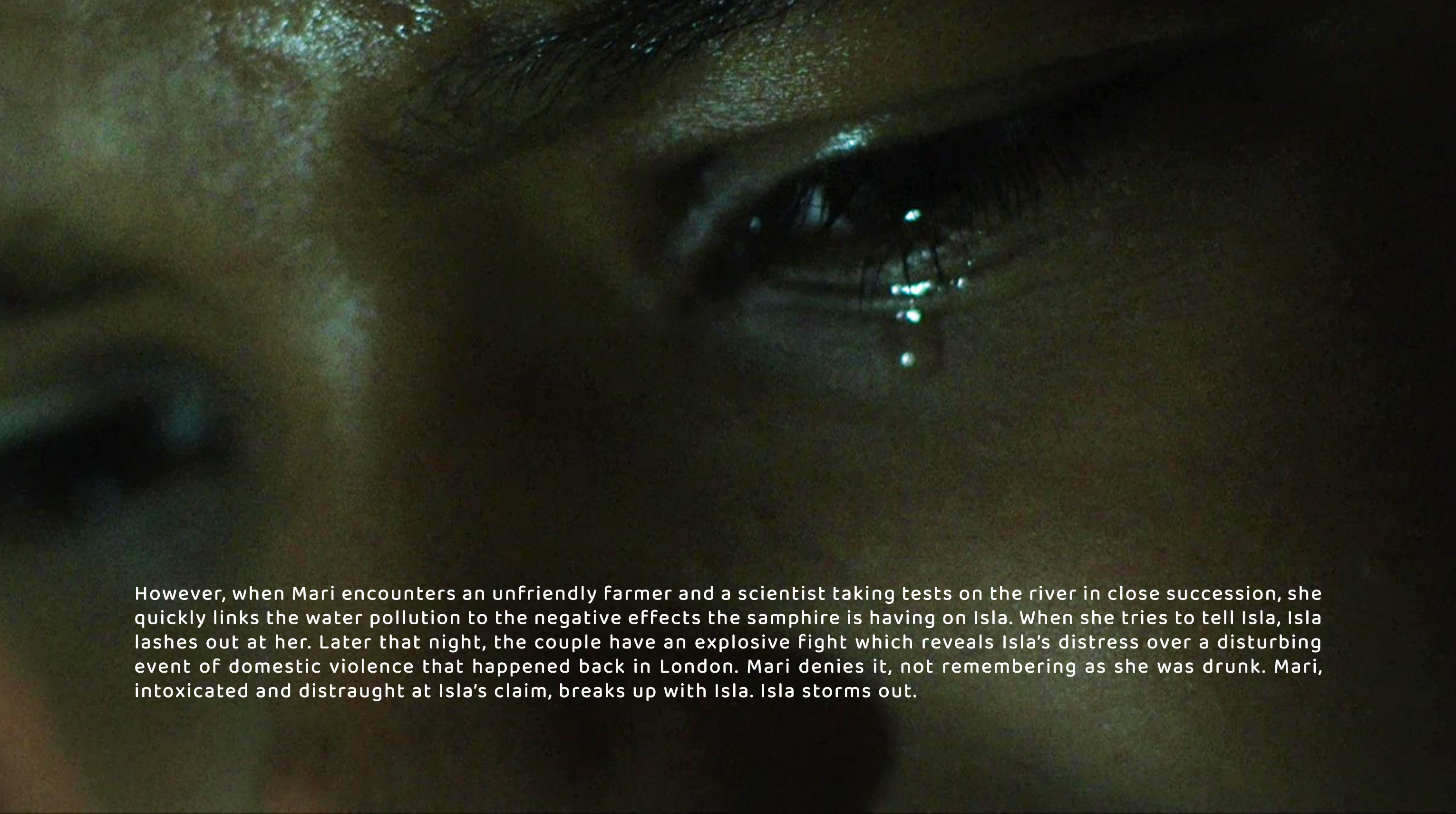


What's more, the locals of the village begin to appear more uncanny; a local farmer delivers a disturbing warning to Isla, Samantha (the owner of the airbnb) appears visibly more stressed every time they interact, and the townsfolk in the pub all have sickly pallors to match that of Isla's. This, combined with increasing sightings of strange figures dressed in hazmat suits on the marshlands, watched over by a sinister man in a suit.





