

MORNING VIGIL

a Night Maire Séance

short film press kit

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SYNOPSSES



➤ *logline*

A pious sister and her inflexible brother mourn the passing of their beloved mother.

➤ *short synopsis*

A pious sister and her inflexible magistrate brother mourn the passing of their beloved mother. To honour her memory, the siblings burn the midnight oil over their mother's old correspondences with family members whom she so often spoke of, until they come across a letter from someone she had never mentioned.

➤ *inspired by*

Guy de Maupassant's 1882 short story "A Dead Woman's Secret" (original title: *La Veillée*).

➤ *genres & niches*

Independent short film. Adaptation. Gothic drama. LGBTQ+. Gender politics. Religion & faith. Victorian period piece. Gaslight noir / retro-noir / neo noir. Magic realism.

DIRECTOR'S EPISTLE

Hailing from Provincial France, Guy de Maupassant was always part of my scholastic upbringing, his pessimistic themes and disillusioned characters resonating with my more macabre condition. Like many of the author's best short stories, 'A Dead Woman's Secret' has a dark and mysterious undertones despite its extrinsic simplicities, much like my own work. It is a cautionary tale of moral virtue as a cudgel that destroys people's lives, extolling how sanctimonious dogma breeds restrictive multi-generational prejudice and intolerance.

My appreciation for the story developed while living with my grandparents during the pandemic. This experience was incredibly impactful on my perception of them, as I had to come to terms with certain hard truths about them during my time there. It made me realise just how much our opinions of others is so often influenced by biased impressions, and how any new information about a person can drastically alter our judgment of them.

I found this brief, yet meaningful story relatable in many ways. Through the cinematic medium of a calling-card short film, I seek to explore those facets of the human condition - whether it is truly possible to know someone - while serving as memento mori to live true to one's self - especially LGBTQ+ members - despite any fear of castigation that living in secret may shelter you from.



AESTHETIC APPROACH



Filmed in an intimate 1.19:1 aspect ratio with static frames to make it a more authentic period piece, evocative of cinema's earliest days, particularly German expressionism. This old-fashioned style of immobile shots with a box-like ratio carries several meta-textual implications, including building a claustrophobic mood mirroring the protagonists' narrow points of view. The square-ish shape also mimics that of the titularly symbolic letters being read by our characters.

Lit for a near-monochromatic sepia-heavy colour palette reminiscent of 19th century photography, with a heavy reliance on diegetic sources to motivate low and high-contrast lighting. This sole light source creates dark backgrounds with starkly lit subjects, offering dimensionality to the space and dynamism to the characters and, metaphorically, their psyche as they seek balance between light and dark, good and evil, right and wrong. Such stylistic chiaroscuro techniques also creates a dramatic, shadowy mood, as well as build tension and suspense by bringing secret hidden details to the surface for all to witness.

PRODUCTION SPECS

➤ *runtime*

approximately 10 minutes long.

➤ *shoot length*

production took place over the course of 2 days on May 14 & 15th, with the initial day for prep, setup and B-roll, and the secondary day for principal photography with talent.

➤ *shoot location*

shot on location at King Manor Museum, Jamaica, Queens, New York, USA.

➤ *crew size*

circa

25 production crew members.

➤ *shot with*

an

Alexa Mini camera package with a single Cooke 18-100mm T3.0 Varotal Zoom lens, and 6 denier ultra-sheer hosiery!



ANECDOTES



- “Morning Vigil” is Night Maire’s first directorial independent short film (unaffiliated with a scholastic institution).
- Women’s pantyhose were used behind the lens as a net diffusion to create an in-camera effect that makes the footage grainy and textured, offering up a vintage and painterly aesthetic.
- The canopy bed used in the picture belongs to the King Manor Museum, but it did not have a mattress! One had to be rented for the production, but due to sizing differences, most options were too big or too small. Large pillows were used to fill in spaces between the mattress and the bed frame.
- “Morning Vigil” is the second collaboration between Night Maire & McLean Peterson (*Sister Eulalie*), the former having produced director Andrew Edison’s student thesis thriller short film “Birdie,” in which the latter was cast as a school shooter’s unsuspecting babysitter.
- “Morning Vigil” is the second collaboration between Night Maire & Nancy Nagrant, the former casting the latter as a dotting victim to vintner cannibals in his graduate thesis film “Chateau Sauvignon: terroir.” Anthony Pepe helmed SPFX for both projects as well, and they remain the last two independent films he’s worked on!
- “Morning Vigil” is the second collaboration between Night Maire & Almudena Caminero, the latter having production designed the latest independent short film “Horologium.”



