

A close-up, profile view of a young woman with dark, slightly damp hair. She is looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression. The background is a soft, out-of-focus greenish-grey.

***THE
STRANGE
ONES***



Written & Directed by
Christopher Radcliff and Lauren Wolkstein
Running Time: 14 minutes 06 seconds
Format: HD (RED camera)
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SYNOPSIS

SHORT/LOGLINE:

A man and a boy, traveling to an unknown destination, find respite in a motel swimming pool. On the surface all seems normal, but nothing is what it seems to be.

LONG:

The Strange Ones is a 2011 short film written and directed by Christopher Radcliff and Lauren Wolkstein, and starring David Call (*Tiny Furniture, Two Gates of Sleep*), Merritt Wever (*Nurse Jackie, Michael Clayton*), and Tobias Campbell (*Conviction, Salt*).

The film follows two travelers – a man and a boy (David Call and Tobias Campbell) – whose car has broken down, and who stumble upon a small roadside motel, where a girl (Merritt Wever) offers to help them. At first all seems normal, but an unseen tension begins to mount between the three of them, leading to a startling discovery. Mysterious and evocative, *The Strange Ones* serves to strip away the ordinary situation it presents in order to offer a brief glimpse of a complicated, dangerous, and secret world lurking beneath the surface.



DIRECTOR'S

NOTES

“Be prepared for people to want to bash you in the head with hammers after seeing this film.”

Tom Kalin (director of *Swoon* and *Savage Grace*, and no stranger to controversy himself), said this to us in an early discussion about the script for what would eventually become *The Strange Ones*. I suppose we knew what we were getting into, both with our chosen subject matter as well as the rather enigmatic, mysterious way we chose to depict it. But, even at its earliest stages, we felt that there was a vitality to the idea that compelled us to see it through. So following Tom’s example as well as that of so many others who we admire, we figured that perhaps what makes it a difficult film is also what could set it apart.

STORY AND THEME

While the story of *The Strange Ones* can easily lend itself to a pretty straightforward reading, we wanted to create a film where a seemingly simple story gives way to multiple possibilities, and where the objective truth is a perpetually elusive thing. An initial impression might be that it is about two brothers, traveling to see their sick mother. But as the film progresses, it becomes clear that there is more going on that meets the eye, and the seemingly normal circumstances give way to something strange and potentially darker. The characters themselves are of the type

that we consistently find intriguing – those who find themselves navigating complicated emotional terrain, and who are, in various ways, hiding something. This hidden dimension – both internal to the characters and external to the world of the film – is something that we are constantly drawn to, and as admirers of such films as Robert Altman’s *3 Women*, Peter Weir’s *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, and Lucretia Martel’s *The Headless Woman*, we are intrigued by work that, rather than supplying something straightforward, gives an audience multiple layers to consider, and regards the climax of the film as something to contemplate and possibly question (rather than to simply accept).

While the story can be read as that of a dangerous and inappropriate relationship, we wanted to approach it from a different perspective, highlighting the underlying complexity of their bond. We didn’t want to deal with issues of right and wrong, rather we wanted to create something that would show this relationship from a number of perspectives that each would give the audience a different experience – first from those on the inside – the Man and the Boy – and then through a more objective outsider – The Girl. Through these shifts in perspective, our goal was to create a sort of complex and complicated situation that is both immediate and mysterious, an experience full of confusion, excitement, sadness and danger, without clear answers or conclusions.

COLLABORATION

Having met in film school at Columbia University, we've been friends and admirers of each others work for a number of years. However due to various circumstances, it wasn't until the very end of our academic years that we found the opportunity to collaborate. Having both finished our thesis work, were now in a place where we both wanted to do something simple, small, and with a freedom of subject and style that we could enjoy. We began to discuss the idea of doing a small (5 minutes, tops) project that would be more like an exercise to keep honing our directing skills than a full-fledged short film, something that we wouldn't go broke making and that we could have fun with. We would keep it simple. We would do something small, contained. We set ourselves certain limitations – it would be something that takes place in one location, with only a few characters, over a short period of time. Aside from keeping the scope of the production manageable, we liked these restrictions because we wanted to do something that could actually use the format of the short film as an advantage – to investigate a single, small moment to great effect, and hopefully achieve a certain quality of simplicity and elegance, while still having a depth and complexity that we strive for in all of our work. Soon though, after our brainstorming sessions yielded the initial idea that would become *The Strange Ones*, we knew that it would grow into something bigger than either of us originally expected, and that we would have to follow our creative impulse to a place where we would shed our initial limitations in favor of the film itself.