Distracted by her demanding job back in London and her unwillingness to engage in conflict with Isla, Mari ignores Isla's addiction to the plant until she tries it herself. In the morning, Isla sends her out to gather more samphire and Mari obliges.



However, when Mari encounters an unfriendly farmer and a scientist taking tests on the river in close succession, she quickly links the water pollution to the negative effects the samphire is having on Isla. When she tries to tell Isla, Isla lashes out at her. Later that night, the couple have an explosive fight which reveals Isla's distress over a disturbing event of domestic violence that happened back in London. Mari denies it, not remembering as she was drunk. Mari, intoxicated and distraught at Isla's claim, breaks up with Isla. Isla storms out.

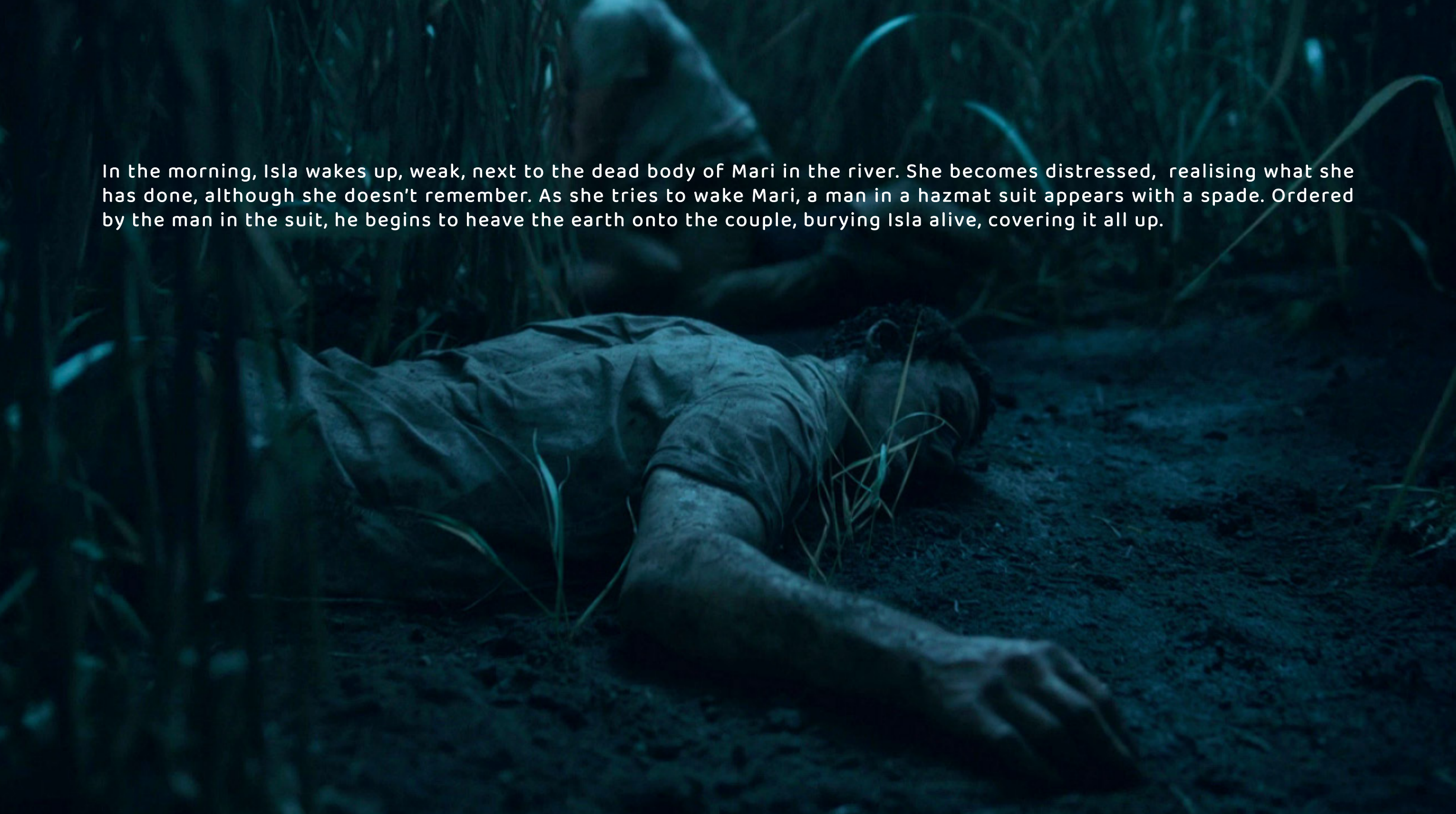


A close-up shot of a person's hands, which are covered in a thick, black, viscous liquid. The hands are positioned in the foreground, with the fingers spread. The background is a blurred green, suggesting foliage. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the liquid on the skin.