ACCOLADES

selections & nominations & awards & reviews

OFFICIAL SELECTIONS

1. Atlanta Shortsfest 2025 (*World Premiere - Atlanta, GA*)
2. "One Shot" International Short Film Festival 2025 (*International Premiere - Yerevan, Armenia*)
3. Dublin International Short Film and Music Festival 2025 (*European Premiere - Dublin, Ireland*)
4. Newport Beach Film Festival 2025 (*North American Premiere - Newport Beach, CA*)
5. YellowHammer Film Fest 2025 (*Virtual / Online program*)
6. International University Festival Cine- Literature Of Agadir 2025 (*African Premiere - Agadir, Morocco*)
7. Music Film Festival 2025 (*South American Premiere - Buenos Aires, Argentina*)
8. Short Spotlight Film Festival 2026 (*Virtual / Online program*)
9. The IndieFEST Film Awards (*Virtual / Online program*)
10. VisioNova Film Festival 2026 (*Mediterranean Premiere - Roma, Lazio, Italy*)
11. The Pint Sized Film Festival 2026 (*U.S.A. Premiere - Croydon, PA*)
12. Winter Film Festival 2026 (*Eastern U.S.A. Premiere - New York City, NY*)
13. Aurora International Horror Film Festival 2026 (*Mexican Premiere - Guanajuato, Mexico*)
14. McMinnville Film Festival 2026 (*Western U.S. Premiere - McMinnville, OR*)
15. Idyllwild International Festival of Cinema 2026 (*Pacific Coast Premiere - Idyllwild-Pine Cove, CA*)
16. Stay Gold Film Festival 2026 (*South Central U.S. Premiere*)
17. Tjov Uluslararası Kısa Film Festivali 2026 (*Asian Premiere*)
18. Ouarzazate International University Film Festival 2026 (*Moroccan Premiere - Ouarzazate, Morocco*)
19. Cine Pobre Film Festival 2026 (*Virtual / Online program*)
20. LES the Lower East Side Festival of the Arts 2026 (*North Eastern U.S. Premiere - New York, NY*)
21. VisiOn Festival 2026 (*Mediterranean Premiere - Caserta, Italy*)
22. The FilmJoint 2026 (*Nigerian Premiere - Lagos, Nigeria*)
23. Riviera Laurence Olivier Vivien Leigh film Award 2026 (*Veneto Region Premiere - Bardolino, Italy*)
24. Literature in Cinema 2026 (*Argentinian Premiere - Buenos Aires, Argentina*)
25. Melrose Hill Short Film Festival 2026 (*California State Premiere - Los Angeles, CA*)
26. Stockholm City Film Festival 2026 (*Scandinavian Premiere - Stockholms, Sweden*)
27. Chain NYC Film Festival 2026 (*New York State Premiere - New York City, NY*)
28. The Indie Gathering International Film Festival 2026 (*Midwestern U.S. Premiere - Columbus, OH*)
29. Montgomery Film Festival 2026 (*Southeastern U.S. Premiere - Montgomery, AL*)
30. Hudson Valley Film Fest 2026 (*Hudson Valley Premiere - Warwick, NY*)
31. Underground Cinema International Film Festival 2026 (*Irish Premiere - Dublin, Ireland*)
32. Indiewood Film Festival Hollywood 2026 (*Los Angeles County Premiere - Los Angeles, CA*)
33. The French Duck Film Festival 2026 (*French Premiere - Paris, France*)
34. Films for World Peace Festival 2026 (*Virtual / Online program*)
35. Cyprus International Film Festival "Golden Aphrodite Awards" 2026 (*Cypriot Premiere - Nicosia, Cyprus*)
36. Fortean Film Festival 2026 (*United Kingdom Premiere - Standish, England, U.K.*)
37. L'Hospitalet Short Film Festival (*Iberian Premiere - Barcelona, Spain*)
38. Fantasmal Film Fest 2026 (*Colombian Premiere - Medellin, Colombia*)

NOMINATIONS

1. Best Actress (McLean Peterson) - *Dublin International Short Film and Music Festival 2025*
2. Best Actress - Short (McLean Peterson) - *Idyllwild International Festival of Cinema 2026*
3. Best Actor - Short (Nick Doolan) - *Idyllwild International Festival of Cinema 2026*
4. Best Director - Short - *Idyllwild International Festival of Cinema 2026*
5. John Milius Award - Best Screenplay - Short - *Idyllwild International Festival of Cinema 2026*
6. Juan Ruiz Anchia - Best Cinematography - Short - *Idyllwild International Festival of Cinema 2026*
7. Best Original Score - Short - *Idyllwild International Festival of Cinema 2026*
8. Best Film Under 10 Minutes - *Cine Pobre Film Festival 2026*
9. Honorable Mention - Best Short Film / Filmmaker - *Stay Gold Film Festival 2026*
10. Best Short Film - *The FilmJoint 2026*
11. Honorable Mention - Best Short Film - *Melrose Hill Short Film Festival 2026*
12. Honorable Mention - Best Actress (McLean Peterson) - *French Duck Film Festival 2026*

