

WAKING

SHORT FILM CONCEPT SUMMARY

TREATMENT

BY

TRISTAN

HOLMES

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A COUPLE WAKE IN A HOTEL ROOM WITH NO MEMORY OF ARRIVING. AS THEY BEGIN TO PIECE TOGETHER THEIR LAST STEPS, A TERRIBLE SECRET SIMMERS TO THE SURFACE, THREATENING TO TEAR THEM APART.



**OUR STORY BEGINS
WITH A YOUNG
WOMAN, LIN, LYING
NAKED IN BED
CONTEMPLATING THE
RAIN OUTSIDE THE
WINDOW.**

The room is shaggy, rendered in rich unctuous reds and tacky wallpaper, diffuse lamp light. It feels like a mix between junkie hangout and love hotel. As she starts to ask how they got there we shift over to the man, Tao, sitting on the floor at the other side of the bed. He also seems lost as if in a half dream, the remains of a cigarette still perched in his fingers.

As they begin to talk to each other we can sense them drifting in and out, like they are in the midst of waking from a long sleep. Their memories seem shuffled, oddly abstract, their interactions loose and thick with lingering Lynchian tension. Tao does not seem that interested in why they got there, he seems lost in his own private thoughts but at Lin's insistence begins to tell her what he remembers.

Lin thinks it's strange that they don't remember. We can see her already wrestling with the sense that something is horribly wrong. Tao tries to make light of it, but we can see that he, beneath his casual attitude senses something is wrong too. As the dialogue quickens we sense a rising

tension between them, like they are continuing an argument that neither of them can remember starting. In the midst of this we see something clicks in Tao. He remembers something. But he hides this. In the sequence that follows Lin's increasing desire to know how they got there constantly collides with Tao's need to deflect.

This eventually culminates in a moment of truth. Tao, now in the shower, is confronted by Lin. She wants to know what he knows. It is a moment where running and deflection no longer seem like options. Tao confesses something. This initiates a slow, relentless unravelling and takes us into the final sequence.

In this last act we see the of them grappling with this new information, taking in the the pain and unexpectedness of it. Lin stands at the window and looks out. She remembers now. She remembers the painful truth. But that still doesn't answer the original question. Why are they at this hotel? In these final moments Tao remembers one more thing, and reveals a far more sinister truth...

DESIGN



The world is rich and unctuous. The air thick and brooding. From the very opening moments the sense of something simmering, waiting to erupt to the surface. It can be felt in every aspect of the design. From the low drone, almost like distorted traffic far away to the dull pitter patter of rain underscoring the dialogue, to the diffuse wash of red that holds the room in a amber-like incandescence, the story is always enveloped in a growing sense of ominousness.

Its Lynch meets Wong Kar Wai (In the Mood for Love, 2046, Chungking Express) meets Park Chan Wook (Old Boy, Thirst) meets Gaspar Noe (Irreversible, Enter the Void). Detailed. Kitsch. And rich. The room carries notes of repetitions in it. A vague decay. A careful balance between being both opulent and impersonal.

The core story components function very much like Adam and Eve in the garden. Only here the apple is a secret and the truth will unravel them both. In some ways I see the story as Eve wanting to leave Eden, and Adam wanting to do anything to stay. The price here is truth. Lin would rather live with the truth, as horrible as

it might be, Tao wants to forget. For this reason using opulent prints on the walls, florals, deep red satins, flower prints, speak subtly to this garden concept. Other elements in the script also allude to this without ever being on the nose about it.

I'm seeing deep red dirty carpets, satins somewhere either in wardrobe or the bedding. Mirrors and reflected elements, following curtains etc. The hotel room does not feel new, or fancy. In spite of all the touches, there is something cheap and sticky about it.

These expressionistic touches should carry into the bathroom. The bathroom and shower in particular is the womb of truth in the story, it is the place where the direction of the story changes from deceptive/ retreating to truth seeking. Tao retreats to the shower and when confronted here finds he has reached a dead end, there is nowhere else to run to. It is the first time in the story that they are straight with each other.