As Mari drinks herself into a stupor, Isla vomits black liquid into the sink upstairs. Realising the danger of her transformation, Isla begins to claw at her veins, which are now carrying black, contaminated blood. But it is all too little too late.

Mari goes to find Isla but discovers she is not in the house, and goes out onto the marshes. She follows the ghostly spectre of Isla and pleads with her to stop eating the samphire. When she tries to stop her with physical force, the possessed Isla lashes back, wounding Mari and stuffing samphire into her mouth in an attempt to suffocate her. When Mari fights back, Isla pushes her head under the water in a marshland river, killing her.



A person is lying face down in a field of tall grass. The person is wearing a light-colored, short-sleeved shirt and dark shorts. Their arms are outstretched to the sides. The grass is tall and green, and the ground is covered in dry leaves and twigs. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

In the morning, Isla wakes up, weak, next to the dead body of Mari in the river. She becomes distressed, realising what she has done, although she doesn't remember. As she tries to wake Mari, a man in a hazmat suit appears with a spade. Ordered by the man in the suit, he begins to heave the earth onto the couple, burying Isla alive, covering it all up.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

WARNING

DUE TO WATER POLLUTION THIS
AREA OF THE HANSTOWN KILL
IS UNSAFE FOR SWIMMING OR
FISHING. FISH CAUGHT IN THIS
AREA MAY BE CONTAMINATED
AND UNSAFE TO EAT.

ALBANY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



When Cathy and Joe first approached me with the script for *Black Sapphire* I was immediately drawn to its slow-burning urgency as a clarion call to every single one of us to confront the profound impact of our choices - or our apathy. By leaning into the folk horror genre, *Black Sapphire*, explores a community poisoned by contaminated waters and a queer couple on the brink of collapse as they confront the repercussions of their choices and the toxic relationships that bind them.



With a stellar cast of rising British stars, including Ishtar Currie Wilson as well as household names including BAFTA and Golden Globe nominee Stephen Fry, BAFTA winning / Golden Globe nominated Cathy Tyson and potentially Celia Imrie, who starred in my previous film and who we are in talks with for the role of IONA, we will craft a gripping narrative that explores the depths of human toxicity, madness and the urgency of addressing our environmental crises. Through subtle and nuanced performances and a thoughtful visual language drawing inspiration from genre films such as *The Wicker Man*, *Persona* and *Saint Maud*, but with a fresh, bold and female-led take, we will crescendo to an examination of the destructive forces that haunt our lives when we turn a blind eye to our surroundings.