PRODUCTION

The script turned out to be something we were really excited about, and from there the film started to come together at a rather fast pace. People became interested in taking part in the film, most notably our actor David Call – he was a huge supporter and the first and most important piece of the puzzle of this production. Through him we met our DP, Drew Innis, who became our most valuable creative partner, and we soon secured our other two actors, Tobias Campbell, a startlingly talented young actor, and Merritt Wever, an actress we admired greatly. We stumbled upon our location in upstate New York, and with a great crew of friends and colleagues we were able to shoot the film in four days. That said, the production was not without it's major setbacks, but though it was an intensely difficult film to make in many ways, working together we seemed to be guided with some kind of momentum that carried us from inception all the way through post. We had started writing the script in late spring 2010, and finished the shoot during the last breath of summer. We began editing the film immediately, and are now fortunate enough to premiere the film at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival, a first for us both.

BIOS



CHRISTOPHER RADCLIFF (WRITER/DIRECTOR)

Christopher Radcliff recently graduated with Honors from Columbia University's Graduate Film School, where his short film, *Stranger*, was selected for Faculty Honors in 2009 and also won the IFP Audience Choice Award and Entertainment Partners Best Producer Award at the 2009 CU Film Festival, and has since gone on to screen at numerous festivals across the country. In addition, he wrote the award-winning short film *Ben* (DGA Student Film Award 2009, director Eliza Subotowicz), and his previous short film as writer/director, *Bonnie Rocks* was an official selection of the Brooklyn Arts Council and the Zero Film Festival. He is currently writing and developing a series of low-budget feature film projects, and also works as a script supervisor.

LAUREN WOLKSTEIN (WRITER/DIRECTOR)

Lauren Wolkstein recently graduated with Honors from Columbia University's Graduate Film School, where her short film, *Cigarette Candy*, won Best Narrative Short at SXSW in 2010 and went on to screen at film festivals worldwide garnering multiple awards (<http://www.cigarettecandy.com>). Lauren received her B.A. in computer science at Duke University, where she also won the Duke Filmmaker Award. She lived in Los Angeles for a year, assisting film producer Chris Hanley at Muse

Productions (*The Virgin Suicides*, *American Psycho*, *Buffalo '66*). Her award-winning short, *Dandelion Fall*, played at numerous film festivals and was distributed by Wolfe Releasing. She is currently developing two projects with close friend and collaborator Jeff Sousa: the feature version of *Cigarette Candy* and a television show based loosely on her own high school experiences as a "teenage hacker and spy." She is also adapting David Foster Wallace's short story *Little Expressionless Animals* into a feature that is in development with Plum Pictures producer Galt Niederhoffer.

DAVID CALL (THE MAN)

Actor David Call's latest film *Two Gates of Sleep*, in which he stars alongside Brady Corbet, premiered at Cannes 2010 to much acclaim. He has also starred in films such as *Tiny Furniture*, (directed by Lena Dunham and released in 2010 by IFC Films), *Did You Hear About the Morgans*, and *Breaking Upwards*, among others, and his television credits include *Fringe*, *Rescue Me*, *Army Wives*, and *Gossip Girl*, among others.

MERRITT WEVER (THE GIRL)

Merritt Wever is an acclaimed actress who currently stars alongside Edie Falco in the television series *Nurse Jackie*. Her

filmography includes roles in such films as *Tiny Furniture*, *Greenberg*, *The Messenger*, *Into the Wild*, *Michael Clayton*, and *Series 7: The Contenders*.

TOBIAS CAMPBELL (THE BOY)

Tobias Campbell is excited about the 2011 Sundance premiere of *The Strange Ones* which caps a solid year. In fall 2010, he appeared in *Conviction* directed by Tony Goldwyn and starring Hilary Swank, in which he plays young Kenny Waters, the character portrayed as an adult by Sam Rockwell. Tobias also had feature roles in Joe Maggio's thriller *Bitter Feast* and Larry Fessenden's retro radio-play *The Hole Digger@TalesFromBeyondthePale*. Tobias attends high school in NYC and loves to make his own short films with friends.

DREW INNIS (DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY)

Drew Innis is a director, photographer, and cinematographer currently based in Brooklyn, NY. He graduated from Tufts with a degree in Economics before embarking on a career in film and photography. His last film as director of photography, *Mary Last Seen* premiered at the Sundance Film Festival 2010, and went on to screen at Cannes Director's Fortnight 2010, where it won Best Short Film.

