

CRICKETS, IT'S YOUR TURN

Director	Countries	Year	Format	Runtime	Languages
Olga Korotko	France / Kazakhstan	2024	DCP 2K · Color	105 min	Russian · Kazakh

A diagnosis, not a prescription.

POSITIONING

Crickets, It's Your Turn is a darkly absurd, self-reflexive feminist parable: a young photographer's private theatre of imagination begins to invade the world around her. Merey enters a mountain house governed by hierarchy, male solidarity and the logic of the strongest. She follows another logic — beauty, play and creation. Through white-room tableaux, grotesque humour and deliberate ruptures between realism and theatre, an ordinary birthday party becomes a study of collective complicity: not a single monster, but reasonable men who protect one another until violence becomes ceremony.

The film refuses the expected catharsis of revenge — not to punish the audience, but because allowing Merey to prevail by adopting the men's logic would concede that their definition of power is the only one available. Her erasure is not the failed ending of a thriller; it is the film's central accusation. Korotko calls this gesture *cinematic femicide*: the film enacts the erasure it diagnoses, refusing the audience the comfort of symbolic repair.

LOGLINE

A young woman walks into a room full of men who follow the logic of the strongest. She follows the logic of beauty. One of them will kill her for it.

FORM AND TONE

The film is built on deliberate ruptures between realism and theatre. Merey's white-room fantasies — pristine, staged tableaux in which she rises above what she cannot fight — begin as her private refuge and gradually invade the film's reality, until a podium with a microphone materializes in a living room. The men are drawn almost as caricatures; the key word is "almost", because this joke is not funny. Violence, when it comes, is shown as bare fact, stripped of sensation and never aestheticized.

The title comes from the phrase used when someone makes a joke and no one laughs. That is the shape of the film: a comedy in its construction, a tragedy in its punchline.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Photographer Merey accepts an invitation to a birthday party in the mountains, where an ordinary gathering gradually becomes a darkly absurd theatre of hierarchy, male solidarity and collective complicity. As her private world of imagination begins to invade reality, she confronts a group of men governed by the logic of the strongest.

EXTENDED SYNOPSIS

Merey, a 25-year-old photographer whose mission is to find and capture beauty, meets the charming, apparently open-minded Nurlan by chance. He seems different: he runs a film club, laughs at the right things, treats her as an equal. She agrees to join him at his friend Bakyt's birthday party in the mountains. Bakyt is the obvious aggressor — loud, boorish, a believer in social Darwinism. He is also, in the end, the least dangerous man in the room.

It is Nurlan who carries Merey's camera bag when the situation turns violent — an act that looks like care and is in fact disarmament. It is Nurlan who finds her hiding in the dark outside, tells her Sergey confessed everything, and in the same breath asks her to make a deal. It is Nurlan who, in the end, will be the one to pull the trigger. The system does not require monsters. It requires men like Nurlan: reasonable, sympathetic, and ultimately more loyal to the group than to what they know is right.

In the film's final sequence, Merey confronts her attackers in the living room. A podium with a microphone materializes from the air — a deliberate collapse of the boundary between reality and theatrical imagination — and she delivers her argument: that the peacock's beauty, not the predator's strength, is what ensures survival. Bakyt, in a moment of unexpected humanity, releases her and tells her to leave. She walks toward the door. Nurlan shoots her in the back.

As Merey falls, the powerful men from an earlier theatre scene reappear and applaud. The taxi driver from the opening hands Nurlan a trophy. The system closes ranks, rewards its own, and moves on. Merey dies looking out the window, at a sky that continues indifferently.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

I knew that the most anticipated conclusion would be a revenge narrative — the protagonist takes justice into her own hands. But such an ending would have betrayed the film's central idea. If Merey could survive only by adopting the men's logic — meeting force with greater force — the film would already have conceded that their definition of power is the only one available. Her logic, the peacock's logic of beauty and creation, cannot win on the terms the room has set, and the film refuses to pretend otherwise.

The film treats patriarchy as one expression of a broader social-Darwinist logic: a world in which domination is mistaken for strength and solidarity becomes complicity. I wanted to examine this worldview under a magnifying glass — to nearly turn it into caricature. The key word is “nearly”.