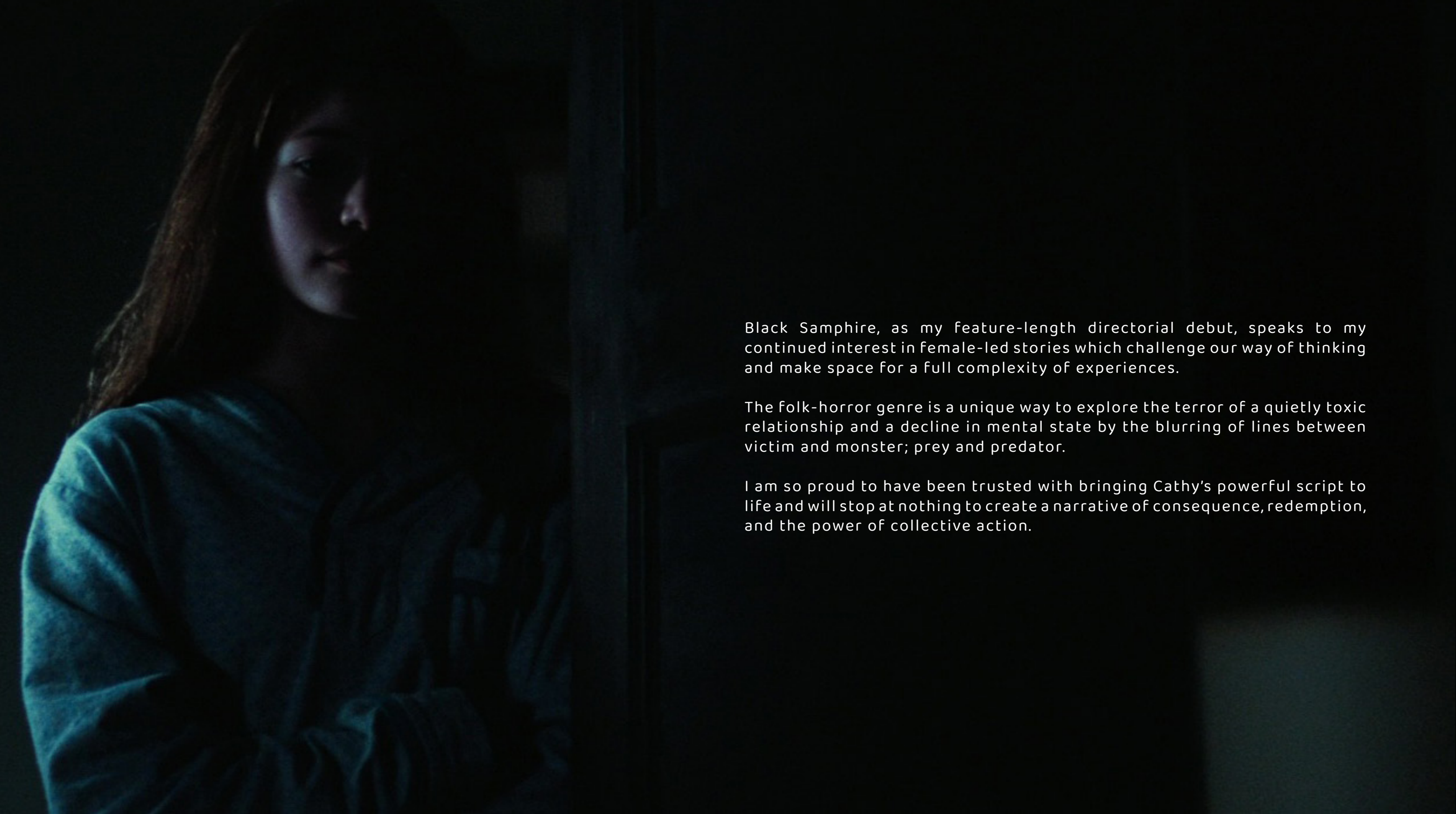
Visually, water will serve as a powerful symbol throughout the film, representing both the cyclical way that our actions impact future generations and the untamed forces that take hold of us if we allow them to. Water both gives and takes life and we will harness the motions of its movement to inspire our camera movements and explore what it looks like when something as critical as water is poisonous for us. From tranquil streams to turbulent oceans to stagnant polluted sources, water will reflect the emotional undercurrents of the story. Camera movement will inform this further, moving from a locked off camera where framing feels observational and almost incidental to the dream sequences where the interplay of water and camera movement will mirror the emotional currents that guide our characters, leading us into uncharted and unsettling territories of the human psyche.



The grade and sound design will be integral in building the horror. I will create an otherworldly, discordant world using primitive and ancient sounds; gnawing strings, ethereal vocals and mangled percussion culminating in an unrelenting and claustrophobic score and sound design. Through the grade I will play with the over-exposed retro feel at the start of the film before leaning into the cooler, desaturated tones whenever we are in nature and warmer colours in the house which will gradually decline along with the growth of the samphire. During the hallucination sequences, desaturated colours and high contrast will be used to create a surreal and disorienting atmosphere.