AWARDS

1. Best Horror - *Dublin International Short Film and Music Festival 2025*
2. Best Score - *Dublin International Short Film and Music Festival 2025*
3. Award of Recognition: Best Christian Theme - *The IndieFEST Film Awards 2026*
4. *Best Visual Craft - VisioNova Film Festival 2026*
5. Best Cinematography - *French Duck Film Festival 2026*
6. Best LGBT Film - *Stockholm City Film Festival 2026*

DISTRIBUTION DATA

Number of Countries Screened In : *x15*

Events Screened at Per Country :

x14 U.S.A.

x1 Colombia

x1 Spain

x3 Italy

x1 Cyprus

x1 Sweden

x2 Argentina

x1 England

x1 Turkey

x2 Ireland

x1 France

x5 Virtual / Online

x2 Morocco

x1 Mexico

x1 Armenia

x1 Nigeria

Number of U.S. States Screened In : *x8*

Events Screened at Per State :

x4 California

x1 Georgia

x1 Oregon

x4 New York

x1 Ohio

x1 Pennsylvania

x1 Alabama

x1 Oklahoma

REVIEWS

“We’re truly honored to be showcasing ‘Morning Vigil’ at Newport Beach this year. It was one of my personal favorites from the submissions and really stood out to me for its elegance and emotional depth. [The performances are] such a powerful anchor, and the film lingers long after watching.” - Sebnem Acar, Short Film Programmer at the Newport Beach Film Festival

“The cinematography and overall vintage aesthetic is flawless, perfectly transporting the audience into a world with utter intention and specificity.” - Dances With Films’ Narrative Shorts Programming Committee

“The performances are solid, and the tone is appropriately airless.” - Gary M. Kramer, Gay City News

“The strongest response was to the film’s visual style. The cinematography, editing, and production design create a clear sense of grief, repression, and family history. The religious imagery works well, and the decision to keep the dialogue limited allowed the characters’ actions to carry much of the story. The final scene also stands out. It revealed the relationship between the mother and her children without stopping to explain everything to the audience. That kind of visual storytelling is difficult to pull off, and it is one of the strongest moments in the film. ... Overall, our team sees ‘Morning Vigil’ as a well-crafted film with particularly strong cinematography, editing, and production design.” - Utah International Film Festival’s Review Team

“Well done and well acted. Loved that this was a period piece in a different aspect ratio. Textured and beautiful. Had enough levity to keep the viewer hooked and was a great way to explore grief, sexuality, and familial acceptance.” - Oxford Film Festival’s Programming Committee

REVIEWS CONT'D

"Interesting and compelling. ... High production values. For an 1880 based story it was avant garde. ... The lighting and soft focus gave me the feeling of a Caravaggio painting. Strong performances from McLean Peterson and, as always, Blanche Baker. It's incredible to see how mesmerizing Ms Baker can be with just her eyes. It reminded me of Diane Salinger's performance and Carnivale. ... A beautifully crafted film with a distinctive visual style and an enigmatic atmosphere that lingers long after it ends. The near 1:1 aspect ratio is an especially inspired creative choice, reinforcing the film's intimacy and timeless quality. A confident and accomplished piece of filmmaking. Highly recommended." - Industry Professionals at the Melrose Hill Short Film Festival

"A polished, deeply atmospheric piece of work that successfully translates classic literature into a meaningful and surprisingly relatable cinematic drama. Despite its 19th century setting, the themes of hidden identity and judgment ring remarkably true for modern audiences. The production design is outstanding - getting a period piece right on a short film budget is notoriously difficult, but the visual world here is impeccably crafted. Paired with a stylised visual palette and simple, elegant camera movement, the overall aesthetic feels deliberate, high-end, and immersive." - Sunday Shorts Film Festival Programming Judge

"It was a true pleasure to screen 'Morning Vigil' as part of our festival program. [The] film demonstrated strong storytelling, artistic intent, and a compelling sense of mood and atmosphere. The care and dedication behind the work were evident throughout, and it made a lasting impression on our programming team." - Lisandro "Lasso" Boccacci, Festival Director at the Stay Gold Film Festival