The film deliberately makes these men ridiculous: caricatured, absurd, pathetic. Not to minimize what they do. Humour does not make them harmless — it deprives them of the grandeur that violence so often claims for itself, both for Merey inside the film and for the audience watching it. They remain ridiculous and lethal at the same time.

Merey's white-room fantasies are her method of resistance — humour and theatre as the highest forms of resistance available to her. As the film progresses, the line between her imagined theatre and the real world dissolves. The podium that appears in the living room is not a hallucination. It is a statement: this film knows it is a film, and it is asking you to think, not only to feel.

I call this *cinematic femicide*: not a film about the erasure of women, but a film that enacts the very erasure it diagnoses. It denies the audience the narrative relief that victims themselves are so often denied — and turns the desire for catharsis into part of its ethical tension. Comfort would be a lie.

“The film denies the audience the narrative relief that victims themselves are so often denied.”

DIRECTOR

Olga Korotko is a Kazakhstani filmmaker, screenwriter, and producer born in Uralsk, Kazakhstan (1988). She began her career directing short films under the tutelage of Kazakh master Darezhan Omirbayev, earning an MFA in Film Directing from the T.K. Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts. She was selected for the Asian Film Academy at Busan (2011), studied at the New York Film Academy (2014–2015), and participated in the Berlinale Talents (2016) and the Berlinale Script Station (2020).

Her debut feature *Bad Bad Winter* (2018) premiered in the ACID section at Cannes, winning the Audience Award at the Queens World Film Festival (2019) and the Audience Award at the Beirut International Women Film Festival (2019). *Crickets, It's Your Turn* (2024), her second feature, was developed through La Fabrique Cinéma (Cannes 2020), the Asian Cinema Fund, and the Berlinale Script Station. It premiered in the Concorso Cineasti del Presente competition at the 77th Locarno Film Festival.

Korotko is currently based in Dubai, UAE, where she is developing her third feature.

CAST

Merey

Inzhu Abeu

Nurlan

Ayan Batyrbek

Bakyt

Arnur Kusaingazin

Maksat

Nurlybek Maulezaripov

Alex

Boris Yugay

Sergey

Alexandr Khvan

CREW

Director, Screenwriter & Producer

Olga Korotko

Producer

Étienne de Ricaud (Caractères Productions)

Director of Photography

Aigul Nurbulatova

Editors

Ricardo Saraiva · Yedilkhan Amandyk

Line Producer

Dana Dastem

Creative Producer

Yerlan Aigozhinov

Original Music

Akmaral Mergen

Sound Design

Ilya Gariyev

Sound

Benjamin Laurent · Erkhat Sembek

Art Director

Dana Jumagaliyeva · Eldar Nevlyutov · Zhuldyz Dulatova

Costume Design

Dmitriy Zorin

Hair & Makeup

Julia Sycheva · Greta Orlova

Post Production

Aidos Zhumurov

FESTIVAL HISTORY

Locarno Film Festival

Concorso Cineasti del Presente · World Premiere
Official Competition · 2024

Helsinki International Film Festival

Finland, 2024

El Gouna Film Festival

Feature Narrative Competition · Egypt · 2024

São Paulo International Film Festival

Brazil, 2024

IFFI Goa · Chennai IFF · Cinévesture

India, 2024–2025

Glasgow Film Festival

UK Premiere · Audience Award Shortlist · 2025

Eastern Neighbours Film Festival

Netherlands, 2025

PRESS

CINEUROPA · 2024

“Inzhu Abeu’s enigmatic face, containing an unadulterated curiosity about the world, sparking hope despite the underlying sadness — together with DoP Aigul Nurbulatova’s soft imagery sculpted by subdued light — leads one to stare at the screen in awe.”

LOUD AND CLEAR REVIEWS · 2025

“Korotko convincingly lays bare a world in which men prioritise and excuse the actions of other men — a fraternity that poisons itself from the top down, encouraging the worst impulses of its loudest members.”

MOVIESCRAMBLE · 2025

“Korotko uses her camera with an intensity that makes the walls of the remote cabin appear to close in around Merey.”

RIGHTS & LICENSING

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PRODUCER

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PRODUCTION

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