SÉBASTIEN AUBERT (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER)

Sébastien Aubert is the managing director and co-founder (with David Guiraud) of Ad Astra Films, a production and distribution company based in Cannes, France. His first production, *The Danaïdes's Barrel*, shot in the Moroccan desert, has played in more than 50 international film festivals. Ad Astra currently owns a catalogue composed of 10 awarded short films, many sold to high-profile TV channels (France 2 and Canal Plus, among others). He was recently selected to be part of the 2011 Berlinale Talent Campus among 3900 applicants.

JOONHAN LEE (PRODUCER)

Joonhan Lee is a New York/Korea based filmmaker who has worked for years in the TV commercial industry as a producer, and is currently pursuing his MFA degree in Creative Film Producing at Columbia University.

ELISA LLERAS (CO-PRODUCER)

Elisa Lleras a graduate of the Universidad Complutense Madrid and of the University of Sussex, UK. She has produced over 10 short films in several different countries, and is currently pursuing an MFA in Film Producing at Columbia University as a La Caixa Fellow. In May 2010 she received a PostWorks Post-production Award for her upcoming thesis short film *A Viagem*.

SAUNDER JURRIAANS & DANIEL BENSI (COMPOSERS)

Saunder Jurriaans and Daniel Bensi compose music. Recently they have scored *Two Gates of Sleep* (Alistair Banks Griffin, Cannes 2010), *Martha Marcy May Marlene* (Sean Durkin, Sundance 2011), and *The Strange Ones* (Chris Radcliff and Lauren Wolkstein, Sundance 2011). They have also recently composed music for the American Ballet Theatre and various short films and editorials.

T TERRESSA TATE (SOUND DESIGNER)

T Terressa Tate is a New York based sound designer and mixer for The Royal T Room. She has worked extensively in film, television, and music videos, garnering industry recognition through her work on a wide range of award winning short and long form projects. Her short form sound design work includes music videos for The Yeah Yeah Yeahs, 'Nas, and Beyonce. Her long form work includes sound design for the feature *Afterschool* and the short film *The Last 15*. She is a strong believer that sound can create mood, tone, and emotion to help complete the picture.



CREDITS

RENTAL MEMBER

THE STRANGE ONES

THE MAN DAVID CALL
THE BOY TOBIAS CAMPBELL
THE GIRL MERRITT WEVER

WRITTEN, DIRECTED, AND EDITED BY CHRISTOPHER RADCLIFF AND LAUREN WOLKSTEIN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS SÉBASTIEN AUBERT AND DAVID GUIRAUD
PRODUCED BY JOONHAN LEE
CO-PRODUCED BY ELISA LLERAS
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY DREW INNIS
CASTING BY JESSICA DANIELS, C.S.A.
PRODUCTION DESIGNER JULIET LASHINSKY-REVENE
ORIGINAL MUSIC BY SAUNDER JURRIAANS AND DANIEL BENSI
SOUND DESIGNER T. TERRESSA TATE
COLORIST SAM DALEY
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR JEANNIE DONOHOE
SECOND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR RAMMY LEE PARK
ASSISTANT CAMERA CHE BROADNAX
SECOND ASSISTANT CAMERA GREGORY ALMOND
SOUND RECORDIST ANTHONY THOMPSON
GAFFER ANDREW SADTLER
STUNT COORDINATOR DREW LEARY
HAIR AND MAKEUP CRYSTAL SOVEROSKI
CATERING AND CRAFT SERVICE CARMEN JIMENEZ
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT MIMI JEFFRIES
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT MARC REIN

THANK YOU
PIERRE SALMON
CHRISTOPHE TAUDIÈRE, FRANCE 2
CATHERINE AMENDOLARA
ROCKY OWENS, FINAL CUT EDIT NYC
KEVIN VALE and BARBARA JEAN KEARNEY, TECHNICOLOR NYC
TERU TAKAYAMA, TK DIGITAL CORPORATION
BLAKE MARTIN
CHRISTIAN MAGALHAES
JOE MURPHY
TODD THALER
DANA BYUN
YEN TAN
NATALIE PRESS

TOM KALIN
KATHERINE DIECKMANN
ERIC MENDELSON
MAUREEN RYAN
IRA DEUTCHMAN
BRIAN FITZHUGH
CRAIG PAULL
JEFF SOUSA
SEAN DURKIN
ALEXANDER JERRI
HEATHER SMITH
NICKY RATLIFF
KENNY AND EVERYONE AT THE FOUR SEASONS MOTEL, CATSKILL NY



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