A wide-angle photograph of a calm body of water at sunset. The sky is a mix of soft pinks, oranges, and blues, with the sun's glow reflecting on the water's surface. In the foreground, a dark wooden pier or dock extends from the bottom center towards the middle of the frame. On either side of the pier, there are silhouettes of tall reeds or grasses. In the background, a dark line of trees marks the horizon. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

In terms of my own trajectory as a director, my work sits in this space of harnessing the power of the visual medium to bring women's voices - in all of their complexities - to the forefront. From winning awards at top BAFTA and Oscar qualifying festivals to being nominated at the Africa Movie Academy Awards, named as a finalist for Warner Bros highly competitive Black Britain Unspoken, working as Director's Mentee on productions such as Black Mirror, being named on the Forbes 30 Under 30 list, gaining funding from the prestigious Uncertain Kingdom fund, and successfully pulling in top household name talent for my films including Gugu Mbatha-Raw MBE, Celia Imrie CBE, Juliet Stevenson and Imelda Staunton, and gaining finance and support not only from institutions such as the BBC and BFI but also from charities, individuals and businesses, I have shown myself to be a talent on a rapid rise.

A woman with long dark hair is shown from the chest up, looking slightly to her right. She is wearing a dark, long-sleeved top. The scene is dimly lit, with a strong blue light source from the left creating a dramatic effect, casting her face and hair in shades of blue and black. The background is dark and indistinct.

Black Samphire, as my feature-length directorial debut, speaks to my continued interest in female-led stories which challenge our way of thinking and make space for a full complexity of experiences.

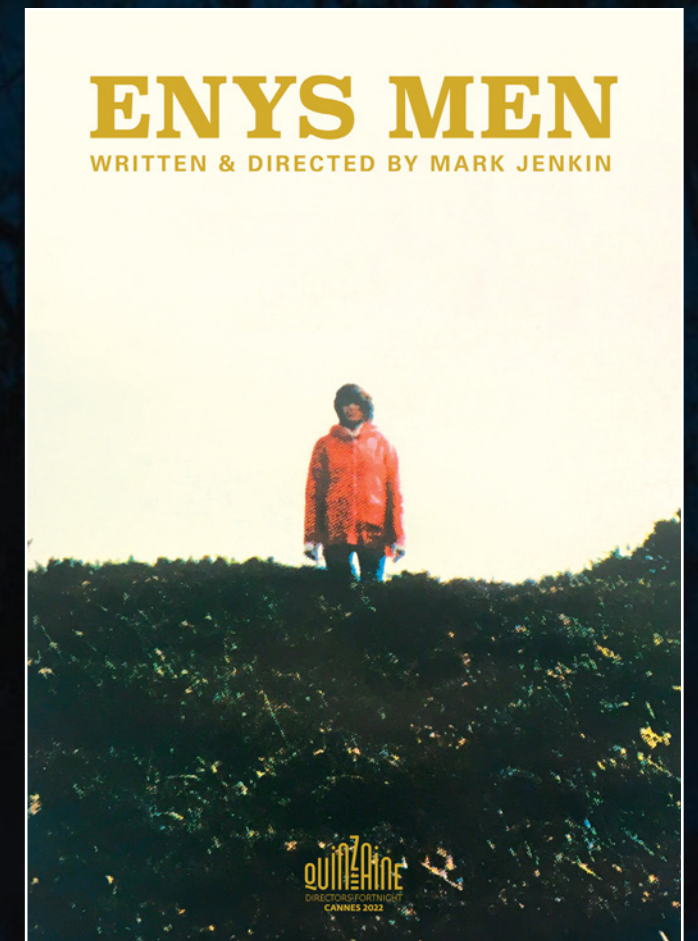
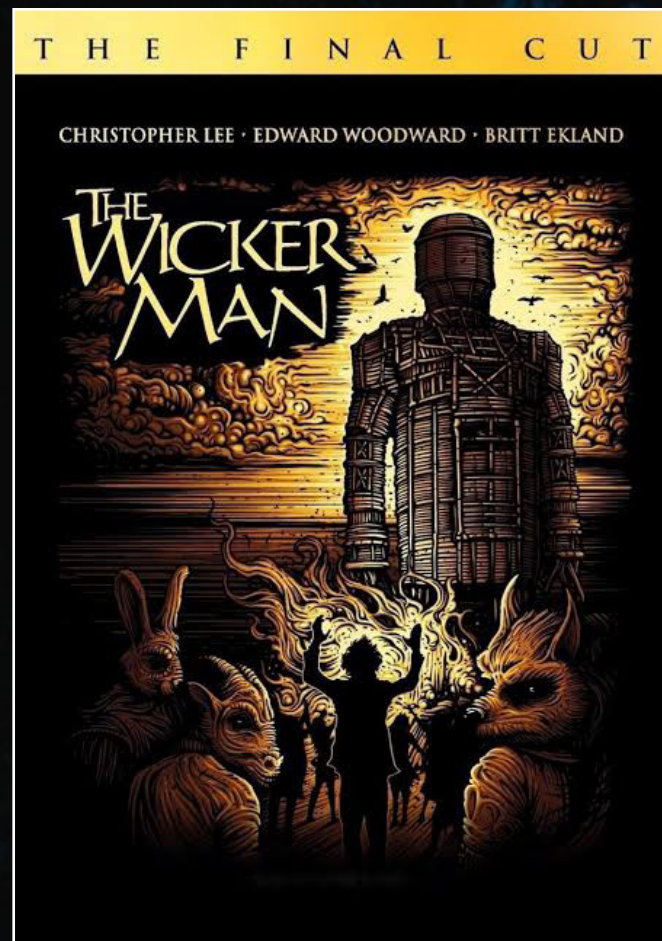
The folk-horror genre is a unique way to explore the terror of a quietly toxic relationship and a decline in mental state by the blurring of lines between victim and monster; prey and predator.