There is something very direct and neutral in

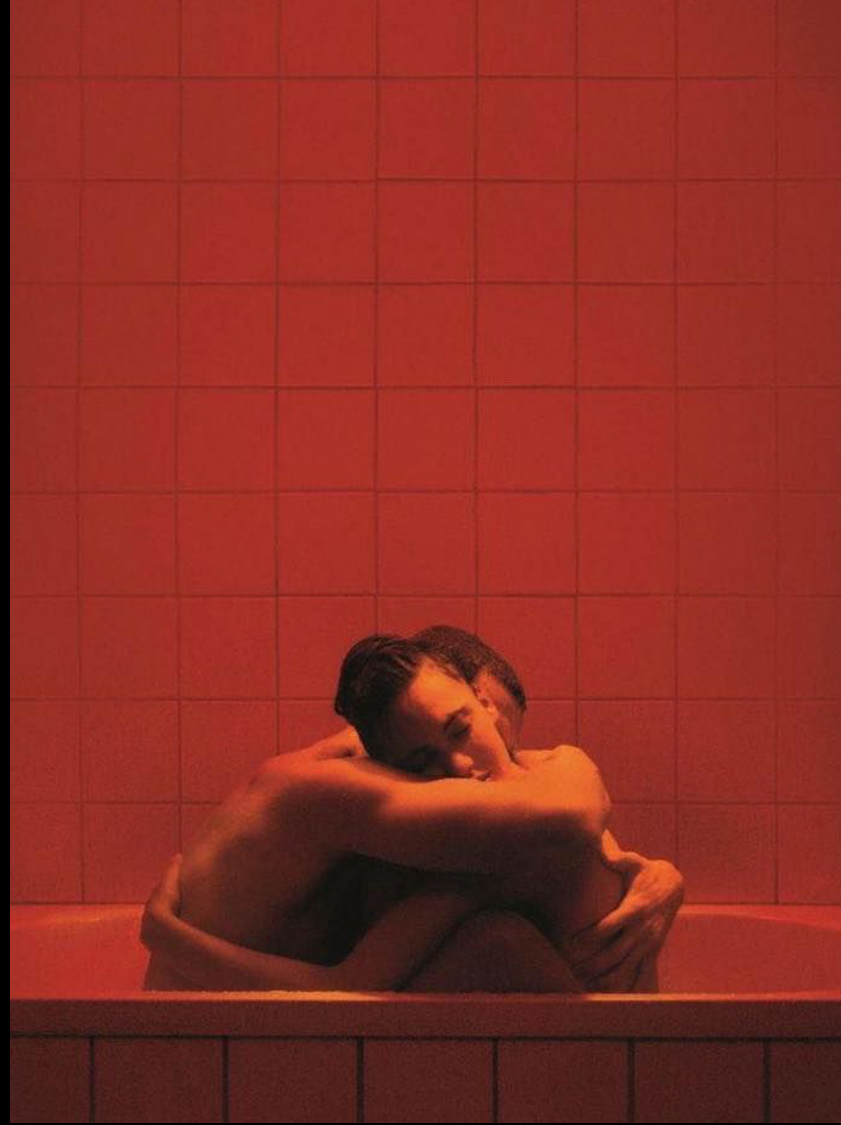
this reveal. Making sure with both lighting and finishes that this tone lands is very important.

The final sequence reveals the room for what it is. Here the room's opulent floral design underscores a macarbe poetry, a kind of sickly sweet veneer as we see the slow motioned agony of one character clinging to the truth, whilst the other surrenders to the anaesthetic of forgetting.

Performance is everything in this. There is very little to hide behind. Finding strong actors who are willing to commit time to rehearsal and really give of themselves is the be all and end all of this. It is their willingness to be vulnerable and raw that is going to lend the story the unspoken sense of loss and mourning that it needs.

I would love to shoot this on film. Nothing will hold the reds and the glow of the bulbs as well as Vision 3 35mm. The story seems almost primed to the use of 4-perf. Obviously that would be a wish given the detail of the coverages needed and the length of the scenes but with rigorous rehearsals it would be something wonderful to explore.







CASTING

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LIN

Late twenty/ early thirties.
Radiant/ eccentric beauty. An immediate depth in her presence. She must hold space well. We must be drawn into her silences. There is something simultaneously haunted and enchanted about her. Whilst both Lin and Tao strike us as a professional, educated, and attractive, there is a dreaminess to Lin, a drifting in and out, a strange, whimsical, almost ethereal contemplation, that contrasts Tao. Where Tao is the resistant force, it is Lin's refusal to stop questioning, that need to keep tugging at the suspicion that something is not quite right, that propels us though the story. She is taunting at times, whimsical at others. She is manipulative and determined. She knows how to get what she wants, but does not always know what that is. Lin is emotional in the sense that facts matter far less to her than feelings. She is not intellectual. The answers she seeks having nothing to do with wrapping neat bows around events, she wants to understand something far more intangible: the disquieting sense of dread lingering at the base of her.

TAO

Late twenty/ early thirties.

Tao deep intense eyes. There is powerful, alluring, magnetic quality to him. He also holds space and silence very effectively. We get the sense from the outset that there is a lot brimming just beneath his surface. It could be that he knows more than he says he does. Or just that he, via some other intuition, senses that no good can come from questioning. Either way there is an avoidance in him that operates in direct contrast to Lin's curiosity. Where Lin wants to pry open, to uncover, Tao wants to distract and deflect. He does not want to know the truth. He is smart, attractive, capable, sensitive but also manipulative in his own way. His actions seem distant at times, like he remembers more than he is letting on, and at others like he is as confused as Lin is, and deeply concerned for her well being. It is this vacillation between guardedness and sensitivity that both allures us to Tao, and makes us uneasy about him.





THANKS