

A woman with blonde hair, eyes closed, and hands covering her face, surrounded by colorful bokeh lights. The scene is dimly lit, with the woman's face and hands being the central focus. The background is filled with out-of-focus, colorful lights in shades of red, blue, green, and orange, creating a festive yet somber atmosphere.

# Christmas Eve Eve

Or: the Things I Can't Remember



**Produced, Written, and Directed by**  
Suzanne Lenz & Tom Bean

2020 | USA | 14 min | color | drama

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**Starring**  
Suzanne Lenz  
David Dean Bottrell  
Janet Zarish  
Jay Rogers



## Logline

A woman goes home for the holidays to Kentucky, where she's forced to confront an unresolved family trauma.

## Synopsis

For the first time in three years, Morgan travels home for the holidays to Kentucky, where she's forced to confront her father, a low-functioning alcoholic reeling from the suicide of his younger brother. Through the course of one day, Morgan visits first her mother, and then her father, hoping to take him to the family's annual Christmas Eve party. But nothing goes according to plan. In the end, Morgan can't save her dad, or make him sober, but she's able to share a small, quiet moment with him. . .



# A Film About

intergenerational trauma, substance abuse, and self-harm— but it's also about finding a way to **connect** in spite of it all.



# Artist Statement

Telling this story is the hardest thing I've ever done. I thought I needed to keep it all a secret. What would people say if they knew about my father's alcoholism and drug abuse (as if they didn't already)? What would people say if they knew I hit myself? Would speaking aloud about the past somehow ensure my greatest fear—that my dad would take his own life the way his brothers and father had before him? But as I grew older, I realized this wasn't just something I would have to reckon with. Ultimately, this was a story I would have to tell.

The film includes details and situations from my own life, but I chose to use a fictional frame to deliberately explore themes and ideas that have fixated me personally— how does trauma get passed down from generation to generation? How does it manifest differently in different people? How can we engage with our family in the present tense while dealing with so much pain from the past? We all have our own ways of coping with pain, but sometimes these overlap— can that bring us closer? Are our shared coping mechanisms sometimes our only way of understanding one another?

I was also eager to use humor in the piece—not just as a tonal device, but as a way of illuminating how laughter and trauma can overlap and draw each other out (I've long admired this awareness in filmmakers like Kenneth Lonergan, Greta Gerwig, and Mike Mills, among many others). And I used a “home for the holidays” genre frame to evoke a season filled with family gatherings and obligations, memories and explosive feelings — as well as the weirdly strident demand that we be outwardly happy. In the end, the film's protagonist isn't able to save her father or fix her father (or get him healthy or sober), but she is able to be with her father, and to share a small, quiet, human moment with him that I hope will resonate with people who take the time to watch our movie.

— Suzanne Lenz



# OUR TEAM

## **Suzanne Lenz** | Director, Writer, Producer

Suzanne Lenz is a producer, actress, and filmmaker based in Brooklyn, NY. *Christmas Eve Eve Or: The Things I Can't Remember* is her first directorial effort. In 2020 she produced her first feature film *Every Man for Himself*, directed by Gary Gardner and starring Daniel Sharman and Nicholas Logan. As an actress, she can be seen in the television shows *Silicon Valley*, *Crashing*, and *Blindspot*, and the feature films *Obvious Child*, *The Desiring*, and *Ricki and the Flash*. A Kentucky native, Suzanne received her BA in Theatre from Davidson College in North Carolina. She's spent time studying abroad with the Royal Shakespeare Company and the British American Drama Academy in London. In NYC, she's studied improv and sketch comedy with the Upright Citizens Brigade, and taken scene study with renowned actress Maria Dizzia at The Freeman Studio.

## **Tom Bean** | Director, Writer, Producer

Tom Bean is a Brooklyn-based writer and filmmaker. He co-directed the documentary *Plimpton! Starring George Plimpton As Himself* (a NY Times' "Critics Pick" and an Entertainment Weekly "Must See"), which was released in theaters and then presented on TV as part of PBS's American Masters series. He subsequently collaborated as a writer on the film *Landline* ("story by" credit), which premiered in narrative competition at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival and was released theatrically by Amazon Studios. He also co-created and produces the ongoing short film series *My First Time* for the literary magazine *The Paris Review*. *Christmas Eve Eve Or: The Things I Can't Remember* is his first narrative directorial effort.

## **Gillian Robespierre** | Executive Producer

Gillian Robespierre is a filmmaker born and raised in New York City. She graduated from the School of Visual Arts, Film & Video Program. Her first feature, *Obvious Child* (A24) premiered at Sundance in 2014. The film got a nod for the year's "Best Discovery" on iTunes and Ms. Robespierre won Best Directorial Debut from the National Board of Review. Her second feature *Landline* premiered at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival and was released by Amazon Studios in July of 2017. She has directed episodes of *Casual* and *Shrill* both Hulu original television series and episodes of HBO's, *Silicon Valley*, *Mrs. Fletcher*, and *Crashing* as well as episodes of FX's limited series *A Teacher*. She recently collaborated again with Jenny Slate directing her Netflix Comedy Special/documentary *Jenny Slate: Stage Fright*. Gillian lives in Brooklyn with her husband and their young daughter.