I am so proud to have been trusted with bringing Cathy's powerful script to life and will stop at nothing to create a narrative of consequence, redemption, and the power of collective action.

Together, let us create a wave of change that reverberates far beyond the confines of the screen.

CATHERINE JOY WHITE

COMPARABLES



'Black Samphire' takes inspiration from cult classics like 'The Wicker Man' and more recent folk horrors like 'Men'. However, with the film's environmental focus, we are seeking to modernise the horror genre with a fresh and unusual story.



THE TEAM

CATHERINE JOY WHITE

DIRECTOR

Cat's film Fifty-Four Days was selected for over 50 film festivals worldwide, garnering nominations and awards at BAFTA, Oscar and BIFA qualifying festivals including winning Best Short Film at British Urban Film Festival & the 2024 Cannes Film Festival Diversity showcase. The film has sold to American Airlines.

She was a Director's Mentee on Black Mirror, working alongside show creator Charlie Brooker. She is currently working as writer/director on her debut TV series - female-led thriller THE PRIMES & animated film TO MY DAUGHTER. Exclusively announced in Variety, it was awarded funding from the Uncertain Kingdom's Belief Grant, 'Honourably Mentioned' by Jodie Whittaker and Primetime's Empower fund and is being produced by Emmy® winning & BAFTA nominated Lupus Films.

As well as a director, Cat is an activist, UN gender advisor, published author, BAFTA Connect member, Forbes 30 under 30 alumni and keen open water swimmer / passionate advocate for our lakes and rivers.

[Website](#)

MARTYNA JAKIMOWSKA

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Martyna is a Polish cinematographer based in London. She received her Master's degree in Cinematography from the UK's National Film and Television School. Her short film "Summer" won her the Silver Tadpole for Cinematography in the Student Etude Competition at Camerimage 2016, a prestigious international film festival dedicated to the art of Cinematography.

In 2021, she won the Jan Machulski Award in Cinematography for "The Last Whistle," a prize for the most talented newcomers in Polish Independent Cinema.

In her final year at NFTS she photographed "Spring Roll Dream," a stop motion animation which was selected for La Cinéfondation at the 2022 Cannes Film Festival. The film also saw her win best cinematography at Worldwide Women's Film Festival, for which she received a prize with Panavision which she will be utilising for Black Samphire.

[Website](#)

CANDID BROADS PRODUCTIONS

PRODUCERS

Candid Broads is a BAFTA-nominated production company founded in 2020 by French-British producer Oriane Pick. The company aims to revolutionize the industry by bringing unspoken truths from underrepresented communities to the forefront. Shortly after its inception, Development Producer Anais Ferrato joined the team, furthering Candid Broads' commitment to ensuring diverse female representation both in front of and behind the camera. In 2023, Pick was shortlisted as one of the Film London Lodestars in the Producer category and won BusinessWoman of the Year at the SME Awards in 2024.