"Very solid short. ... It definitely has style." - Queer Screams Film Festival's Judges

"The jury was deeply struck by the film's atmosphere and precision, and by the way it holds the viewer in a space that feels both intimate and universal. 'Morning Vigil' left a strong impression on us, and we are truly proud to include it among this edition's awarded works."
- Visionova Film Festival Team's Jury



BIOGRAPHIES

Cast & Key Crew

Blanche Baker as Mother

Blanche Baker is an American actress of stage, screen and television. Born Blanche Garfein in New York, her mother is actress Carroll Baker, who won a Best Actress Oscar nomination for “Baby Doll” (1956), several months after baby Blanche arrived. Her father is stage director Jack Garfein, who later went on to direct movies and teach acting.

After attending Wellesley College, she took her mother's surname and made her television debut in the miniseries “Holocaust” (1978), for which she won an Emmy Award for Best Supporting Actress.

Baker made her movie debut in “The Seduction of Joe Tynan” (1979), an A-List production featuring Alan Alda at the height of his popularity and another “Holocaust” co-star at the start of her career, Meryl Streep. She then appeared as the Holy Mother in the TV movie “Mary and Joseph: A Story of Faith” (1979).

Baker is also known for her role as Ginny Baker in “Sixteen Candles”; she also starred in the title role of “Lolita” on Broadway. In 2012, she produced and starred in a film about Ruth Madoff titled “Ruth Madoff Occupies Wall Street.”



McLean Peterson as Sister Eulalie



McLean (muh-klayn) **Peterson** is a New York City based actor and singer hailing from Chicago, IL. Her work can be seen on Netflix's "Jessica Jones" (2015), Amazon's "Zero Avenue" (2021), and PBS's "The Chaperon" (2018), and she has been seen on stages from New York, to London, to Edinburgh. She received her B.F.A. in Drama from NYU: Tisch and has since toured the United States and United Kingdom theatrically as Ivanka in Charles Gershman's critically acclaimed "IvankaPlay."

McLean led her first indie horror feature last summer with "Summoners" (2022) by Terence Krey which won the Silver Audience Award at Brooklyn Horror Film Festival. This followed "Friend Crush" (2021) by Alex Sherman, which took home the Film Olympiad Grand Prix and Silver Award for Leading Actress, as well as Andrew Edison's "Birdie" (2022), which won Best Short Psychological Thriller at the Manhattan Film Festival, to round out her most recent thrilling roles. Simultaneously, McLean has spent over a decade developing new plays and musicals at FringeNYC, 54 Below, Joe's Pub, Irondale, Edinburgh Fringe, and A.R.T.

Nick Doolan as Magistrate Henry

Nick Doolan earned his B.F.A. in Drama from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, training in the Stella Adler studio. Prior to graduating, he had the opportunity to study Shakespeare abroad at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London, England, an opportunity that he looks back on as a fundamental building block in his artistic career.

Nick is known for his recurring appearances on CBS's "Person of Interest" (2011), Hulu's "Wu-Tang: An American Saga" (2019), as well as Paramount+'s "Evil" (2019).



Fenton Lawless as Priest



Fenton Lawless is a musician and SAG-AFTRA member residing in New York City's East Village.

He started acting for the screen in the 90s, which saw him cast in such Oscar nominated pictures as "Ghosts of Mississippi" (1996) featuring Alec Baldwin, James Woods, and Whoopi Goldberg, as well as in "Air Force One" (1997) featuring Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman, and Glenn Close. Fenton is best known for his work on Netflix's "Orange Is The New Black" (2013), "Stranger Things" (2016) and "Manifest" (2018), CBS's "Person of Interest" (2011), "Blue Bloods" (2010) and "The Good Wife" (2009), FOX's "Gotham" (2014), Amazon Prime's "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" (2017), as well as NBC's "The Blacklist" (2013).

WRITER & DIRECTOR & PRODUCER & EDITOR

Cosmopolitan in nature, **David M. Night Maire** is a creative independent filmmaker who's gritty, character-driven films have received endorsements and worldwide acclaim. A bilingual alumni of NYU: Tisch School of the Arts, Night Maire earned his B.A. with honours in Film & T.V. with a focus on Directing, and Minors in Psychology and Producing. This native Alpine's passion for storytelling led him to pursue a Masters in Directing at the School of Visual Arts and one in Screenwriting for Television & Film from Royal Holloway's University of London. He has since been invited to guest lecture on an array of production topics to undergraduate and postgraduate students from both programs.