## **Katherine Castro** | Director of Photography

Recently selected for the American Film Institute Cinematography Intensive for Women in Los Angeles, Katherine is a New York City-based Cinematographer. After studying architecture and photography while living in the Dominican Republic, Katherine returned to Boston in 2008 where she began working in film and TV as a Local 600 Camera Assistant. Applying her design and photography background along with the invaluable lessons she has acquired over the years working in production, Katherine brings a unique style and viewpoint to her cinematography. Her work spans narrative, music video & documentary and has screened in film festivals such as Indy Film Fest, Woods Hole Film Festival & Asian American International Film Festival in NYC.

## **Casey Brooks** | Editor

Casey Brooks is an editor who lives in New York City. He has edited both narrative features and documentaries, including *Obvious Child* (2014), *Brittany Runs a Marathon* (2019), *Buffaloed* (2019), *Landline* (2016), and *Plimpton! Starring George Plimpton As Himself* (2012). Over the past few years he has also worked with the TV channel Viceland, editing shows like *King of the Road*, *Epicly Later'd* and *Traveling the Stars with Action Bronson* and Showtime's *Desus and Mero*. He is currently editing Amy Schumer's upcoming show *Life & Beth* for HULU.

## **Chris Bordeaux** | Composer

Chris Bordeaux was raised in a musical family on eastern Long Island, New York. His formative years were spent experimenting with rock and training classically. He spent his twenties touring the U.S. and Europe in various bands. Now in his thirties, he has shifted focus to scoring films such as *Obvious Child* (A24), *The Nymphets* (Gravitas Ventures), *Landline* (Amazon), and *American Reject* (currently in post production). He lives in Brooklyn with his wife and young daughter.

## **Michael Abiuso** | Composer

Multi-instrumentalist producer and composer Michael Abiuso owns Behind the Curtains Media, a music promotion and audio production firm which he launched in 2012 in the back of a dirty tour van. He studied classical and jazz guitar, music theory, composition/arranging and audio engineering. He has toured for 10+ years between his bands Kiss Kiss (guitar/vocals) on Eyeball Records, The Gay Blades (keyboards/vocals) on Triple Crown Records and The Venetia Fair (guitar/bass/vocals) on Red Blue Records. Michael's recording techniques are a hybrid blend that utilize the warmth of analogue gear for tracking and mixing while taking advantage of the speed and versatility of the modern digital world.

**Janet Zarish** is an actress known for her work in television, film and theatre. She is the Associate Arts Professor and Head of Acting of the Graduate Acting Program at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. She received her B.F.A. at The Juilliard School under John Houseman. As an actress, she has performed on and Off-Broadway, starring in such productions at the Minetta Lane Theatre and Roundabout Theatre. From her association with Circle Rep and Ensemble Studio Theatre she has originated roles in many new plays, working with David Mamet, Shel Silverstein, Wendy Wasserstein and Terrance McNally. Regional theatre credits include leading roles at The Longwharf Theatre, The McCarter Theatre, Sundance, Hartford Stage, Seattle Rep, Berkshire Theatre Festival, New York Stage & Film and the Actors Theatre of Louisville.



**David Dean Bottrell** is a veteran stage and television actor, and has performed extensively Off-Broadway and in regional theatres across the country. On TV, he's guest starred in more than 20 shows including *Boston Legal* (where he memorably played the creepy, homicidal "Lincoln Meyer"). He also wrote a hit movie, a popular book and has performed sketch comedy & storytelling shows at venues such as Joe's Pub, Dixon Place, The Triad, The Comedy Central Stage & The Acme Comedy Theatre in LA. His acclaimed comedy show, DAVID DEAN BOTTRELL MAKES LOVE: A ONE-MAN SHOW returns to off-Broadway this fall. Originally from Louisa, Kentucky, David currently divides his time between New York and Los Angeles.



**Jay Rogers** is an actor based in New York City and has worked extensively in theatre, film and television. He had a co-starring role of Vincent, a ventriloquist/bartender, in the indie feature *This Train* and he was featured as Maryjo Lance in the hysterical short *The Trey Billings Show*. He was most recently seen as Pete, the barber, in the hit series *At Home With Amy Sedaris*. Theatrically he appeared in both Howard Crabtree Off-Broadway revues *Whoop-Dee-Do!* and *When Pigs Fly*, for which he was recognized as a Drama Desk nominee for Outstanding Featured Actor. He played The Wizard in Transport Group's *Once Upon A Mattress* and Archy, the cockroach, in *Archy and Mehitabel* at Trinity Church and Lincoln Center Family Series.

## Additional Credits

Co-Producer: Lauren Leland  
Assistant Director: Jason Shahinfar  
Sound Designer & Editor: Marcus DiLauro  
Sound Mixer: Monica Rodriguez  
Colorist: Marika Litz  
1st Assistant Camera: Samantha Tetro  
2nd Assistant Camera: Peter J. Harrison  
2nd Assistant Camera: Alec Addalia  
Gaffer: Sam Robinson  
Key Grip: Dan Peck  
Production Assistant: Keira Cronin  
Catering By: Kelli Scott



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Starring SUZANNE LENZ DAVID DEAN BOTTRELL JANET ZARISH JAY ROGERS

Music by CHRIS BORDEAUX & MICHAEL ABIUSO Co-Producer LAUREN LELAND Edited by CASEY BROOKS TOM BEAN

Director of Photography KATHERINE CASTRO Executive Producer GILLIAN ROBESPIERRE

Produced, Written, and Directed by SUZANNE LENZ & TOM BEAN

Thank you for reading

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