ESCAPEES

Побеги

A short film by Mikhail Rudenskii

Press Kit | Armenia | 23 min



Short Synopsis

In Yerevan, crowded with new arrivals, Polya, a young Russian émigré, has run out of money. She sets out to sell her T-shirt signed by a dead rap star. On the way, she meets Dima, who deserted the Russian army after it invaded Ukraine.

A shortcut through the outskirts brings them face to face with a pack of stray dogs. What should have been a quick sale turns into an overnight journey beyond the city. Polya fears being prey. Dima's body still knows war. The closer they get, the harder it is to ignore what violence has made of them.

Original Title	Побеги
International Title	ESCAPEES
Country of Production	Armenia
Runtime	23 minutes
Genre	Drama / Road Movie
Languages	Russian, Armenian, English
Subtitles	English

Themes

- Exile and displacement
- War and its aftermath
- Fear, vulnerability and trust
- Human connection in a state of uncertainty
- Yerevan as a temporary refuge and emotional landscape

Director Statement

I left Russia because I could not accept its invasion of Ukraine or the government's repression of dissent. Living in Armenia, I wanted to make a film about what people carry with them when they leave home, and how it shapes their attempts to get close to someone else.

Dima is a deserter from the Russian army, like many of the men around me in Yerevan. He has chosen not to kill. That decision matters to me, even as the war continues to live in his body. Leaving the army does not erase his part in that war.

Polya's story grew out of getting to know women who had experienced violence. Her fear of stray dogs became a metaphor for the feeling of being prey. I was interested in both her fear and her refusal to be treated as prey.

Through their encounter, I wanted to explore how violence makes it difficult to trust another person: how it shapes the way we read a gesture, respond to touch or accept care. I was interested in the tenderness that can emerge between them, and the fear that makes it so difficult to sustain.

Their moment of greatest closeness is simple: one bowl of soup shared between two. Dima tells Polya that everything will be all right. I cannot make that promise. But in cinema, I can stay with a moment in which they might believe it. I made this film to hold on to that possibility of connection.

Production Notes

POBEGI (ESCAPEES) is an Armenian production created by an international cast and crew from Armenia, Iran, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia.

Set largely during one night in Yerevan, the film combines documentary immediacy with intimate character-driven storytelling. The city becomes both a temporary refuge and a psychological landscape for two people trying to stop running.

Director's Biography

Mikhail Rudenskii is a director and screenwriter based in Yerevan, Armenia. He studied screenwriting at VGIK and is currently studying directing at KinoDproc Film School. He has worked in film, television and advertising and participated in the screenwriting lab of the One Sixth International Film Festival.

His first short film, Day Off, screened in the Cinema Without Borders programme at the One Shot International Short Film Festival in Yerevan and was selected by AmAuteur Film Festival in Chicago. It received awards at Rolling Ideas and Short Film Factory.

Cast

Karolina Melqumyan – Polya

Viktor Pryakhin – Dima

Key Crew

Director & Writer	Mikhail Rudenskii
Director of Photography	Nikita Kornev
Producer	Vasilisa Borzova
Sound Designer	Vladislav Kiktenko
Production Designer	Anastasiia Svetlikova
Editor	Sergei Zinevich
Colorist	Victor Mironenko

Online Links

Website: https://pobegifilm.com/

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/pobegifilm/

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61588663505673

Contact Information

Producer: Vasilisa Borzova

Email: vasilisaborz@gmail.com

Additional materials available upon request: screener, trailer, English subtitles, spotting list, poster artwork and stills.