Upcoming features from Candid Broads include the highly anticipated TO THE GIRL I ONCE KNEW, starring Calvin Demba, recognized as a Screen Star of Tomorrow; ARTHUR & CLARA, the debut feature by Kieran Bourne. The slate also includes BLACK SAMPHIRE, starring multi BAFTA nominee Stephen Fry and Golden Globe nominee and BAFTA winner Cathy Tyson ; and BELLE, a feature documentary currently in post-production about a 24-year-old woman who uses burlesque not only as her livelihood but also as a platform for healing and raising awareness about women's issues. Additionally, the feature drama PEOPLE ARE STRANGE follows a ten-year old British Pakistani girl grappling with internalized racism and societal prejudice in 1980s Hertfordshire. As her mother hires a skinhead au pair, she must navigate conflicting loyalties and her identity. This project is in late development with backing from BBC Film. Finally, TREACLE is a coming-of-age thriller TV series about a struggling actress drawn into the world of high-class escorting after falling for a mysterious model. Recently pitched at the London GrowthLab event, TREACLE is currently under review by BBC, Paramount+, DreamBay Entertainment, and Banijay.

Candid Broads' recent success, THE DATE, starring Sinead Matthews, earned acclaim as a 2024 BAFTA Cymru Breakthrough Nominee and won the Best Film Award at BIFA-qualifying Exit6 Film Festival. It has been screened at prestigious festivals, including the BFI and Aesthetica, and is now in early development for a feature-length adaptation with Olivier-nominated director Amy Hodge and BAFTA-nominated writer Bethan Marlow.

www.candidbroadsproductions.com

SILICON GOTHIC

PRODUCERS

Silicon Gothic was founded by Joseph Archer and Cathy Wippell in 2022. The company creates work that 'monstifies' modern day issues through the horror/thriller genres. Creating these stories with an environmental or socio-political angle has seen them working with top talent such as Stephen Fry and BAFTA-winning producer, Tom Miller.

Between them, Joseph and Cathy have received funding from the BFI, GENERA and third sector organisations such as River Action UK. Their work has screened at OSCAR, BAFTA and BIFA qualifying festivals, including Aesthetica, Raindance and Encounters.

Their work has also been featured on national news outlets, such as SKY News and National World. With both founders coming from activist backgrounds, the company is passionate about bringing message-led film and media into the national and international news.

Silicon Gothic places great importance on sustainability practices in film as part of their process. This has led to the company being featured at length on BAFTA albert and being invited to talk at events such as Severn screen's sustainability coordinator training in Cardiff.

Black Samphire will be the company's debut feature film out of an extensive slate of climate and socio-political led stories in the thriller/horror genres.

www.silicongothic.co.uk



OUR EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

STEPHEN FRY



We are delighted that, in addition to his support in a VoiceOver role, Stephen Fry has come on board as an executive producer and supporter of the project.

JAMES MURRAY



Along with starring in THE CROWN and Apple TV's MASTERS OF THE AIR, James has been an advocate for clean rivers and a passionate angler. He works with water campaigners and River Action.

JAMES WALLACE



James is the CEO of River Action. With a long and successful career in activism and environmentalism, he believes in using creative media to raise awareness of climate issues.

TOM MILLER



Tom is a BAFTA-winning producer of TV and film. Best known for 'PHANTOM OF THE OPEN', starring Oscar-winner Mark Rylance, Sally Hawkins and BAFTA-winner Rhys Ifans.



CAST ATTACHED

SAMANTHA

 BAFTA **STEPHEN FRY**

Multi-BAFTA Winner

'The Dropout'
'Heartstopper'
'The Morning Show'
'V for Vendetta'
'Harry Potter'



CATHY TYSON



BAFTA

**GOLDEN
GLOBE
AWARDS**

BAFTA Winner & Golden Globe Nominee

'KAOS'

'HOARD'

TV Series 'BOILING POINT'

'HELP'

'MONA LISA'



VOICEOVER

ISHTAR CURRIE-WILSON

New Zealand born actress

'The First Omen'

'Lockwood & Co'

BAFTA-nominated short 'Eyelash'



ISLA

MARI



CATHY WIPPELL

Emerging actor

Shakespeare's Globe short 'Lost From Sea'

SUPPORT





We are proud to confirm the support of River Action UK as well as Panavision. Post equity deals have been negotiated with top UK post production houses. Further deals with local catering services, costume, and so on are underway.

CONTACT

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**CANDID
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PRODUCTIONS

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