Night premiered music videos on MTV and Glamour, and produced content for the likes of Louis Vuitton . Moët Hennessy and Red Bull, among others. Moreover, Night Maire has garnered thousands of laurels and awards for the many short films he's Directed and Produced, including the Jury Award for Best Short Film at Donostia-San Sebastian Horror & Fantasy Film Festival, the Zeno Mountain Award at Miami Film Festival, and the New Industry Selection Award at Oaxaca FilmFest. His cultivated persona and visual aesthetic have also precipitated invitations to Program and Judge diverse international and independent film festivals and competitions, notably the DC Shorts International Film Festival & Screenplay Competition, FilmQuest, and Shriekfest Horror Film Festival.



PRODUCER



Nancy Nagrant is an award-winning actress and producer based in New York City. As a producer, she loves ushering work from development through distribution and is passionate about creating work featuring under-represented protagonists, especially women. Her films have played at major film festivals, including Academy-Award qualifiers St. Louis, Woodstock, deadCenter, Reel Sisters, and LA Shorts; and have collected nearly 100 official selections, along with dozens of awards and nominations. Nancy produces under the name Anemone Productions, although it's really just her... and some badass collaborators.

Nancy is also a busy working actor in NYC, with an extensive resume in television, film, and theatre. She is best known for her appearing in the televised series 'The Equalizer' (CBS), 'The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel' (Amazon Prime Video), and 'Law & Order: SVU' (NBC). Her notable cinematic credits include Laura Kosann's 'The Social Ones' (2019), Steven Soderbergh's 'Side Effects' (2013), and Ken Scott's 'Delivery Man' (2013) alongside Vince Vaughn.

Born and raised in Michigan, Nancy received her B.A. in Theatre Performance with a Psychology minor from Western Michigan University. She's passionate about travel, especially anywhere she can be in the water, and is an avid snorkeler and a PADI-certified scuba diver. Nancy is a 20+ year yogi and has been practicing Vedic Meditation every day for over a decade.

DIR. of PHOTOGRAPHY

Ben Goelz is a Brooklyn-based cinematographer. A California, Bay Area native, Ben studied film at New York University: Tisch School of the Arts where he fell in love with the city's vital filmmaking community.

His work ranges from narratives to commercials and music videos, and has been featured at a number of festivals including TriBeca, Cleveland International, Boston International and HollyShorts. In 2020, a film he shot titled "Master Maggie" took home the Best Short prize at the American Pavilion at Cannes Film Festival's Emerging Filmmaker Showcase as well as the Audience Award at the Nantucket Film Festival.

Notable commercial and music video clients include Lululemon, Verizon, Amazon Music, P.Volve, The Record Company, Saturday Drive, Crash Gordon, Bitters, Hometeam, NFL, and AmEx.



PROD. DESIGNER



Almudena Caminero is a Brooklyn-based production designer and painter originally hailing from León, Spain. She earned her B.F.A. in Fine Arts from the Universidad Europea de Madrid, and received her M.A. in Set Design for Film, Theatre and Television from TAI School.

After working on a number of short films and television shows in Madrid, she decided to move to New York City, where she graduated in Filmmaking from The New York Film Academy.

Almudena continues to live in Brooklyn, NY, and since her most recent graduation, has refined her artistic craft as a Production Designer on a myriad of corporate and commercial projects projects, as well as narrative ones, including features, short films, television shows and web series. She also runs a personal Etsy Shop for her aesthetically gothic painting series.

SPECIAL FX MAKEUP

Since 1995, **Anthony Pepe** has created characters and effects for all types of film and T.V. productions, working as a special effects makeup artist in the industry. Located in the greater New York City area, he has had the honour of working with numerous talents in front of and behind the camera, and nearly three decades later, Anthony has notched over one hundred film and T.V. credits.

He is a member of I.A.T.S.E. Local 798 and provides all types of makeup and makeup effects for the projects he's attached to. Services include prosthetic fabrication and application, injury simulation, hairwork application, beauty and clean makeup, character design, illumination incorporation, epoxy and fiberglass moldmaking, animatronic applications and full bodypainting, team leadership, budget management and department heading.

Anthony's film resume includes many large Hollywood tent-poles and independent features, as well as a long list of television shows. Some of his notable achievements include "Hunger Games 2: Catching Fire," "The Woman," the "Sharknado" films, "The Amazing Spider-Man" films, CBS's "The Good Wife," and "Elementary," FOX's "The Following," and "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit," HBO's "Boardwalk Empire," SyFy Channel's competition show "Face Off Season 1," and most recently nine seasons of NBC's "The Blacklist" where he was made head of the makeup department.



CONTACT



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Thank you.