

*Where Monsters Lurk* was produced by Lindy Stokes (MFA Thesis Project, Columbia College Chicago) and directed by Beth Ashby. It's a short psychological horror film wherein we aim to build a deep sense of dread within our audience as they follow our protagonist through a day in her life, stuck in her tiny apartment. Our protagonist, Kelly, has a tenuous control on her own sanity. She has removed or covered up every mirror in her house because she can't stand her own reflection. She's avoiding the monster she sees within herself in the hopes that it will stay quiet. Unfortunately for her, avoidance doesn't work forever. She catches her reflection in kitchen appliances and receives yet another rejection letter for her writing which sends her day over the edge. She must decide whether she will face the monster in the mirror. We hope to externalize the damaging effects of self-loathing, isolation, and self-medicating an untreated mental illness.

*Where Monsters Lurk* was adapted from a short story written by British author Ellie Scott. I (Lindy) came across the short story in October 2019, and the story's focus on this woman's negative perception of herself struck a deep chord with me. I wanted to bring it to a visual medium, so I wrote a treatment and pitched it to Beth. I was so excited that Beth was interested in coming on board as the writer, and later director, of the project. She really took this story and made it her own.

Once I acquired the rights to the short story, we began pre-production in December 2019, with plans to shoot in March 2020. Two weeks before our shoot dates, the world went into lockdown. We began preproduction again in the Fall of 2020, and we shot the film at the Media Production Center in February 2021. The pandemic and the shutdown forced us to change the story in ways we could have never anticipated in the Fall of 2019. It became a vastly different piece, but in the best ways.

While developing and producing *Where Monsters Lurk*, it became clear that this story about isolation and mental illness was relatable to more people post-pandemic than it had been pre-pandemic. So many people in the world were forced to isolate. Suddenly, something that only affected the "mentally ill", became a problem for everybody. How can you manage your mental, physical, and emotional health when you're forced to isolate? What of the people who didn't have loved ones or roommates during the 2020 shutdowns? Hopefully, this film will remind people how they're not impervious to breakdowns, isolation, depression, and addiction. We all have our bad days, no matter what traumas we may or may not carry. This film is specifically for those who struggle to love and care for themselves. Whether they struggle with it chronically, or situationally. We all deserve love, empathy, and understanding, especially from ourselves.